7-30-2012

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The Internet and Lady Gaga

Justin Redona

For a popular music artist, the Internet serves as an essential tool in becoming well recognized on a global scale. In a sense, the Internet is a one-way ticket to fame and power, enabling the artist to form a specific online community. YouTube, for example, enables anyone with exceptional talent to become easily noticed and regarded as a musical wonder. Aside from getting millions of views, the journey to the YouTube musical spotlight is a process where artists capitalize on their growing popularity through various network technologies, creating a fan base community in which to serve. In terms of business, many self-promoting artists may find that the Internet can facilitate the demand for their music, live performances, and creation of more hit singles by creating a virtual space of instant artist-fan interaction. The full power of utilizing the Internet in pursuing musical stardom is not realized, however, until the artist has established him or herself in the music industry.

Artists in the music industry can have a powerful influence over their fans as they grab the public’s attention as record labels continue to extensively market their music. Although the music business on the web has made it possible for music making and distribution to happen outside the industry infrastructure, the music industry fully capitalizes on the steady supply of music-related online platforms and the diverse field of direct involvement with artists.¹ There will always be ways to download music for free, but the key for the music industry may lie in earning the financial support from loyal fans. This depends on the direct, instantaneous interaction between fans and the artist, which, again, can become a powerful, dynamic relationship. Fundamentally speaking, the Internet allows a piece of music to be frequently exposed to a greater audience over a small amount of time. The music industry that once narrowly relied on album sales and concert revenues is now taking advantage of this rapid output of music, integrating the Internet as part of their marketing and promotional schemes. Nowadays, artists in the music industry have the ability to know their audiences, as a group of individuals, on a more intimate level. This relationship establishes an engaged, loyal fan base. Lady Gaga, heralded as the Queen of Pop in 2011, is the music pop artist who has demonstrated the potential of pop music on the Internet with an extensive online presence and influence over her devoted fans.²

¹ Woods, A. (2010). In the groove. New Media Age, 20–21.
Otherwise known as Stefani Germanotta, Gaga has shown that effective online communication with fans perpetuates the demand for her performance. Network technologies allow Gaga to facilitate music production, consumption, and distribution. Musicians, such as Gaga, have pushed the envelope to seek audiences, by either taking themselves to an audience in the case of touring, or by taking the music to the audience, in the case of recording. Gaga created a new social experience for her fans by investing in the variety of options online in which fans can join, participate, and feel a member of numerous communities simultaneously. It is essential for a musician’s work to be public. Fortunately, the Internet has no difficulty creating musical and social buzz. Media streaming sites such as Pandora and YouTube have “buy” links to encourage impulse purchases of music. In 2010, Pandora had more than 65 million registered users and YouTube reported streaming more than 1 billion music videos from the top five music labels. As Gabe McDonough, the executive of the ad agency DDB puts it, “No other artist commands the kind of attention that Gaga does...If she does something with your brand, it’s like bam!—a million eyeballs.” As a musician, Gaga has reached new levels of influence through the Internet.

Gaga began playing the piano at four years old and started performing gigs in coffee houses as a teenager. Now, Gaga is touring across the globe performing for greater audiences that outnumber the crowds in the coffee houses in New York City. We can attribute her success to her sense of motivation, commitment, and determination. But for the sake of analyzing how the Internet has played a role, we can see that Gaga made a quick entry into the global musical spotlight by combining her talent with the use of the Internet, her tech-saviness perhaps stemming from the fact that her father is an Internet entrepreneur and telecommunications executive. In Google Chrome’s commercial advertisement that first appeared in 2011, Gaga is shown typing on a computer, posting messages on her blog, and updating her status on her Twitter account. Before signing to Interscope Records, Gaga started sharing her downloadable pieces of her early music from her MySpace page. As of 2010, Gaga fans had posted over 15,000 videos displaying themselves mimicking her dance moves on YouTube. In fact, Greyson Chance, who performed a piano cover of Lady Gaga’s “Paparazzi” that debuted on YouTube, is such an example of the kind of affect Gaga has over her fans because of the Internet. Chance was only young teenager at

7 Wilson, B. (2007)
9 Wilson, B (2007)
10 Benton, E. et. al. (2010)
the time, but as of 2011 he has attracted 42 million viewers, sold 14,000 copies of
his debut album, and appeared on Ellen DeGeneres’ show. The Internet is also serv-
ing Chance well, for he frequently chats with his 741,000 followers on Twitter. In a
sense, Gaga has redefined how fans and musicians can interact. The boundaries that
separate the fan from the artist is no longer finite and is blurred by network technol-
gies. Fans of Gaga become invested knowing what she is up to, where she is going
to go, and what she is going to wear. The Internet bridges a gap that once existed be-
fore network technologies were introduced and utilized by many all over the world.

Lady Gaga dominates the pop music realm over the Internet. She is the queen of
tweets and a Facebook leader of “likes.” She has received massive album and single
sales that swamp her competitors’. All of this would not have been possible were it
not for the network technologies that allow her to interact with her fans on a more
intimate level. Ultimately, Lady Gaga has redefined the way we approach the con-
sumption of popular music and the interactions that audiences can make.