



UNIVERSITY OF AGDER

## **In which ways has the digitalization changed the A&R profession**

**A&R in today's digital industry**  
*A valuable resource*

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*This master's thesis is carried out as a part of the education at the University of Agder and is therefore approved as a part of this education. However, this does not imply that the university for the methods that are used or the conclusion that are drawn*

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## **Abstract**

Behind every artist there is a handful of people that work day and night to make sure the artists career keeps going steady forward. In this machine consisting of record labels and managements, there is one profession that works in-between these to make sure everyone is happy. This paper aims to get a deeper understanding of the a&r profession and the importance this person actually has in the music industry. The background for this thesis lies in that a&r is a topic that not so many know too much about, and neither speaks of. In this paper, I will go deeper in to the world of the a&r and their working methods. The foundation for this thesis will be the a&r and the importance of their role before and after the digitalization. The A&R role will be set up against the changes the digitalization has applied to the music industry, to see if a&r role has been sustainable through the transition from analog to digital.

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## 1. Introduction

As a 90's child, I have been so fortunate to grow up and experience two different ages of the music industry. Born in the CD era and physical sales, and then, be a part of and experience the transition of the music industry in to the digital era. From going to music stores to look through albums of albums until I found something I liked, to just one press of a button and all the music in the world is available. For me, the curiosity for finding and creating music has always been a passion that has driven me, and with the different knowledge that I have gathered through experience in my years of studying music, this passion has been even more amplified. I have always had an interest in working with people and to draw out their musical potential to the fullest. Through my studies these last two years I have gained a deeper insight and understanding in how the music industry work with their artists, both musically and industry-oriented. My interest is especially pointed towards A&R and how the music industry find, develop and maintain their artist, so for me to discover that this was a profession unknown to many, this subject became most naturally for me to write a thesis about.

Through decades, the goal for many artists and bands has been to have the big breakthrough. The one opportunity in their career to be signed by a record company, record an album and go on tours. This may just be the case for only a few, but for those that are lucky and get this once in a life time chance, many accept the offer of a record deal without much knowledge of the process to become a star. In this chain of event there is many people and different aspects that are working across each other. One role that often are left out of is the A&R role. This job may be a little unclear for many and are often done by different people with other roles in the industry such as managers or music publishers. Examples of this is the a&r role in the music industry has always been an important job with their main goal is to find and develop new artists. For the record companies this is the lifeblood to be able to survive in the industry. The a&r role is extending across several different positions in a record label from being involved with the artist, the artist development, the recording process, artist planning, marketing plan and contract negotiations between the artist and the record company. The a&r position in a record label is very comprehensive with lot of responsibility towards the artist, but also towards their company. To keep the artists happy so they can create albums that sells is a very important for the records labels, person in charge of this is the a&r man. In a way, they

function as a link between the artist and the record label with the ambition of working towards a common goal (Peter Jenner, 2017, 9. March, Personal Interview).

In the last decades with the technological development the a&r role has in some ways stayed much the same, but also in some ways changed along the advancement. With the influx of the internet in the 90s, and new TV shows with the focus finding talents in the early 2000s, the working method for the a&r profession has changed in the process.

In this thesis, I will be looking into the changes the A&R profession has gone through as the results of the digitalization during the millennium. The thesis will go deeper into the a&r profession as a position in the music industry, and consider the challenges the profession has had to handle after the digitalization.

My main question of research for this thesis is as following:

- *In which ways has the digitalization changed the A&R profession?*

As a follow-up to the main question, following sub-questions is connected:

- *Is A&R profession still relevant in the industry today?*
- *To which extent?*

To answer these research questions, I have chosen to answer these question from two angles through four interview objects. All these interviewees have different background and relation to the a&r profession and the music industry. To get an even broader understanding of the a&r job, these interviewees also belongs to different generations so their overall experience extends from before the digitalization until present day. I will through the data I gather from the interview try to make an overview over the business aspects for the a&r before and after the digitalization, and consider the strengths and weaknesses in these changes.

## **1.1 The history of the A&R profession**

For approximately 100 years ago the music industry as we know it today was a very different. It consisted of two different market, the live market and the publishing. The way people listened

to music was either go to a concert or get a sheet music and play it on the piano at home. The period before the invention of the phonographic records, the music business was dominated by sales of sheet music. The interest in sheet music had a lot to do with the rising popularity of vaudeville shows across America in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. New York back in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century would prove to be the musical center where music publishers, musicians, songwriters and instrument store would gather. They would settle in an area that would later be famously known as Tin Pan Alley. In this creative area of New York, music publishers would find talented songwriters and print their music then sell them to the Broadway shows, or to the public through the many music stores. One other interesting phenomena that had its peak in the mid 20s was the Player Piano, a self-playing piano. It can be in some way called the predecessor to MIDI<sup>1</sup>. The way the player piano worked was that it contained a pneumatic or electro-mechanical mechanism that operated the piano action via pre-programmed music recorded on perforated paper or metallic roles. These were often known as piano rolls. The piano rolls could be purchased so in a way, this was the first case of mechanical rights in the industry. The player piano had its peak in the mid 20s, but was short after declined with the improvement of the phonograph records. With the development of the phonograph the shellac (later polyvinyl chloride) disk came along that would replace the sheet music and the player piano as the main consumption of music.

*Earlier if people wanted to hear their favorite song of their favorite artist, they had to either go listen to someone perform it at the local venue, or they had to buy it themselves and perform it themselves. With the vinyl disk, they could buy a record of their favorite artist and listen to it at home instead.*

The technological development around the phonograph would prove to be a huge benefit for the many rising stars in the 30s and 40s like Frank Sinatra, Ella Fitzgerald, Louis Armstrong and many more. These artists were good singers that could capture the essence and the vocal performance of a great song, thus the increase production of vinyl disk, more specific the seven-inch<sup>2</sup> disk used for singles. The vinyl disk had already been around for some years, but the reason for the seven-inch disk was that the play time was the perfect length for a single song. For the artist, this became the format they would record and distribute their singles through.

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<sup>1</sup> MIDI – Musical Instrument Digital Interface

<sup>2</sup> Seven-inch vinyl (former shellac) disk; First produced in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Playback speed of 45 rpm with 3-5 minutes' playtime per side.

The singles would be sold to promote the upcoming album. Back in the 20-30s the artist in some occasions didn't write their own songs. This is a good example of where the a&r man came in and helped matching the artist with a songwriter, composer or arranger. Example of this is the song "*Come fly with me*" composed by Sammy Cahn and performed by Sinatra. In the early days of the vinyl the focus was on singles, this had to do with the as mentioned the play time of the seven-inch disk was a perfect length for a single, but also that the play time was too short to fit more songs into the disk, therefore the limitation of the disk. This changed in the late 40s early 50s when the Columbia records (subject to today's Sony) started to bring out Extended-play LP's with 45 to 50 minutes' playtime, or 26 minutes each side. With the possibility to record several songs the introduction of the album came and more artists started to record albums. At the same time the radio broadcasting became public and radio stations began to expand from not only be available for the local area, but nationally and internationally. Now the radio stations started playing music to the public making it even easier for the artist to get their music promoted. Having the artists play on the radio also became more normal but also necessarily for them to in order to promote themselves and get more gigs. Radio plays also helped many artists to become bigger acts and get even bigger gigs. Some artists like *Frank Sinatra* and *Ella Fitzgerald* also moved towards other industries such as the movie industry with roles in different films. In combination with many sold albums and movie appearances, the artists began to gain more influence, this gave them more bargaining power when it came to contract negotiations with the record labels. With the artist's popularity beginning to expand over larger areas, the a&r man came in. His role would be to guide and help the artist make the right choices in terms of; who they should sign, what they should record, career strategies and at least make sure that everybody, especially the artist was happy.

With the explosion of rock 'n roll in the 1950s pointed towards the youth market artists started to write their own songs. Bands like The Beatles, The Rolling Stones and Chuck Berry expressed their feelings from a whole generation through their music. This time the technology came so far so the possibility for recording an album was manageable. During this period, an a&r person could also be the producer, in that case he was either hired or worked for the record label. One example is George Martin for The Beatles.

Not quite so-known events during the 50-60s is that some famous record labels were founded by people that did a&r. Motown records founded by Berry Gordy jr. and Island records (today a division of Universal Music Group) founded by Chris Blackwell. As a&r men both Gordy and Blackwell were people searching for the new thing, and eventually found it since Gordy is responsible for the distinctive "*Motown sound*", and Blackwell is known to be the



man that introduced the world for reggae music. These record labels are famous today for their recognizable sound and genre, this much thanks to the a&r people starting them.

From early on where sheet music were the main music consumption, to hit singles, albums releases and radio performances, there has been a shift that affected the artists position and made them stronger. The empowerment of the artists gave them more bargain power that would prove to be helpful in a contract situation. As the artist began to expand their territory, the need for people to help them make the right decision was needed. The a&r man would function as a link between the artist and the labels, helping the artist and make sure everything was ok. From that time until present day the a&r role would grow along the artist and the record labels, and become more comprehensive as the business developed. Some a&r people even started their own company with major success. The a&r man went from be the one that found and helped the artist, to become a key person in the artist's career development.

## 1.2 The A&R Department

*“There's the famous thing that the A&R man from the record company is supposed to do: He's supposed to come into the studio and listen to the songs you've been recording and then say, 'Guys, I don't hear any singles.' And then everybody falls into a terrible depression because you have to write one”.*

*- Jarvis Cocker*

Behind every successful artist there is a long list of people devoted to the artist and their work to accentuate the artist's career. This list consists of managers, record studios, record labels, booking agents, distributors etc. These shareholders cooperate to keep the artists career going. The a&r department (Artist and repertoire) is a division in a record label responsible for scouting, overseeing the process of developing recording artists, negotiate contract deals, make sure the artist is happy and pursue them to make records. An a&r man's job also includes going to live shows, listen to demos received from the press, contacts or other people. The a&r job can be very diverse, and often many of the different tasks overlap each other. The role of the a&r person can differ depending on the seize of the label. The smaller the label is, more intertwined the roles will be. i.e. the a&r man can be both the scout, manager and the director, or all three. For the biggest companies that have the need for more people there is some more

positions that can be placed between the main positions like a&r coordinator, administrator or assistant, but they are in most cases covered of those four below.

1. A&R Scout
2. A&R Manager
3. A&R Director
4. M.D of Co. – Head of company

### **1.2.1 A&R Scout**

At the first level is the a&r scouts with their main responsibility is to find, sign new artists and oversee all the aspect of the recording process that leads up to the final recording. In addition to scouting artists and musicians, the a&r scout often will manage the early recording process and be concerned in the development in the artist as they grow. For an a&r scout it is crucial to keep up and follow the new trends that pops up along the way. This includes a lot of listening to music, attending gigs, go to clubs, listening to demo recordings and watching videos of performing acts. Much of the time also include reading music magazines, music blogs, reading on music related website and monetizing the social media. For an a&r scout the internet and social media is very important sources since it is most organic source of information in spotting trends. In this process, the a&r scout job is to recommend rising artist to the a&r manager and a&r director.

