

Written evidence submitted by Kirstian Taylor

Name: Kirstian Taylor.

I am a Singer and Actress. I work with a label called SONS Records, who have put my music out on a platform called Sonstream. After years of barely receiving any cash from streaming, Sonstream paid me £200+ in one week for around 8000 streams. I believe that the model they use has got to be given more attention.

Q 1. What are the dominant business models of platforms that offer music streaming as a service?

Free Music with Adverts or there is also the Subscription Model, which in reality, is nowhere near as popular.

In context, Ad-funded music from YouTube provides somewhere between 51%* and 78%* of the worlds' entire online music consumption. You Tube has 2.5 Billion users only has 20 million paying (music) subscribers*.

Spotify claim 130 million subscribers* but actually have 286million users* in total – so even their established customer base overwhelmingly opts for 'freemium' rather than subscription.

Consumers simply don't like to pay £10 up front for something they may or may not consume – and hence the market is overwhelmingly dominated by the ad-funded model.

The whole ecosystem is in reality, focused on advertising. It's all about making huge profits for the Tech Industry rather than the Music Industry...

The tech giants are in effect, always 'advertising' themselves. YouTube is popular because everyone knows they can go to YouTube and find any music they wish to listen to for free; they just have to put up with some adverts.

Because in reality, streaming is funded primarily by advertising revenue, it becomes the case that really huge pop tracks of the day get really good streaming pay-outs, whereas most content is paid a tiny fraction of a penny.

It is my opinion that the Music Industry, and all the Creators especially, are subsidising YouTube (the worst culprit) and all other ad-funded platforms.

Q 2. Have new features associated with streaming platforms, such as algorithmic curation of music or company playlists, influenced consumer habits, tastes, etc

The Playlisting system and culture is nothing short of a fiddle. Overwhelmingly the Artists pushed on the Playlists will have some association or connection with the Major Labels *and* in turn the Platforms. However, there is more to the new online marketing culture for music:

Artists have no choice but to pay the online platforms – all of which operate incestuously in truth – to advertise their music. The platforms have developed countless ways to “boost” your streaming stats so that an artist can look far more popular than they really are. It pampers the ego and esteem for thousands of artists but really, it is something they pay for; and something that is deceitful for the consumer!

So, the platforms, instead of paying the musicians for *authentic* streams, are in fact charging the artists directly to pay a “click farm” in the far-east to bump the streaming stats up.

Q 3. What has been the economic impact and long-term implications of streaming on the music industry, including for artists, record labels, record shops, etc?

Music streaming isn't to blame for everything, but it does make a deteriorating situation even worse when it could well be part of the remedy – *if the Sonstream business model became dominant.*

Singers such as myself used to make at least some money from pub gigs. Although there are still gigs for covers and such, it is decreasing all the time, and the gig circuit for new music is disappearing fast outside of London, Manchester and Liverpool. Simply put, cheap booze from Supermarkets means that many young people simply pre-load to save money and this, over the last 10 years especially, has really knocked the music scene. Nothing has yet filled this void – with the exception of Sonstream.

Q 4. How can the Government protect the industry from knock-on effects, such as increased piracy of music? Does the UK need an equivalent of the Copyright Directive?

The problem is having business models tied to advertising revenue – it must be clear to everyone that it causes all the issues from there on in. Surely, the government can ban the use of advertising to monetise music streams or at least force them to pay the same for each and every stream no matter what?

If there's any Pirates in this then it is YouTube, Spotify and the other platforms. Just because billions of consumers use those platforms doesn't mean that the platforms are fair and honest.

How can it possibly be fair that really big artists get paid more for their streams than artists who are just starting out or simply have smaller, niche followings.

Q 5. Do alternative business models exist? How can policy favour more equitable business models?

Pay per Play [Sonstream.com] is brilliant! It's not just better for the Artist but is actually cheaper for most consumers too. This is because the platforms claim that their users listen to hours and hours of music per day – but that just isn't true in reality. It's difficult to find the stats that support this though – as most folk who only have chance to listen to music occasionally, do so on YouTube and YouTube doesn't give figures on how much unlicensed music it streams and to how many!

The Sonstream "Pay per Play" system means that the customer always pays a fee for any music streamed, but conversely, also pays nothing if they *play* nothing.

Legislation could force streaming to pay more to PPL and PRS also and to be dissociated from promotions [playlisting], and advertising.

I believe that recording & song-writing copyrights should not have time limits. It is a myth that songs are written in seconds and great recordings "just happen". In truth, writing and recording music requires a lot of hard work and dedication, and so it simply isn't fair not to recognise this and for its value to be protected by law.

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