Music Technology

Music is an art form widely enjoyed by consumers all over the world. The music industry benefits from the prevalent use of music across cultures, and it seems that there is a type of music for everyone. I enjoy listening to music in many different situations. For example, when I workout, fast-paced music helps me increase the intensity of my workout without noticing it as much. In this way music can be used as a distraction. Other times, I use music as a study tool. Classical or instrumental music can actually help me focus when I am doing homework or studying. The large variety of music and many different uses of music available makes it an essential part of many people’s day in various situations.

In addition to the variety of music types, the improved accessibility of music makes it even more widely used. Technological advancements such as streaming services like Spotify have made it easier for consumers to access their favorite music without downloading the content to their phone, laptop, or other device. It certainly makes it faster for consumers to be able to listen to their desired music, and streaming also conserves the storage space on their devices. Because of this, listening to music has become easier and more efficient for consumers and producers alike. Artists and record labels, with the help of streaming service companies, are able to connect listeners with their music better than ever, thanks to technology. One example of this is Lorde, a young pop star who recently gained popularity by being featured on Spotify. “Spotify’s data team, which analyses current trends and reaches out to trending artists, realised her potential very early on, and promotes her work accordingly” (“Pros and Cons”). Because of technology, companies like Spotify have been able to collect data and choose music for listeners in a predictive way. Data science is an incredibly powerful tool that has completely changed how music is accessed.
Although streaming seems to be a very positive thing for everyone involved, there are also many negative consequences. All of the data collected from users is beneficial to predicting what new music the user will enjoy, however, consumers as a whole are becoming more and more aware of how their information is being collected. While some do not care, there are a significant number of listeners that do not want data collected about them on this level and feel as though they have lost their privacy. Additionally, many of these streaming applications are perceived as free to users. On the other hand, some claim that “there are potentially hidden subscription fees” (“Pros and Cons”) which means that these service providers are not being transparent and clear to consumers. Aside from concerns about the streaming service providers’ ethics as related to consumers, there is another central concern with these services and what they do to artists. Some are concerned, including Taylor Swift who “objects to the fact that Spotify offers its services for free, as it sends users the message that they don’t need to pay for music” (“Pros and Cons”). This type of service may lead, not only to lower earnings for artists, but also lead to illegal use of music. When music is not paid for, reproduction of it is a violation of intellectual property.

Music and how it is accessed has been drastically changed and shaped by technology. It is hard to be sure of what the future holds, but there are some aspects of the future that we may be able to accurately predict. Future changes may include powerhouses like Pandora creating “streamlined streaming services” by utilizing its own technology involving “data science to assist in discovery and curation” (“7 Ways Tech Will Change”) and simplifying the listening experience for consumers. Pandora’s creative and strategic use of algorithms could put them ahead of competitors. There are many less-effective streaming service companies that exist today (ones that do not have the same level of technology as Pandora). One example may be Tidal, which does not have the same level of service as Pandora. Someday soon they may cease to exist. The future of streaming may only include a few companies, which may result in a less competitive industry, and possibly stunting technological advancement.

Technology plays an essential role in the music industry. Technological advancements shape how consumers like myself are able to access music in everyday life. If it were not for the changes
Technology has made to music, I may not get to enjoy music as a frequent hobby. Discovering new music and accessing it easily is what makes listening to music a favorite pastime of many and keeps companies innovating to stay on top using the most advanced technology.

Technology in the Media

*Black Mirror* is a television series that illustrates what life would like like in the future, should new technologies become normalized. According to Robinson, the show has a “pattern of pusing existing technology a few iterations into the future, then considering the nightmarish consequences” (Robinson). The episode I have chosen to focus on is called Arkangel which is episode number two in season four. In this episode, an overprotective mother gets a chip installed in her daughter’s brain. In the show, it is available to a select few. In the show, it is still in the trial phase to test it, so the mother and daughter get to use the technology for free. Little did they know how much it would actually cost them. The chip technology allows the mother to monitor her daughter in every way. She can see what her daughter sees and hear what her daughter hears. The mother can even put filters on her daughter’s senses so that she will not be exposed to any trauma of any sort. On top of all of this, the chip allows the overparenting mother to track her daughter’s location.

As the daughter grows up, the technology proves to be more complicated and have adverse effects. Having never seen blood, the daughter’s curiosity spikes and she punctures her finger with a pencil. Even after the blood starts to pour out of her finger, she can only see skin-toned blotches where the blood should appear. Her perception is completely controlled by her mother. This continues to form the daughter into a rebellious teenager and essentially tears her apart mentally. She is not able to have a normal childhood including mistakes that are a necessary part of life and the learning process. The ending turns quite violent and it is made clear that this well-intentioned decision to protect the daughter has actually ruined her life.
Although, chip technology exists in real life, the program the mother uses to monitor her daughter does not exist, at least not exactly. Overparenting does happen and some technologies, such as baby monitors, allow parents to keep a closer eye on their children. In the usual style of the show, this episode takes what exists now and makes it far more extreme. Tracking programs do exist and it is actually a fairly normal thing in this day and age. Censorship of violent media does happen in real life. However none of these applications in real life are as invasive as the application of these in this episode.

The type of chip technology used in the episode does exist to an extent, but it is not used widely, especially not in children. According to Robinson, “the market availability of tiny RFID chips has raised a long-running series of debates about whether children could or should get microchip implants that can help parents track them” (Robinson). The technology currently exists, but it it widely criticized and it has an overall negative connotation. Certain religious and political groups do not approve of it and it is a controversial topic in regards to ethics. It is happening though, and in Wisconsin, a company recently had all of their employees get chips inserted. According to USA Today, “the chips are voluntary but if a company announces a plan to be chipped, the expectation is that you will get chipped - or risk losing out on advancement” (“You will Get Chipped”). This is a serious invasion of privacy and an ethical concern, beyond the fact that it is unfair to those who try to decline the chip.

Works Cited