### **1.2.2 A&R Manager**

At the second level is the a&r manager. The a&r manager's job is to pick rising acts, or acts that they think will be successful and make them work with successful or upcoming producers, songwriters or musicians etc. The a&r manager often looks at the tracks record when it comes to finding people the artist can work together with. An example of this can be if a producer has a hit with a dancefloor song, then he can be the right person for that artist. This is of course the "horses for courses"<sup>3</sup> principle, but there is more a little more to it than that. Perhaps the artist

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<sup>3</sup> *"Horses for courses". Used to say that it is important to choose suitable people for particular activities because everyone has different skills.*  
– Cambridge Dictionary

or the band already have done an album with such a success so that the a&r manager allows them to do a second. What would be the best choice, to choose a new producer or keep the same. Even if the album perhaps just had a moderate sale there must have been something good with it. The trick for the a&r manager is to choose the producer that can keep the good stuff and add even more to the band or artists sound, songs or performances.

The a&r manager must be a person with solid understanding of the music market and good business skills. These skills involve having an excellent overview of the market, the contemporary scene and to know what sells. Until an artist is mature enough or till it comes someone around that fits the artist, the a&r managers job is to nurture and keep them prepared.

### **1.2.3 A&R director**

The a&r director is the head of the a&r department, but can also be the head of the record label (the M.D) in some cases. The main responsibility for the head of a&r is to oversee any activities going on in the department. The most important tasks include having the main responsibility of signing new music talents, budget responsibility, managing and hiring new staff, always be updated on the music market, have knowledge in every part of the department and sometimes work as the a&r manager for larger acts. Just like the a&r manager, the a&r director also must have a very solid understanding of the music market and good business skills. The need to be able to see the likelihood of commercial success and negotiation skills to ensure they get the best deal for the record company while supporting the artists' ambitions is important. As the director, he must know and understand the process of how the albums are recorded and produced. The director also has the control over the money flow the artist is generating and in the budget for the label. It is essential to have a broad understanding of different genres like rock, pop, jazz and classical in order to understand the music market. Decisions when it comes to signing and commitment to artists is a daily routine for the a&r director and is determined based on this knowledge. The a&r director's job has a high position in a record label and the person manning this job must be as mentioned a person with excellent skills in marketing and business, as well as understanding the music. Beyond that, having a huge network stretching across different levels of the music industry i.e. managers, lawyers, publishers, booking agents,

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songwriters, producers, independent labels & publicists etc. is very important to always keep the label updated.

The a&r director may have a high position with great power in the record label, but with great power comes a huge responsibility. It may not be the director who mainly scouts after new artists, but it is a&r head that's decides wherever they should sign and bet on the artist. It is no secret that it is the recording artists that is the life line of a record label, without no new artists signed and generating money, the label will die. In the end the a&r director's responsibility is not only towards the artists but also towards the record label.

#### **1.2.4 MD of Co. – Head of company**

The M.D (Music Director) is the head of the record label and the person with highest authority. The M.D is overseeing the whole record label including the a&r, marketing, economy etc. The M.D is the person in the label that always have the last word, nothing come past him without his or her approval.

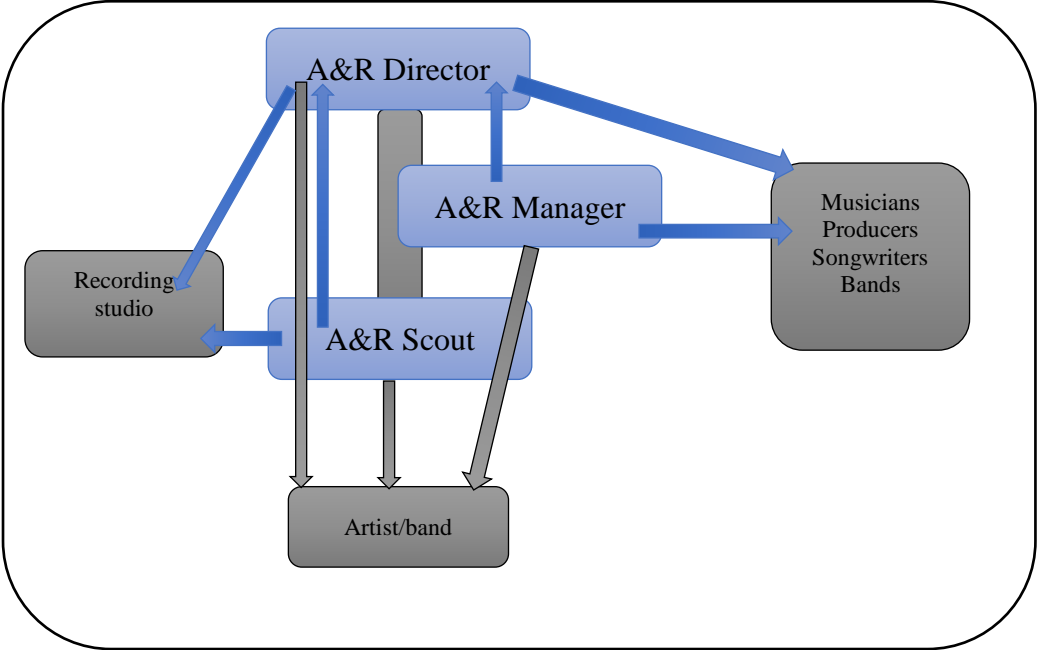
*If the a&r director has one artist or band that he is sure will have success but the some of the other departments disagree, he can present it for he M.D in which can decide wherever it is worth betting on.*

As the a&r director the job and the qualifications of the M.D is much the same, but in addition to overseeing the label, the M.D also must pay attention to what is going on outside the label. In addition to the artists, the M.D also must keep track on the marketing and the economical side of the label.

### **1.3 Overview**

The main job for the a&r department is to scout for new artist and music, always be on the lookout for the next hit. The department is divided in different divisions where the a&r scout, a&r manager and the a&r director is the most common positions with some exceptions. The success of the label depends on the skills of the a&r department and the artists they manage to find. The department is built up on a hierarchy where the a&r scout report their findings to the

director to try hope to get them singed. This goes for the a&r managers as well, but the managers focus is to pair the artist or band up with the right musicians or producers. Mainly working with developing the artist after he or she has become signed. At the top is the a&r director monetizing the activities and keep control over the artist development and label budget.



## 2. Theory

In this chapter I will present the theory that will be the groundwork for my research questions. The theory I have chosen for this thesis is selected to get a wider view and a deeper understanding of the a&r field in the music industry.

In the last couple of decades, the music industry has gone through dramatic changes due to the impact of the digitalization. These changes were triggered by some central communication technology in the society – a process that is referred to as a digital mediamorphosis (Towse, Handka, 2013, s. 280-281.). The result of this process was that the digital media replaced much of the old way of distribution and communication. This change led to a transformation both in the socio-cultural and techno-economic society (Hesmondhalgh, 2013, s. 380.). For the music industry, this change meant to go from physical to digital, and with the rising development in digital communication technologies such as internet and mobile phones, this led to a major change in production and distribution of media-content. However, despite the changes in the infrastructure of the music industry, some things have remained the same. Like in the beginning, development of commercial content, artists and bands is still done by the core aspect in the industry. In larger record labels with a need for a clear organized structure, this job was traditionally assigned to the a&r department. The a&r man was beneficial both for the artist and the record label since their function was to be a bridge between these two parties.

### 2.1 The digital paradigm shift

*“A paradigm shift is when a fundamental change in an individual’s or a society’s view of how things work in the world”.*

- *businessdictionary.com*

For the music business, this was the reality when the development in the digital area started to merge with the music industry. The digitalization changes the whole way the music industry worked and changed the business model the industry was built upon. Through the last two decades we have seen the music industry go through some major changes. The development in the technological field have affected not only the music industry, but the whole society. For the

music industry, these changes came with a lot of trouble. The introduction of the new technology changed the traditional value-added network (Figure 1.1) the music industry was built upon. (Wikström, DeFillippi, 2016, s 15-16.)

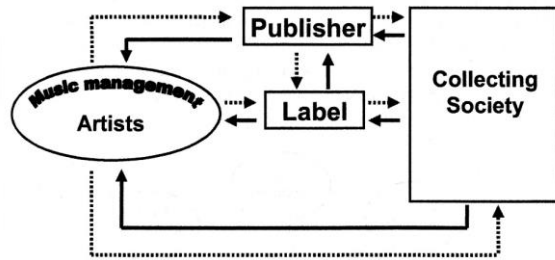


Figure 1.1 The old value-added network  
(Wikström, DeFillippi, 2016, s. 15)

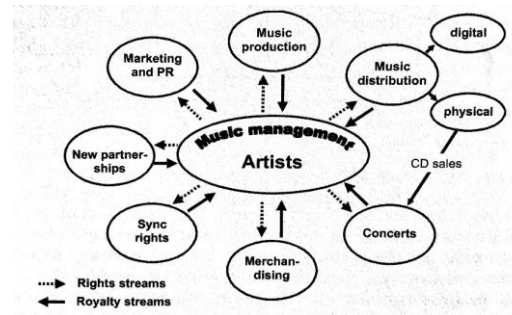


Figure 1.2 The new value-added network  
(Wikström, DeFillippi, 2016, s. 16)

The new value-added network (Figure 1.2) that was a result of the digitalization would prove to be a major challenge for the industry in terms of economy. From records being the main revenue in the old value-added network, to putting the artist in the center of their own career in the new value-added network. At the same time the influx of new technology in the society would also affect the way the audience would relate, find and use the music. The development of technological equipment as PC and cellphones made it possible to connect to the internet everywhere and made music content easier to access than earlier. Napster and the P2P network (Weiss, 2008) was the first file sharing network and the start of musical content sharing over the web. Napster as a file sharing network would in a way be the predecessor of file sharing networks and social media we know today as YouTube, Facebook, Spotify and iTunes. As the technology continued to develop, so did the technological equipment for studio production. With a decreasing production costs on equipment, the beginning of home studio or bedroom studio began to appear (Wikström, DeFillippi, 2016, s. 98.). This development made it easy for people to produce good quality music in their bedroom and distribute it from their pc from home through the internet. Along with the internet, different websites and internet communities began to appear, social media and forums slowly became a new channel for people to find and share information (Wikström, 2013, s. 163.).

The digitalization opened the music industry for the public and made it easier to share and get musical content, at the same time it damaged the music industry in an economical sense in the decreasing sales in music since everything was accessible on the web.

### **2.1.2 The music business - Analog to digital**

Before the digitalization, the value-added network the old music industry used was much simpler and easier to understand. The funding of the distribution and music production was driven by the records that were sold. Public relations and concerts aimed at CD sales were also regarded as promotion tools to maximize the sales. In this network, the record labels and music publishers were the main gate keepers. This placed the publishers and labels at the center since creators had to have a contract with either of them in order to spread their work. This also meant that getting a contract with a record label was a huge deal and a great business opportunity for artists and bands. The revenue the artist earned on the record sales was an important income source and enabled them to make a living although it was based on the record sales. For the musicians as well as the artists, there was also money to earn from the collecting societies that licensed music for different use. The small difference was that the musicians had to have a contract with the record labels and the publishers only to get any share from the records sold. This was however not a problem since the artists back then not could produce or distribute their music by themselves (Wikström, DeFillippi, 2016, s. 15-16.).

Fast forward to today after the digital disruption, much of the structure of the old value-added network has been replaced. For the artist, there is no longer sufficient to earn from one income source only. The digitalization has made it necessary to earn income from different revenue streams to make a good income and have a successful career. For the artist to survive in the new age, they must have a sense of entrepreneurship and economic knowledge. The artist is no longer only the singer or performer, but the producer, songwriter, arranger, studio engineer and composer. Like the industry, the artist also had to change to keep up with an industry which is constantly changing. Anyone can become a member of license organization (Tono in Norway and PRS in England). That will help and represents the creators to protect their rights of their music. License organizations also enable everyone to use their member's music, and collect and distribute the royalties they get from those using the music back to their members.



The digital disruption has also affected the development in the studio technology, resulting in, among other things, lower costs in studio equipment. In the wake of that, a new generation of music creators and producers has emerged (Bennet J, 2015, 07.11.). After the digital transformation, a decreasing cost in studio equipment and production made it possible for artists and creators to make music at home. The way they come to finance this is either by them self or crowdfunding<sup>4</sup> campaigns done through internet or social media. This gave rise to a new kind of studio producers and music culture. This was people able to make music at home in their own bedroom with their laptop, for to then distribute it through the internet and social media (YouTube, Soundcloud, Myspace) on a very low budget. For many established record studios, this new development has resulted in major economic challenges. A solution to this problem would prove to be “*diversify or die*”, to change the way they operated. The studios had to become “*professional audio service centers*” that provided *one-stop audio shopping*. This included two things. First, make more efficient use of the key personnel and the core studio equipment. Second, diversification, spread the risk of insufficient bookings. It involved doing more than just audio recording like; mixing, mastering, post-production for film and television, video games and interactive multimedia. One example of this is the case of the Abbey road studio that offers a big variety in different audio services (Wikström, DeFillippi, 2016, s 100-108.).

The labels and publishers have been pushed aside and the artist has now become the center of the business. The artist has gained more control over the creative process and with the internet, content aggregators makes it possible for home studio producers to upload their music to streaming services worldwide. The transaction of the music industry from analog to digital has resulted in economic changes for the artist, but also for the already established shareholders of the industry. The rapid development in technological equipment has paved way for new ways of using music, and with the internet it has changed the old value-added network and put the artist in the center. The rising numbers of home studio productions made it hard for the well-established studio so diversity became the way for these studios to survive in the new value-added network.

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<sup>4</sup> **Crowdfunding;** *The use of small amounts of capital of a large number of individual to fiancé a new business venture. Crowdfunding makes use of the easy accessibility of vast networks of people through social media and crowdfunding websites to bring investors and entrepreneurs together.*

## **2.2 A new media channel**

The digitalization did not only change the music industry on the inside, but opened it for the people on the outside letting them take part in what was happening. This meant that marketing, distributing, producing and selling music not only was limited to the labels and publishers, but available for everyone. The audience went from only being listeners to have an influence on the music, business and the market. With the internet becoming a bigger part of the society, a fast increase in different social network services (SNS) or social media started to appear. These were internet based applications and were based on user-generated content (UGC). The use of internet and social media became the new channel to process information to the audience along with the “old” media channels like TV and radio. This would be the start of the global phenomena called *The Social Media* that would dominate people’s everyday life up until today. It has by no means replaced TV, radio and newspaper, but it has proved to be a very important source where people would go to find and get information.

### **2.2.1 The Social media**

The social media have had a huge impact on the music industry since its introduction in the mid 2000s. It has changed the way people relate, find and use music. The social media has become the new tool for the music industry in terms of distribution, marketing, PR and real-time information (Franklin, 2013). With the possibility for everyone to find and share everything, the social media would prove to be a game changer in how the music industry worked. For people like myself growing up during the digital transition the social media would be the main source for information. Growing up with as a part of the generation Y “The millennial’s” (Horowitz, 2012, 05.04.), along with the internet, it is natural that our generation would be the highest consumer of social media and internet consumption. The social media was first only an pc based application used to share information among people, but with the development in technology it has also expanded to mobile devices like the cellular phone and tablets. The social media includes different networking websites like Facebook and Twitter, as well as bookmarking sites like Pinterest and Reddit (Maina, 2016, 04.05.). Websites like this involves forums and blogging, or any aspect of interactive presence which allows individuals to engage in conversations with each other. The rapid use of social media made it easier for the audience to connect and share things between each other.

Facebook that was launched in 2004 would prove to be a major hit on an international scale. It may be the definition of social media since it was the first social media application that has surpassed a billion users (Statista, 2017). Facebook is a clear example on an application that allows the users to share own things, or things they find on the internet through their webpage. This can be all sort of things as articles, pictures, videos, music etc. In the profile area, the user can put in almost every detail of their personal life, likes and dislikes, political point of view, religion, liking of food etc. Other kinds of website that appeared with the social media was video hosting services like YouTube or Vimeo that appeared in mid 2000's. Video hosting services can be classified into several categories, among them: user-generated video sharing websites, white label providers and web-based video editing<sup>5</sup>. Some hosting services may charge a fee for you to watch, but almost all these websites are free to use. With YouTube, people could upload videos of themselves or other things to the web and it would be available all over the world where there was internet and a computer. Content sharing would prove to be an important key factor in the development of how the music industry would develop, but I will talk a about it later in this text.

### 2.2.2 A new tool

For the generation that grew up along with the development of the internet, it was natural that the social media was not hard to adapt to. It also explains that the majority of the users of internet and social media is between age 16 and 24 (Statista, 2017). For the music industry the main target audience, especially in the pop-music genre has largely been pointed towards the young people. With a rapid use of internet and social media among the young audience, it began to be noticeable that it was through the internet and the social media it was easiest to reach out to the new fast-growing internet generation. With the open access for everyone to take part in the social media network, the opportunity to follow and monetize the activity going on among

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<sup>5</sup> - **User generated video sharing websites;** *Free online based service where user can upload video clips and share them with the masses. Some site may have placed restrictions on the file size, duration, file format and subject of matter. Some site does not accept adult content as it is seen as inappropriate content and not correspond with its terms and condition.*

- **White label product;** *is a product or service produced by one company (the producer) that other companies (the marketers) rebrand to make it appear as if they had made it.*

- **Web based video editing;** *basically the same the "user generated video sharing" website in addition to some form of editing application. Some of these applications simply allow the user to crop a video into a smaller clip or add filter or effects.*

the fans was possible. The reason for this is that the information that are being spread and thorough the social media networks happens in real-time, and are therefore useful data to use in the hunt to find the next big hit. Different social media applications as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Google, Reddit and Pintrest are example of media network where information spreads like wildfire, or in internet terms, “go viral”<sup>6</sup>. The Canadian artist Justin Bieber is a perfect example of a person that becomes a superstar after the videos he uploaded goes viral. (Biography.com, 2017, 08.05.). This incident shows the power and influence that the social media has on the music business, but also on the public and artists.

The internet and social network also had a positive effect for the artists as well. With the possibility to have direct contact with their fans, the walls between the artists and fans were removed opening for direct interaction between them without involving the record labels and publishers. One known case that is a good example of artists interacting with the fans is the *Radiohead* case back in 2007 (Wikström, 2013, s 113).

*The Radiohead case was a rather unconventional experiment where they offered their newly recorded album for free on their webpage leaving the fans the choice to pay or not. Surprisingly many fans did pay for the album, around 40 per cent paid with an average of \$6 pr. download meaning the average revenue was \$2.40. The end results were “leaked” on the band own website a year after the release saying that “in Rainbows” had sold approximately three billion copies.*

Another example of where an artist is interacting with their fans is the case where the Canadian producer and DJ *deadmau5* (Joel Zimmerman) discovers the vocal for his new song “*The veldt*” during a livestream. Zimmerman had live streamed himself the day before while he was creating the song. Suddenly he came cross a singer named Chris James on twitter that had created his own rendition of the vocal for the song and put it up. The discovery was captured live on a live streaming session from his own website while he saw through twitter and was interacting with his fans (Deadmau5 discovers Chris James on twitter for The Veldt March 20 2012, 2014).

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<sup>6</sup> **Go viral;** *If a video, image, or story goes viral, it spreads quickly and widely on the Internet through social media and e-mail.*

- [www.collinsdictionary.com](http://www.collinsdictionary.com)

As the internet and social media became more and more integrated in the society and people’s daily life, spreading information fast among the public was suddenly very easy. With a rapid increase in use of social media, especially among the younger generation, monetizing the activity also became much easier. Record labels and publishers, as well as artists and audience took good advantage of the information they could gather from the social media. As like the common user of internet, the shareholders in the music industry also adapted the social media network and used it as a tool to distribute and promote their cases to the public.

### 2.3 Revenue streams; before and after

The digital transformation around the millennium had a huge impact on the music industry. Not only did it change the musical aspects of the industry, but also the business aspect including business models, marketing, copyrights and revenue streams. In this section I would like to talk a little about the revenue situation before and after the digital transformation.

For any artists, the revenue stream has always been important to keep the career going. The income of money is the lifeline for the artists in more than upholding the career, but also earn enough for a living. During the millennium change, the outcome of the digital interruption influenced the revenue streams that put the music industry in an economic crisis. As the value-added network changed (Wikström, DeFillippi, 2016, s. 16.) several new forms of revenue sources were introduced. For the artists, the main revenue sources were record sales. in addition to that there was some income drawn from collecting societies that licensed music for different use. This could be licenses like synchronization rights or mechanical rights. During the digitalization, this got a sudden turn and changed the value-added network and then also the revenue sources for the artist. Tschmuck explains the fundamental changes in the different sectors of the new value-added network (Figure 1.3), that I briefly will go through in this paragraph.

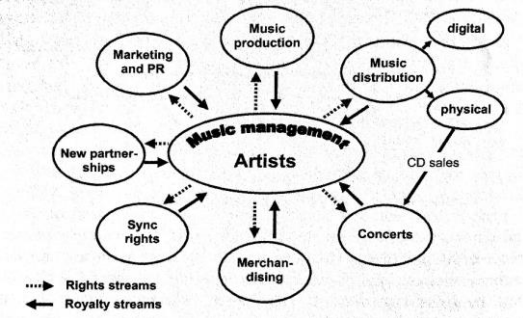


Figure 1.3 The new value-added network

As a result of the digitalization, new methods were used to collect revenue and royalties. As mentioned earlier, crowdfunding became one solution for artists to act independently from intermediaries and labels. It may not be a full-fledged alternative to the funding of traditional album releases by record labels, but its benefits were that it involved and communicated with fans during the process. It also helped the artist to determine the scope of the fan base, that again could be monetized by the artists with the help of other business partners. The uncertainty in this type of financing is the amount per supporter chooses to contribute. There are some studies on this topic ending with the same kind of results (Wikström, DeFillippi, 2016, s. 17-18.). Only around half and less of the projects were successfully financed, and projects that are being supported by a backer had a higher average financial support than newcomer bands' projects, even if the backers only contributed smaller amounts. Few of the backers did donate higher sums, being the one that in the end enabled most of the projects. The crowdfunding method may be a good way for independent artists to gather money for their project, but it will never be as certain compared to having a deal with a record label. As digital distribution grew and slowly became the main source of music sales, content aggregators<sup>7</sup> such as The Orchard, Finetunes, Believe Digital and Rebeat (Wikström, DeFillippi, 2016, s. 18.) appeared that could channel their music out to music streaming and download portals services as Spotify, Google, iTunes and Amazon. A tracking software showed which portal the track was available on, and widgets<sup>8</sup> could be integrated into social media websites like Facebook to play a sample of the track (30 seconds). The tracking software also includes a clearance and overview of sold and showed tracks on the different platforms, in addition to expected payments. Since most of the music sales slowly began to take place in the digital domain, the control of music distribution and music production became very important for the independent artists. Since the start of the digitalization the synchronization rights has become a much more important revenue source, especially for the independent creators. The reason for this is that it allowed the music to e-connect with other media content as video games, music to film and commercials. An example of this is the gaming industry where big game developers hire independent composers to make music for their latest game. One game series that is well-known for using both licensed and commissioned music in their games is the GTA (Grand Theft Auto) series that are developed by Rockstar Games. The last game (GTA 5) that was released in 2013 had a track list with

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<sup>7</sup> **Content aggregator;** *A Content aggregator is an individual or an organization that gather web content from different online sources.*

<sup>8</sup> **Widget;** *A widget is an element of a graphical user interface (GUI) that displays information or provides a specific way for a user to interact with the operating system or an application.*

approximately 240 songs and around 200 artists among them Elton John, Muse, 2pac and Queen just to mention few of them. (Young, 2013, 03.10.). Collaboration between creators and business partners, both outside and inside the music industry became more normal. With record labels no longer having the monopoly on the production of a record, companies outside the industry started to take over the competence. These are big companies like Starbucks, Walmart and Apple to mention some of them. These new kind business partners can be a good revenue source for the artists and good advertising for the company, but it seems that a partnership with a company outside the music industry do the best if the artists can provide added value (Wikström, DeFillippi, 2016, s. 18.). i.e. Since digital download of music have become so popular, devices that grant that opportunity to download, store and play music has become very popular. For Apple as one of the world's leading tech companies this is gives them a great advantage in selling their products. Mac's, iPhones, iPad's and iPod's has that technology to do so making giving the artists and music an additional value both for the company and the artist. Drake and the deal he got with apple music in 2016 is a good example of an artist that is adding value to the deal. He's album "*Views*" was exclusively released through apple music, and apples Inc.'s own iTunes store, and sold over one million copies during the first five days of sale (Reisinger, 2016, 09.05.).

Even if advertising is not something new for the music industry, the digitalization made it relevant again. As Michael Jackson when he revolutionized music sponsoring back in 1983, the superstar Nicki Minaj also entered a collaboration with Pepsi that integrated her song "Moment for Life" in an advertising campaign (Hampp, 2012, 19.03.). This has also been done of other artists like Jessica Frech and Hyundai, and Ana Free with Volkswagen Beetle (Wikström, DeFillippi, 2016). One revenue sources that really have grown the last decade and become one of the most important ways for an artist to earn money is the live industry. From physical sales being the main source of income and the marketing tool for promoting the record, the digitalization has turn it completely over and put the live industry to be the most important source of income. The reason for it is as simple, as the physical sales went down and music being illegally distributed and downloaded through the internet, the artists and record labels began to notice a drop in music sales. The solution for this troubled development became touring and live concerts. Earlier until the 90s the live music industry only has been organized on a regional or local level, but with the entrance of the company SFX Entertainment the touring and concert business was revolutionized (Wikström, DeFillippi, 2016 s. 20).

*SFX Entertainment acquired a huge number of concert promoters and touring businesses in the U.S. This included some of the most important as Contemporary Productions, Bill grahams Presents, Concert/Southern Promotions and Pace Entertainment. SFX Entertainment was then sold to the radio broadcasting company Clear Channel Communications for \$4.4 billion in 2000, but was later spun off in 2005 to form Live Nation. In 2009, Live nation was the largest concert promoter, the same year they merged with the largest concert promoter Ticketmaster and formed Live Nation Entertainment. As Live Nation, Ticketmaster had also bought up one of the businesses largest concert promoters Front Line Entertainment. The merging of these two companies gave them global monopoly both on concert promotion and artists management businesses.*

In addition to Live Nation Entertainment there are some other participants like CTS Eventim and Anschutz Entertainment Group that have been a part of turning the live industry into a billion dollar industry. With such big companies in charge of the live music industry, the revenue share is also much higher than earlier. This making the concerts and touring a profitable business, especially for the superstars.

*Beyoncé's Formation tour that started in April 2016 and ended in October the same year earned her over \$250 million and sold over 2 million tickets through her 49 concert that she had across Europe and the US (Wadell, 2016, 14.10.)*

As mentioned earlier in this chapter the internet and social media has become one of the main platforms for artist to distribute and promote themselves. The social media along with user-generated content platforms can reach out to a mass audience in no time. Earlier this could only be done by traditional media and would take much longer time. Many famous artists have had their career started by posting a simple YouTube video. The video then went viral and got thousands of views in a short period time. Justin Bieber, Ed Sheeran and Carly Rae Jepsen are some of the artist that got so much attention through social media that a record label discovered them and offered a deal.

For Ed Sheeran using the social media was central for developing his career. As a teenager, Sheeran moved to London to become a musician. He played several shows on local



venues and started to open for bigger established acts like Noisettes, Nizlopi and Jay Sean. At the same time, he was working and releasing some albums. He's first real step up the ladder to be a superstar was when he was asked to join the rapper Example on his tour after he has seen a video Sheeran had uploaded through SB.TV. This made him an even larger online fan base and inspired him to make more songs. He then moved to Los Angeles the same year where he got in touch with Jamie Foxx that gave him the opportunity to play and record even more of his songs. In 2011 Sheeran recorded his last independent project No. 5 Collaborations Project featured with some grime (Genre) artists like Sway, Ghetts, JME, Delvin and Wiley. This album release hit the no.2 on the iTunes charts and sold over 7000 copies the first week. Some month after Sheeran was signed to Atlantic Records. After this his career just took off and he did several co-writing jobs with big artists such as One Direction and Taylor Swift. He also supported Swift on her 2013 Arena tour (Biography.com Editors, 2017, 08.05.).

Sheeran would have several successes after this among other things his release of the first studio album + (read as "plus") with the single "The A Team". He later released two more song of the same albums as singles with remarkable success (Haugh, 2011, 20.06.). He's contribution with the song "I see fire" in 2013 to the movie The Hobbit: Desolation of Smaug directed by Peter Jackson entered the UK Singles Charts at number 13 and reached number-one in New Zealand on its sixth week (Wikipedia, 2017, 06.05.).

Ed Sheeran started his whole career as a singer on local venues. He operated in a DIY (Do It Yourself) method that included doing all the marketing and promotion by himself without any help or backing from a record label. During this period he wrote and performed his own songs, and also uploaded them to the internet via social media networks. As the one of the few he was discovered and offered to be an opening act on a tour t for a bigger artist. For Sheeran, this was the start of he's career that later would make him an international superstar (Biography.com Editors, 2017, 08.05.).

## **2.4 DIY (Do It Yourself)**

In this digital age where everyone is connected, it is easy for new artists and producers to upload their work to the internet through social network and content aggregators and have it reach a vast audience. With the improvement of studio gear that are getting better and better for every year, an increase in home studio production has occurred over the last decade. The production of music is no longer limited to the big fancy studios with expensive gear and equipment Good

quality studio software as Logic Pro, Pro Tools and Fruity Loops has become cheaper and more available for the common person (Wikström, DeFillippi, 2016, s 96-99.). Since most of the pop music today is computer based programmed music, many newcomers chose to go this way to become a musician. You do not have to be able to play an instrument or read sheet music to begin with music production, but it is of course an advantage to have some basic music knowledge beforehand. With low expenses on gear many newcomers, especially young people get into music by getting into music production and programming. All that is needed to today is a pc or mac, studio monitors, studio software, soundcard and a microphone. This can all be bought for a price tag around 10 000 NOKs, around \$1100. Tutorials and webpages all over the internet pointed towards music production has made it easy for anyone to get into, and distribute music. With an easy access to the internet, distributing music can be simply done by uploading them to free online distribution services like Soundcloud and YouTube. Independent music distribution companies like Tunecore or Record Union can help you get it on Spotify or Apple Music. The artist is no longer only the artist, but also the producer and the creative mind behind the music. The music producer/DJ/remixer has in way become a new type of musician with the laptop as their main instrument. In contrast to earlier, you do not have to be able to play an instrument or read sheet music in advance since most of the composition happens on a computer through midi. Of course, being able to play an instrument give you an advantage during the process. Even if the music production part may seem the most exciting, the distribution part is equally important, or even more important. There is not an unknown case that musician is bad to handle money and business related stuff. That is why they have a manager that can take care of business related tasks. The one problem is that when you are a fresh artist in this business, you rarely have the money or to contacts to have your own manager. Therefore, you must do everything yourself, hence the word DIY or “do it yourself”.

One Norwegian artist that has become famous for using the DIY method is the musician and DJ/remixer Kygo (Kyrre Gørvell-Dahll).

*Kygo started his career by creating music in his home studio and posting it on Soundcloud and YouTube. He’s first hit “Firestone” that was released in 2014 gained international recognition and debuted on several charts worldwide. This song got several million hits and it led to him being contacted by Avicii, a Swedish musician and DJ of the same caliber as Kygo, and Chris Martin from Coldplay to do a remix of the song “Midnight” (Stokland, 2014, 18.04.)*

He, as many others has done before and after makes their computers at home, for then to distribute it through online streaming services like YouTube, Soundcloud or Spotify. It can be discussed that it is success has only been pure luck or good knowledge to the business, but what is certain is that Kygo did touch something in the world audience when he popularized the Tropical House<sup>9</sup> genre. The genre tropical house was originally intended as a joke by the Australian musician and record producer Thomas Jack (Nick, 2014, 19.05.), but instead the term gained popularity among the listeners and became genre known worldwide.

Like many other artist Kygo was recognized for his music and ended up landing a contract deal with a record label, more concrete Ultra Music, a partner to Sony Music Entertainment (Buerger, 2014, 24.10.). To land a record deal with a record label is considered the musicians dream only a handful are lucky to achieve. When landing a deal with a record company, the artists will get access to the network and the resources the label is possessing. All the managing work will be done by the label, this is things like distribution, marketing, revenues and contract deals. The main task for the artist will be to focus on the music and work towards the goal they have set with the record label, the goal is usually a part of the deal. These events are the most common way in a signing process, and seen in an artist eye also the easiest. There is no surprise that most musician are bad with handling money and take care of the business aspect around their career. Nevertheless, there exists exceptions. Some artists choose to manage their own career of several reason. The feeling of being in control, have more freedom and not be bound by a contract and express what they want through the music without being told to do.

One artist that has gained international recognition is the British-Portuguese singer/songwriter Ana Free. What's special with her is that she has built her whole career by herself through social media channels without being signed to a record label. This artist is a very good example of an artist that uses the social media for all it is worth (Wikström, DeFillippi, 2016, s 24.). Ana Free became YouTube phenomena in 2007 after posting a video of herself playing guitar and singing. The video was a hit and had been seen around 700 000 times in the end of that year. This gained her huge attention and she was offered several gigs and deals everything from being an opening act for Shakira, to being the musical ambassador in their campaign surrounding the new Volkswagen Beetle (Wikström, DeFillippi, 2016, s 24.).

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<sup>9</sup> **Tropical house;** *Tropical House is a sub-genre to deep house, which again is a sub-genre to House. It uses the acoustic elements from deep house and the synthesizers from dance music. Marimbas, horns and steel drums are part of the sound, and the beat is also taken down some bpm.*

She funded her debut album with crowdfunding via the website Pledge music (Koranteng, 2012, 14.02.), this was a campaign that lasted eight months. During her whole career, Free used social media, especially YouTube as her platform to convey and communicate with her followers in a way that they felt they knew her. She also used her dual nationality, especially her Portuguese heritage to build her international career. Her song “In my place” became a hit and topped the Portuguese charts for three months.

*"The Portuguese market is small, so if you make a splash, everyone notices. One way of starting a career here is to get attention online with the traditional media covering it." (Koranteng, 2012, 14.02.)*

- Ana Free

For Free to break through the small Portuguese market, this attracted other countries and an investor whose name remains unknown. This investor funded her first EP that was released in 2010 and sold out gigs in New York and Miami. She highlighted these events on her YouTube page and not so long after she got the offer to be the opening act for Shakira at Pavilhao in Atlantico November 2010. This was just the start of a series of big gigs around the world she would play during her career. Some of them would be at festivals with headliners as Linkin Park, Metallica, Lenny Kravitz and Maroon 5. Even after Free gained an international career, she still would use social media as her medium to communicate with her fans. In a quote, she declared that she like to be a part of the decision around her own career. She also stated that she was waiting for the right partnership to come along, but until then, she could make a living by herself and that was good enough for now (Koranteng, 2012, 14.02.).

*"It is unusual for an act to develop when their only marketing platform is YouTube. But that is what she did - through YouTube, social media and her fans. It shows YouTube can translate into a real live audience." (Koranteng, 2012, 14.02.)*

- Will Blake, promoter at London-based SJM Concerts

### 2.4.1 Better or worse

With a rapid increase in home-based studios, there is natural that an increase in distributed music will occur. Nearly all project studios today are connected to the internet and communication happens through different online services. As one result of the technological and digital development, an explosion in different websites and forums related to music production started to appear around the web. With a large number of websites dedicated to music production, a community based on music creation arose. Websites like GearsLutz, Waves, Slate Digital, Pro Audio Files along with social media are just some of the websites that are giving tips or advices to how become a better producer/musician/remixer/DJ. With an increasing number in home-studios, you may ask if the difficulty of having the change to breakthrough has been even harder. A follow up question that can also be ok to have in mind is; have the quality of the music also gone down since there is no quality assurance that checks the music that are being distributed from the project studio is up to the industry standard. According to Watson (Wikström, DeFillippi, 2013, s. 98) there should be no worries around the quality the project studio delivers, or what he calls them "*Bedroom producers*". As mentioned, there is a huge amount of content surrounding recording, mixing and mastering spread around on the web. There are even written books in how to do a home studio production. Furthermore, the studio software technology (Pro Tools, Logic) has become standard in both professional and home studios. Even if the number of home studios has increased, the stakes remain the same between the competition artists and producers. A study done in Trondheim by Spilker. (2012) with focus on home-studio production versus a professional music studio was conducted. In this study Spilker interviewed around 22 (Spilker, 2012, s. 775) musicians and producers, amateur and professionals, and asked them about their view on the home-studio development. What he finds out during the interview process is that the majority of the interviewees considers the professional records studio as the way to go to record an album. Most of the interview-objects justifies it with telling that much of the reason lies in the environment. A professional sound studio has rooms to record in, treated room for mixing and recording, a lot of expensive gear and equipment and people at the disposal with a lot of experience both in sound engineering and distribution and marketing. None of these are disposal in a home studio, unless you have a lot of knowledge in music production from before. Regardless, there is still a limit to what can be done in a project studio. Nevertheless, the home studio has proven over the last decade that good quality music can be made in the bedroom. Anyway, Spilker's study concluded with that the participants in the study had rather chosen a professional sound studio to record

an album than a home-based studio if they had the choice. Nevertheless, many of the participants point out that the home studio is a great tool to make a pre-production and demos in preparation for a session.

As it was before the home studio was commonly done, the best would generally stand out. The digitalization may have leveled out the possibility to be discovered a little easier. The challenge for the audience in this is that there has become so much new music to choose in, that the outcome may be that people stay with the genre and music they already know. *The paradox of choice* (Barry Schwartz, 2004), too much different music that the listener doesn't get satisfied and rather chooses something that he or she are comfortable with. Spotify has come up with a possible solution with this dilemma in mind, it was presented the autumn 2016 and it is called a *curated playlist*.

*The curated playlist Spotify presented is built around an algorithm made to read the information about the music the user listens to, and find similar music for to then present it to the user. For example, if the user just listens to one kind of sound or genre, the playlist will only present music representing that sound or genre. If the user on the other hand change, or have a more varied music style the algorithm will make a playlist mixed with the different genres and sound the user had listened during the last weeks. (McIntyre, 2016, 27.09.).*

With a playlist with suggestion of songs tailored to the listener's music taste, the listener is saved the time to go and search for new music.

### **3. Methodology**

This chapter will present my choice in methodology for this thesis. When working on a research-based thesis, it is important to choose the right methodology to illuminate the issues. Since there has not been conducted much research of the A&R field in the music industry, a qualitative method was the most natural choice, since this method goes in the depth and emphasizes the interpretation and analysis of the research field. To substantiate this thesis, an empirical approach to gather data is considered the most sustainable solution. Within research-based area, qualitative and quantitative methods are considered the most central methods.

The goal is not to generalize or measure the condition between the A&R and the music business like in the quantitative method, but rather get a deeper understanding of the field through interpretation and analysis of the data that are being gathered through the interviews.

#### **3.1 A qualitative approach**

A qualitative method is being used with a goal to give the researcher a deeper understanding of the fields of research. Qualitative method seeks to get qualitative data from the interview objects that are based in experience, point of view and self-understanding (Thagaard, 2013, s. 13.) Some of what characterizes the qualitative method is a diversity in data and analytical methods. Thagaard (2013) divide the qualitative approaches into four categories;

- Observation
- Interview
- Analysis of text (documents) and visual forms of expression (pictures)
- Analysis of audio and video recordings

As for this thesis, the research design of choice has been interview and analysis of audio recording. The process has been to interview different persons with different background and positions related to the music industry and the a&r profession. These interview objects are very different, both in age and experience. These four interviewees can be divided into three different position related to the a&r, but in an empirical point of view, they were are able to answer the question in a way that will brought new valuable data to the research.

### **3.1.2 Qualitative methods**

There are several ways to collect qualitative data, such as interview, documents, observation, picture and analysis. In this case, interview is the best method since it is all about gathering data based on people experience and point of view on the subject.

#### ***Interview***

An interview is suitable for giving the researcher clear information of the interview subjects understanding, point of view, feelings, thought and experiences. An interview is conducted as a verbal interaction between two or more, and aims to get a rich and comprehensive information on the topics in the interview. During the interview, the interviewees are allowed to speak freely around the predetermined topics set by the interviewer, and can come with further digressions that opens for new information that can be useful to the research. It can sometime be wise to keep the numbers of interviews down to a smaller number. This is among other things to avoid spending too much the time conducting and transcribing the interviews, getting too much similar data of the same topic (quality before quantity), and narrow down to the informants that you think will provide with the most useful data.

#### ***Depth interview***

Depth interview has its purpose to create a situation with the possibility for free speech, a conversation that circles around some predetermined question set by the interviewer. Depth interviews also allows digressions from the interview subject that can lead to topics or information that the interviewer not has foreseen or been thinking of in advance. This can be data that can be relevant or important to the research. A depth interview uses “open question” that allows the interviewees to go even more in the depth of the subject.

Even if there is a free conversation that is being conducted, the interviewer should be aware of not getting sidetracked by the digression from the interviewees. This can in some situations lead to the interviewer getting too much unnecessary data if recording, and make it hard to find the useful information during the audio analysis process.

#### ***Audio recording***

As a main rule, an audio recording of the interview is good to have for when starting to analyze the interview. The use of an audio recording gives the researcher a certainty that what is being said, and therefore gives the researcher the possibility to keep a good flow in the conversation and being more focused on the person who is talking. It also gives room for the researcher to



ask for elaboration if needed. Even if most interview subject is ok with being recorded during an interview, not all are willing to be recorded while talking. The cons with recording an interview is that the interview object sometimes can limit themselves when they know that they are being recorded. Even if the conversation is of free speech. It can be that the interview subject feels that they can speak more confidential to the researcher when they know that they're not being recorded. At the other hand, confidence can be so well established that the interviewees speak about something they in retrospect don't want to be documented. It is important to ask the interview object in advance of the interview if there is ok that you record the conversation. Information that how, where and when the interviews are going to be used, and sometimes deleted are essential to mention. This can be decisive for some interview object that they will let you interview them (Tjora, 2012, s. 137-140.).

An audio recording of interviews gives the researcher the possibility to take more part in the interview knowing that the data are being accessible after the conversation is over. A recording make sure no data is getting lost since the interviewer do not have to write down every detail. The researcher then sits on detailed valuable data that he or she may not have had if they had not recorded.

Recording an interview is a good medium to store valuable data as otherwise could have been overlooked or lost during an interview. A downside of recording an interview is to take for granted that the sound is good no matter what devices that are being used. Briefly explained, not using the right gear and be aware of the surrounding in advance of the interview. Since the undersigned's background lies in music production and recording techniques, I have learnt the value in a good recording device, placement and room. A recording of an interview can be more useless, than of use if the audio quality or recording has been conducted poorly. This can be a problem when starting the transcribing process since much of what being said can be unclear and difficult to hear. This can result in loss of valuable data even if the interview has been recorded.

### ***Transcribing***

Tjora (2012) recommend transcribing the recording of the interview following the interview, but also recommend considering the usefulness in that concrete situation. The problem with this strategy is that you may not know what the most important topics is when starting. Tjora concludes with that it is smart to be a little more detailed than what you think is necessarily. There will be some information that will get lost in transcription this referred by (Tjora, 2012, s. 145.) as visual cues and information surround the atmosphere. The exception is if the

interview object is transcribing themselves and follows the research, or if the researcher is the only one using the transcription. People related to the interview will benefit more of the transcription than people that is not related because they can remember the situation and the events surrounding it. There is a greater change in loss of information in interview analyzed by people that have not been a part of the interview process.

As a researcher one must be aware that in the transcribing process the researcher places them self in a situation that can affect the interpretation, that can further affect the validity of the interview. This requires good understanding of interpretation from the researcher.

### ***Interview by mail***

Time and distance can be two factors that can be challenging to be able to conduct an interview. If the topic of research is very narrow, the interview objects can be very hard to find and even harder to contact. With a narrow theme, the research may have to find interviewees from all over the world. There is some pro and cons with conducting an interview through mail.

You can encounter situations where you are unsure if the person you are contacting are interested, or still active in the field. If you manage to get in contact, the number of respondents (If there is a huge number) can be overwhelming making It hard to separate the useful information.

The pros of conducting an interview through mail is that the informant (if the informant is very engaged in the subject) can answer very complementary. This is the case for this thesis and the interview of Julie Sandberg (a&r manager in Sony). Another benefit using mail is that the researcher don't spend time transcribing (Tjora, 2012, s. 142-143.).

### **3.1.3 Ethical challenges in interview**

The interview method brings some ethical challenges to the table. Respect towards the interview object is crucial, this means not leading the person that are being interviewed to speak out about something that her or she will regret later. Tahagaard (2013) mention that good contact may seem seductive in a way that the interviewee is being lead to be more open and speak more than he or she really want. Further she mentions that to being to open can later lead to problems for the interview object. The ethical question in a situation like this is how the researcher intend to manage their responsibility to secure the interview objects autonomy and integrity. This is based on confidence that exist between the researcher and the interviewer. The

confidence can also increase during the interview. During an interview, the interview object may send conflicting message. This can be body language or cadences that does not match the message the person is telling. If the researcher is provoking a opposite meaning between the verbal and non-verbal message, this also can cause problems for the interview object. It is not ethical that the researcher is provoking the persons understanding, neither is a confrontation of the interviewer's interpretation of the situation.

*“The principle that the interview object should not take damage of participate in the research should be leading in how close the researcher can be in an interview situation” (Thagaard, 2013, s. 120.).*

### **3.1.4 Excluded methods**

The topic of this thesis has much to say in the choice of methods that are going to be used to validate it. In order to pick out the methods that suits this thesis in a most favorable way, some choices had to be made along the way. Not all methods are suitable for the research that are being conducted, and will in some cases be unusable. In most empirical studies, it is divided between qualitative and quantitative methods. In difference from qualitative methods, quantitative methods focus on numbers and statistics in its quest to get an overview and an explanation. This thesis on the other hand uses the qualitative method and focuses to get an understanding of what is being researched. In this case, it is the change in the A&R profession through the digitalization. To gather data certain methods had to be used, in this thesis interview and analysis of audio recording was the two methods that was emphasized to find and gather information. When choosing these methods, some methods (*observation and analysis of text or visual forms of expression*) had to be omitted. Reason for this is that they didn't fit in the research design this thesis working out of.

## 3.2 Reliability and validity

*“Reliability can be linked to the question of whether a critical assessment of the project gives the impression that the research has been conducted reliably and trustworthy way”. (Thagaard, 2013, s. 201.).*

Reliability puts much emphasis on credibility linked to the research. Will the research be sustainable over time, across different methods and other research. Has the researcher been consistent during the implementation of the research method. i.e. If another researcher should conduct the same project based on the same premises and methods, would her or she get the same results.

To strengthen the reliability, the data that have been used must be clarified. For example, by how and where the information has been obtained. Transparency (Tjora, 2012) as a quality indicator can be used to show how the research has been conducted, problems during the research, theories that have been used, determination around choices etc. Making the research process transparent is one way to strengthen the reliability making it easier to make a constructive evaluation of the project.

i.e. during the transcription process, some choices had to be made that effected the reliability of the interviews. When working on the transcription the undersigned (Storstadmo) became a part of the interpretation and will then in some degree influence the reliability on the text. Changes in Quotes and onomatopoeia was done to make the text more esthetical and academic prominent. The reliability of the results must be evaluated assuming this.

*“Validity is related to the interpretation of data. Validity is about the validity of the interpretations the researcher finds” (Thagaard, 2013, s. 201.).*

Validity questions the interpretations of the research that are being found and checks if it is reliable in relation to what where actually studying.

During the study of this thesis some changes in the form of new information has occurred along the way and affected the interpretation of the text. The new information that have been brought to the table by the interviews has strengthening the validity, because the theory behind the main issue of this thesis has been strengthened.

### 3.2.1 Hability

The undersigned (Storstadmo) of this thesis has as mentioned in the introduction has been active in the music field for some years. The previous years has been mainly focused on music studies where music production and music business has been the main topics. Parallel to the studies the candidate has been working as a freelancer, both in performing and studio related productions. Most of the jobs has been private arrangements, but there have been some major gigs at festivals or theater productions between the smaller gigs. Storstadmo has been active within the music performance field from a very young age reaching back to grade school. Back then he was performing with his younger brother that later would become the reason for Storstadmo's interest in A&R and artist development. Back in 2009, the undersigned's younger brother participated in the popular TV-show "*Norske talenter*" (Norwegian got talents) and reached the finals in that year's competition. This incident ignited an interest in talent development within the music fields that would eventually result in this thesis.

During the Storsadmo's study period, he has been an active participant in music related events. As mentioned previously, the topics has mostly been around music performing and music production. Nevertheless, there still has been some cases where the candidate has been a part of a jury in a local talent look-alike show called *UKM*, in English, the *Cultural Youth Event*. This is an event where teens in the age between 10 and 20 years old can participate with various performances like singing, band, theater or art exhibition. In this jury, the single task was to pick out a few participants to excel further to the county event, the next level of the competition that would eventually end as the UKM national finals

In addition, the last couple of years Storstadmo has been working as a manager for an artist that also did participate in Norwegian got talent back in 2015. The artists didn't move on in the competition, but the performance got screen time that resulted in many new fans, both nationally and internationally, this much thank to social media as Facebook and YouTube. The last couple of years Storstadmo has been working in the studio with the act and tried to build up a profile around the artists, this has been mostly done through social media, live concerts and promotion of the new album.

Even if the undersigned has been active within the music field long before the start of this study, he has had no specific knowledge regarding the A&R field. Nevertheless, the undersigned have gained some insight in talent scouting and artist development through his

work as a jury and manager. This may have had some minor impact on the reliability surrounding the theory, but after the interpretation of the interview phase it strengthened the validity and validated the theory.

To have any relation to the field of study can be very expedient and gives the researcher a good basis to understand and interpret the field. On the other hand, it can act against its purpose if the researcher overlook the difference between new data and own experience. As Thagaard (2013) mention, having knowledge to the field of research can be beneficial, but also a limitation. It is not taken for granted that a position in the field of study increases the validity. The important thing is that the researcher presents his or her point of view so that the reader can evaluate the interpretation of the basis of that. It is the readers job to evaluate the validity surrounding how the researcher's interpretation has affected the results (Thagaard, 2013, s. 206-207.).

### **3.3 Interview objects**

Before the interview the candidate had some knowledge of the interview objects in advance, like position in the music industry, background and their previous work. All interview objects were especially chosen because their position and background in the music industry. They were based on role and position related to the A&R profession.

*Peter Jenner as a manager with lifelong experience of the business from before and after the digitalization. Askil Holm as a professional well establish musician and A&R in the music business today, and last David Atoradiyan as a newly signed artist to a major label.*

All four were chosen because they could provide with data related to the A&R through different angles. The angles are; past to present (Jenner), inside the industry today (Holm & Sandberg), and the impression from a newly singed (Atoradiyan). This choice in interview objects has very much affected the outcome of the reliability, but again the interviews did strengthen the validity of the theory.

### 3.3.1 Peter Jenner

Peter Jenner is a British manager starting his career back in the 60s where he first started managing Pink Floyd when they still were unknown. Throughout his career, Jenner would manage several big acts like The Clash, T-Rex and Billy Bragg just to mention some of them. Jenner has been active in the music industry for several decades and in addition to manage his clients, he has also had different positions in various associations like chairman of IMMF (International Music Manager's Forum), director of the UK MMF (Music Manager's Forum) and council member of AURA (Association of United Recording Artists). Jenner also runs his own company sincere management that he started back in the 1980 where he management most of his artists. The later years Jenner has been an active commentator in the aftermath of the digital disruption that heavily affected the music industry where copyright infringement and blanket licensing has been a central topic.

### 3.3.2 Askil Holm

Askil Holm is a Norwegian artist and musician originally from Namsos in Nord-Trøndelag. Holm is working as a professional musician and teacher for the songwriting class at UiA (University of Agder). Throughout his career he has been playing in several bands, some of them are Attack and Deadweight, but there was his solo career that earned him a contract with Universal after his song "*The Boy with The Boomerang*" was named the best song of the year at by:Larm in 2002. During his career, Holm has cooperated with several big acts and won the Norwegian "Spelemannsprisen" in 2006 together with Kurt Nilsen, Espen Lind and Alejandro Fuentes for their cover of the song "*Hallelujah*" by Leonard Cohen. His solo career has also nurtured some songs that had received good recognition. As mentioned the song "The Boy with the boomerang" and the song "*Daydream Receiver*" from his debut album with the same name. In addition to his artist career, Holm is also working as an a&r giving musical and business related advice to upcoming acts. One of them was among others the Norwegian pop artists *Ida Jenshus* that won the talent competition on radio NRK1 back in 2007.

### **3.3.3 David Atoradiyan**

David Atoradiyan is a part of a Norwegian music producer duo called *TRXD* that are stationed in Kristiansand Norway. They operate in the genre pop, EDM, electronica and was first recognized by billboard and then recommended for their remix of Adele's song "Hello" back in 2015. Atoradiyan started with music in a grown up age, but he achieved good results in a short period of time. His interest in music got him in to the music conservatory at UiA in Kristiansand where he met Truls Dyrstad that later would be he's partner in TRXD. The duo started to make music together and after some month they got signed by Warner music in 2016 after contacting them. Their first single "*Wherever You Go (feat. Hilde)*" sold to double platina and was listed on VG-lista for over seven weeks.

### **3.3.4 Julie Sandberg**

Julie Sandberg works as a A&R manager at Sony music Norway. As for today, Sony music Norway has signed artists like Kygo, Marcus & Martinus and Katastrofe. On an international level the record label has artists like Beoncé, Bruce Springsteen and One Direction just to mention a few.



## **4. Analysis & results**

In this chapter I will present and describe the analysis and the results of my findings. Since most of the literature that forms the basis of this theory is focused mostly around the digitalization of the music industry, the interviews became a very important factor to verify and validate this research.

Before starting the interview process, I had a clear idea of who I would interview to get the clearest answers to my research question. To get a clear overview over the a&r's position in the music business, I had decided that I had to go for more than one approach to the topic. What I decided was that I went for two approaches, one from the artists point of view (Atoradiyan and Holm), and the a&r and managers (Sandberg and Jenner) point of view. This is where the choice of interview object became important. To get two approaches with both sides having knowledge to the work of an a&r, the findings I would come across would help me avoid becoming single-minded and help me not to see the situation from one angle only. In addition these interview object also belongs to different generation that is very important factor in validating the theory and research.

I will throughout this chapter clarify the theory up against the findings I have received from the interviews. Further I will through this chapter explain, discuss and compare the findings with each other.

### **4.1 Analysis Process**

As mention in the previous section, I have chosen to have two approaches to the subject that will answer the research question. One from the artist point of view, and one from the A&R's point of view.

The first step in the analyze process was to sort out what was important and relevant information regarding the main research question. The interviewees came with a lot of digressions during the interviews that had very much good useful information. The challenges during this process was to pick out the most relevant data to answer the research question. Because of the lack of time, not all interviews were transcribed but rather heard through while taking notes of the most important information. In the rest of the analysis process, time went

on to sort out the data and place them in an order that felt most naturally in relation to the text. The challenges in this chapter was to decide which order the data should be placed to best present the results. The solution was that I chose to put it in an “*out in, in out*” order. More accurate, the data I have found will be presented in a specific order starting with the results, then the point of views from the artists, followed by the point of views of the a&r and managers. And finally, analysis of the findings from both sides.

## **4.2 Results**

After the interviews and analysis has been conducted, many of the pieces from the puzzle started to fall in to place. The results that came from the interviews did not come as surprising, but they were very much confirmative to the theory. There where nevertheless some new information that was discovered during the interviews of the artists that not had been considered in advance. These will be presented in this next section. One thing that was noticeable through all the interviews was that both parts were very positive to the job the a&r is doing in the music industry.

In this next section I will present the results of the findings. First the artist, and then the a&r and manger. Thereafter I will present my findings and compare them with each other.

### **4.2.1 Holm & Atoradiyan**

While conducting the interviews of Holm and Atoradiyan, they both emphasized and pointed out the importance of the a&r profession in the industry. Their opinions surrounding the a&r were very much linked to their own experience and careers. They were both positive to the job that are being conducted by an a&r, and the knowledge and the network they can provide an artist with. It is important to mention that these to interview objects has very different background in music, and years of experience in the music industry.

In 2001 Askil Holm started working with a record label called Rec 90 that were stationed in Bergen. He’s contact was an a&r called Torfinn Andersen that also were the director of the record label. He helped Holm in the early process by advising in the studio regarding mixing,

and helped him picking out his first hit single “*The boy with the boomerang*”. For Holm being in Bergen was because the limited a&r activity in Trøndelag at that time.

*“A&R back then was probably in a way the Norwegian record companies weak spot because the Norwegian companies were good at distributing foreign music in Norway, and then they got a little money to be a Norwegian department. There are probably many opinions about it, but the a&r role was probably not that developed in Norway at that time.*

*Today the reality is different, the a&r role from 2002 to 2017 is much more professionalized and lies more with the majors because they work more with singles and therefore the a&r must be more active together with the music producers”.*

- Askil Holm, 2017

As Holm mentions in the last part, in the later years become more focus on singles before albums. TRXD and Atoradiyan is a very good example of this. As Holm mentions that the a&r mostly lies within the big record labels, have a lot to do with the backing a major company can provide for the artist unlike an indie company. Another thing Holm mentions where he uses himself as an example, is that he himself also works as an a&r in his own label. As an a&r, he works independent with advising and helping artist in their early period of their career until there are ready to be signed to a bigger label. One of the artist he has been a&r for is the pop artists Ida Jenshus that gained popularity after winning a talent show on radio P1 back in 2007.

Askil Holm began his career in the early 2000 during the digital disruption, but before the digitalization had gained a real foothold in the music industry. The way Holm worked his way through the industry is in some way what we can call “The old fashion way” where the a&r was a little more involved in the creation of music in the studio. This is somewhat a little different from how TRXD and Atoradiyan works with their label. One important factor to mention is that Holm also started he’s career when the a&r position in Norway was very small.

In contrast to the other interview objects, Atoradiyan is the one with least experience and shortest time in the music industry. However, this does not make his opinions less important or valuable. TRXD, the duo Atoradiyan is a part of very much represent the generation and music after the digital development. As an artist with the access to the tool to make good music regardless of being in a studio, they are a perfect example of the DIY (do it yourself) method

that has become more common the last decade. As a part of the new generation of music creators and internet consumers, the duo used internet as a medium to go gain recognition. The interesting part is the process around TRXD and how they came in contact with Warner music, and their working relationship with them. As users of the DIY method, TRXD does the music production and creation process themselves in their own studio, saving them a lot of money in studio rent. The first song they released was a remix of Adele's "Hello" that gave them so much feedback that they eventually were recommended by Billboard.

*"If you get recommended abroad, suddenly people are interested, especially in here in Norway "*

*- David Atoradiyan, 2017, translated from Norwegian*

As mentioned previously, the duo is of the new generation of music creators that uses the internet for communication. When they contacted Warner, their manager then sent in a couple of songs and a presentation of duo through mail and a dropbox link. Throughout the interview, Atoradiyan stated that this is the method there are using when presenting new song material for their a&r. This is very different from before when the a&r person came in to the studio and listened to the songs. This method is very effective since it gives the artists much more time to work on the song material without having to think about the studio rent. The artists also have more time to present more than one song idea due to the longer time perspective they have. The downside of having more time to experiment is that the artist or producer can come up with several songs, but in the end the a&r won't approve them. Then time used to create this song or ideas is of no use since the songs will not be used.

*"We make something, but he (A&R) must also like in order to be released. We had a period that we wanted to experiment with 80s music, the eighties vibe but he didn't like it so it stopped there. We made ideas and showed, didn't go through. We made instrumentals, showed but didn't go through, this was until we made something we knew he'd liked, and he liked it".*

*- David Atoradiyan, 2017, translated from Norwegian*

For the a&r, this development gives the a&r more songs to choose from. This may also open for several new ideas or concepts. The downside is that the face to face communication is not present. Meaning that even if the artists explains what their ideas and intension of the song is in the message, the main points may not come clearly through. Not being able to discuss the song face to face can result in the song not being used. The a&r in this process in a way quality assures the songs.

However, if a song is approved by the a&r, having a record label backing them is a huge benefit. Having a record label in the back can provide them with some of the best mastering engineers and album art creators which is available without any cost since it is in the contract that the label handle such costs. Being signed by a big label has both positive and negative sides. In TRXD's case they are in a way free to make whatever they want, but it must be approved by the a&r. This can be a good, and a bad thing as if the a&r likes it. However, if it gets approved there is almost unlimited possibilities for the song.

A main difference between Holm and Atoradiyan in this case is that they clearly belong to two different generations of the music industry. One artist focuses more towards the old fashion way, and one artist that works through home based system, internet and digital communication. The results of the interview show two artists in a close relationship with an a&r, but with different approaches and experience based on the difference in generations. There are some factors that has influence on the results, it is for example that Holm has been active in the music industry for a longer time, and that he also works partly as an a&r himself.

#### **4.2.2 Jenner & Sandberg**

The main reason for interviewing Jenner and Sandberg was to confirm much of the data that I have used in the theory. They also have a broader insight on some things in the music industry that the artists may not have. They both were very positive to the a&r and could provide with valuable information surround the a&r field, both before and after the digitalization. Two aspects that was mention in both interviews was adaptability and renewability. The importance for a&r to be able to think new, and being able to adapt to the changing surroundings.

*“As long as the a&r role (i.e. those who holds it) is adaptable and willing to accept an industry in constant change (now more than ever because of the digitalization), in the end I think the role still will be relevant”.*

- Julie Sandberg, 2017, translated from Norwegian

The interesting thing between these two interviews is that they confirm each other in some important aspect regarding the a&r. Jenner talks about that there will always be a future for the a&r if they are able to anticipate the market, and putting the money behind the right artist.

*“There will always be a future for the A&R, the person who can find and anticipate the market, the person who can, you know, get the resources behind the right artists”.*

- Peter Jenner, 2017

Sandberg conforms this in her interview by referring to the internet as the new medium to find and discover new artist and music. With the internet, it has become easier for the a&r to monetize and look in to the activity around the artist on the internet, especially on their social media platforms. This method and the use of internet may have made it easier for the a&r to maybe anticipate hit artist or hit song.

As simple as it looks, it also has made it harder on another field. Sandberg gives an example;

*“The digitalization has made the world small, you can find everyone from everywhere in the world. There are suddenly no limits anymore. It has also almost made it free to distribute music, and especially make music. One has suddenly international competition, and not only the labels here in Norway”.*

- Julie Sandberg, 2017, translated from Norwegian

As one result of the digitalization the world has become smaller, but the competition has become harder since there has become possible for labels and artist to communicate between the borders, and not only limited to a local area. Sandberg also mention in the interview, that all songs that are being recommended or sent in to the label must be quality assured.

*“If we sign producers, we quality assures them through professional mix and mastering engineers”.*

- Julie Sandberg, 2017, translated from Norwegian

This correspond with what Atoradiyan spoke about having their song approved by the a&r to have it released.

In the interview, Jenner he spoke of the A&R as the one that got hits, the one that got the potential out of the artist. Holm in his early career mentioned that his a&r in Rec 90 Torfinn Andersen did the same thing for his first hit single. Listened to different song to pin point out the one song that would be the hit.

### **4.3 Findings**

A common confirmation among all the interviewees was that they all consider the a&r position in the music industry as very important and necessary. There was also a common understanding that the a&r profession is a position in the music industry that is changing along the digitalization and therefore must adapt in order to survive. When it came to the question surrounding the digitalization and its relation to the a&r person, Jenner and especially Sandberg had more opinions surround this topic. This is not surprising considering Jenner has been in the music industry for several decades, and Sandberg currently working as an a&r manager for Sony music. Throughout the interview of Sandberg, much of the working method the a&r had adapted after the digitalization as described of Sandberg, correspond with the way Atoradiyan has experienced the a&r. This is things like communication between the a&r and the artist, and the use of internet and social media platforms. This is not surprising since the a&r profession has adapted to the new methods that are being used of Atoradiyan and the new generation musicians.

When it came to Holm and Jenner, their experience and relationship to the a&r resembled each other. This has much to do with they both have been active in the music industry for a long time, and they both have been working with a&r's in both small and big companies, and before and after the digitalization. They both have also been working as a&r themselves guiding and advising new artists. In the interview with Holm he stated that working with new

artists is something he'd like to do. As an independent, he said it was important to agree with the artist in the early stages that he could be there and work with them until a certain level. After that a bigger label should take over. As independent a&r, holm was very clear on how far he could get the artist until a bigger label had to take over.



## 5. Discussion

In this chapter I will discuss the changed of the a&r profession up against the theory in order to address the research question. Just as the questions is set up, I will in the same order approach them as they are set up.

*In which ways has the digitalization changed the A&R profession?*

Looking at the changes the digital paradigm has brought to the music industry in terms of change in economic, communication, equipment and musical influence, it is clear that there has been some changes that has affected the a&r profession. On the other hand, the job of finding and signing artists is still the same, but due to the circumstances around the job, the changes have come in the way the a&r is operating within the industry. Looking at the results from the interviews these changes clearly shines thorough. As seen, the internet has become one of the most important tools for the a&r person to find new music and artists. This clearly comes through in the interview with Sandberg. Using it for communication, monetizing and marketing, internet as a tool replaced many of the old ways the a&r operated. Real-time data is important and the a&r must be updated at all times since things can change very fast online. Communication between the a&r and the artist has also become much easier and faster since everything is happening digitally. With the heavy use of internet in the daily workflow, it gives the impression that the a&r is almost dependent of using it to get the work done. The new generation of artist that does everything themselves (DIY) has also made things easier for the a&r. Having singed artist and producers that does everything themselves saves the record label for booking and studio time. It also saves the a&r the time to go into the studio and listen to the song since they just can send it through mail to get feedback. This opens for the a&r to be present on several projects or places since they not are obligated to be present all the time. A result of the digitalization has made the a&r more mobile and given them much more overview of the music industry and things that happens in real-time. The a&r role has also become stronger and more important to the labels since the competition has increased among the participants. A good a&r must have the ability to adapt to the surroundings as fast as possible, the ones that is not able will fall through and be out of the game.

On the other side, one might ask, has the digitalization made the a&r lazy in terms of researching new artists. Sandberg mention that if she heard about a band and didn't find them on social media or internet, she became a little irritated since it has been taken for granted that

it should be easy to find everything today. By not finding what there are searching for when scouting the social media, the artist or band will suddenly become uninteresting since it is also taken a little for granted that artist that are serious should have an internet page where people who are interest could go to find them.

The digitalization has changes the a&r in the way they operate within the music industry, but their core job has remained the same. The a&r is still responsible for signing and finding new artist for the record label, but their methods has changes making the job much faster, easier and cheaper for the label.

*Is A&R profession still relevant in the industry today?*

When speaking to all the interviewees they all were positive to the a&r role, they were also positive to the experience they have gained while working with them. To answer the question if the a&r role is still relevant, yes, it is very much relevant in music the industry today. Maybe even more than before. In a fast-growing industry with many new artist every day, the need for someone to scout out the best is very much needed.

The job the a&r department does in a record label is by some considered the life-line for the whole company. Bringing new artists and signing them is the thing that make the whole company go around. Without any artists, there will be no money, and with no money the company will go down. The a&r also functions as a safety net for the company helping them distinguishing the good artist from the bad and very good. i.e. the worst artist a record label can have is a good artist that almost always makes it. Then the label will keep pouring money into this artist, but the artists will never get somewhere. This is where the a&r comes in and draw the line. Getting rid of the good artists may be tough but if it is done in the right time it can save the label for a lot of money. Having an a&r in the label is a valuable resource since they tend to be the expert on their field by being able to pick out the hit song before it becomes a hit. Becoming an a&r is something everyone can become, you just have to have an interest in music, and have an opinion of what you consider are good music that may will become popular if heard by others. There is of course a big difference between a professional a&r, and someone that is just interested in music. An a&r for example must have good knowledge to the several genres, they must also have good knowledge to the music industry in terms of what might become popular or not. Finally, they must try to be objective in their searching, not letting their personal taste get too much in the way of their professionalism. The last thing is that having an a&r person

on board is a very valuable resource for the artist as well. As mention in the introduction, the a&r person is the bridge between the artist and the label, speaking on behalf for both sides with interest. The a&r in a record label is the person that the artists has to relate to and the person the artists is working with.

Finding so many good points around the relevance of the a&r profession today made it hard to find any reason to say that the a&r role is not relevant. The result shows that the a&r has become more and more important the more time goes by. If there is anything that may indicate that the a&r role is irrelevant, it must be the rising knowledge and technical skills of the bedroom producers. These people gain their experience through the DIY method and they are getting better and better to pin point out what is going to be the next big hit. On the on side they are working independent without an a&r, but the work they do is the same as the a&r, so in a way they are doing the same job as an a&r minus the administrative connected to a label. Referring to the interview of Sandberg and Holm they both mention that artists can do well without having a record label in the back, but there will is always a person in the team behind the artist which will act as an a&r anyway. Sandberg concludes that the a&r is still relevant, but the profession may change function or name in the future depending on the development. As Wikström and DeFillippi describe in their books, the artist has moved to the center stage and become the most important person. Looking at the development around the a&r profession, you could say in a way that the a&r has moved along with the artist and also become more centered in the industry. This is reflected in the interviews with Sandberg and Holm where they clearly state that the a&r is key-person in an artist's career.

### *To which extent?*

From the results gathered from the interview there is clearly that the digitalization has had a major impact on the a&r profession. This is emphasized by Sandberg through her whole interview. Looking at the situation of the a&r before and after the digitalization, it is clearly that the digital disruption has affected the a&r to a great extent. I have chosen to list up the most relevant changes and explain point by point how to digitalization has affected them and to what extent.

- Position
- Working method

- Availability and communication

### ***Position***

Starting with the position, the a&r role has always been an important position in a record label. Just like before, the a&r persons job was to scout and sign rising acts that could generate money to the record label. Back then, before the internet, this job meant to go out to concert, listen to demos, read magazines and reports from different concert. Since this was before the digital age, most of the work was conducted on a local area since the labels often could not afford to send or bring artist over larger distances. The exception is the major labels that could afford doing so. When the internet came, it opened the music industry and made more international than it has ever been before. With this the competition also became harder, forcing the a&r to always be on and ready to act. Being too slow can result in losing potential artist, then again can harm the company.

The digitalization has not changes the position of the a&r, but it has made it even more important in terms of competition and finding artist. This lead me in to the working methods of the a&r.

### ***Working methods***

As mentioned earlier in this thesis the working method before and after the digitalization has changed in line with the digital development. In the past, the work of an a&r person consisted of going to concerts, reading reports, listening to demos and speaking to people with knowledge regarding new acts. Today this has changed and the whole working method is being mostly conducted through internet and social media. The internet as describer in chapter two has become the new tool for the a&r person to overlook the music industry. With technological devices as smartphones, the a&r can be connected 24/7 through social media and mail. On one side this development is the right way to go for the profession in order to survive the changes, on the other hand it may make the a&r too lazy to make an effort to find potential acts if they're not available by a single search on the internet.

The digitalization has made the world smaller and it has been easier for everyone to connect from anywhere in the world. Since most of the communication and scouting happens in the digital domain, the extent of changes has been big since the working method has changed and the workplace of the a&r has become the internet.

### ***Accessibility and communication***

Easy access to music and communication has become a very important factor and a part of the working method of the a&r profession. Having the possibility to communicate over large distances has opened for several new things. If an a&r finds a new act, it has become very easy to contact them since most of the time contact information is available on the internet. This goes the other way around too, artists can also easy contact record labels to present their songs as TRXD did. The possibility for a&r and the artist to communicate through the web has been time timesaving and economical for both parts. Communication through internet has released both the artist and the a&r from not have to be present or in the same room while presenting or discussing song material.

The downside of this is that there can occur some misunderstandings in opinions if the communication just happens in form of text, therefore a method that may be more helpful and can prevent misunderstandings is video calls through Skype or Facebook. It can be conducted anywhere there is internet access and the part doesn't have to be present in the same room.

## 6. Conclusion

Through this paper, the goal was to get a better understanding of the A&R profession by looking at core task the a&r is doing in the music industry. Throughout this thesis, I have been looking in to some of the most important aspect regarding the a&r. This involves the position the a&r possesses, the working method, and accessibility and communication. To answer the question about the digitalization has affected the a&r in any way, the answer is a clear yes. Through this thesis it has been revealed that there is several factors that has played a part in the change.

As a result of the digitalization the a&r as similar to the artists has become more important. Due to the internet, the world has become smaller but the competition harder. The record labels are no longer limited to their local area since the internet has gained the access to the world. With an increase in competition, the a&r has become more important in terms of scouting and signing artists. Harder competition between the participants makes the job of the a&r crucial since it is the artists the a&r get signed that keeps the label running. As a result of this, the a&r also have gotten a bigger responsibility towards the label. Being second in the race of finding the next big act can results in a huge loss of money for the company, and in worst case ending bankrupt. To prevent this the a&r had to adapted to the changes in order to keep up with the changing industry. With most news being distributed through the internet, the new place for scouting new artists has become the internet and the social media. Instead of going to a concert and listen to the artists, it is the social media platform that has become the medium to check out their music. Monetizing the activity around potential artist has also become easier since the influx of intern, this is much because things on the inter net usually happens in real-time, hence it makes it easier to monetize.

The possibility to communicate through internet from anywhere has led to that people no longer need to be there in personal to discuss the matters. In the past, the a&r was very much present in the studio, sometimes also a part of the writing process. With more artist producing music them self, it is just to send an mp3 or wav file for the a&r to listen to. The digitalization has made communication much easier, this has led to the job of the a&r also has become much easier.

Looking at all these factors, it is safe to say that the a&r profession still has a relevance in the music industry. After the digitalization, the artist moved from the side to the center stage, the finding in this paper concludes that along with the artist, the a&r profession also got closer to the center. The importance of the a&r has several times been pointed out by the interviewees that is a conferment that the a&r is still needed in the industry, maybe even more than before.

In the end, I will for the last time point out the clearest changes the digitalization has made to the a&r profession. These changes being the position of the a&r, the importance of the job and the increasing responsibility towards the label and artist. A change in working methods, the use of digital medium at work. And finally, accessibility and communication, the relation and communication between the artist and the label.

The a&r profession has gone through a change, but the outcome has been positive. The a&r is still strongly represented in the industry and will continue to be as long there is being made music. As long music exists, there will always be people with an opinion about what good music is.

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