

# Lyrics that Sell!



(Radek Zawadzki, 2023)

**The impact of language techniques on the success of music.**

# **Table of Contents**

<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Log.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Repeat to Compete.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Chapter 2: Accents for Sale.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Chapter 3: Ctrl+C Creativity.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Reference List.....</b>	<b>25</b>
Primary Research.....	25
Secondary Research.....	28

## Introduction

Why are the voices of the most popular musicians formulaic and repetitive? The music industry is uniquely complex and competitive, yet it appears to be consistently dominated by commodification and the power of American corporations in their pursuit of profits. However, on closer examination, the industry is much more diverse, even in these seemingly commodified ‘American’ artists. My Personal Interest Project (PIP) investigates “**How the use of language techniques affects the success of music in the Western mainstream, focusing on Rock, Pop and Country music between the 1980s and 2020s.**”

The industry's key influences, such as institutions, were examined and their effect on conformity, while also analysing how conforming to certain language techniques can be detrimental to an artist's cultural diversity, as well as investigating how these influences intersect with the role that technology plays. This allows for the analysis of how promoting homogeneity highlights the tension between individual identity and commercial pressures. For this investigation language is defined as how somebody speaks, including accents, dialect and vocal techniques. In order to quantify success, streams on Spotify will demonstrate how language choices correlate with commercial popularity, potentially revealing the extent to which artists feel compelled to accommodate mainstream tastes.

My personal interest in the topic emerged from my passion for music and my growing awareness of influences on music and the pressures to change, including differences between mainstream and indie genres. This contrast underscores my investigation into how artists navigate presenting their native language while pursuing success, which links to Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT), as artists aim to better converge with their audiences and other artists. This can help better understand individual artistic choices with broader industry trends and generational differences. Finally, by comparing music from Generation X and Generation Y, my PIP aims to connect changes in the industry to current patterns of commodification, demonstrating how language has both continually reshaped notions of success and cultural authenticity and also follows a similar trend of commodification. This integrated approach is supported through both qualitative and quantitative methods, such as the expert interviews with artists like The Drones and content analysis of different artists' contrasting use of language, which influences their commercial

success. Thus providing a comprehensive understanding of how language techniques, industry pressures and cultural identity interact within the Western music mainstream.

## Log

The initial concept for my Personal Interest Project emerged after watching an Australian band called Sly Withers perform their song 'Cracks' live in a thick Australian accent, which I found to be striking. This prompted me to question whether vocal presentation influences musical success. The broader interest in understanding how musicians achieve popularity further supported the choice of topic, particularly about language's role in shaping audience perception and industry standards.

As the project developed, it became apparent that the original hypothesis, focused solely on accent erasure as a direct path to success, was too limited in scope. A lack of scholarly sources addressing this specific issue forced me to redefine my question. The focus shifted from proving a hypothesis to facilitating a broader discussion around language, conformity, and commodification in the music industry. This allowed the project to explore both the ways that the industry creates success and the artistic compromises artists may make to achieve it.

Primary research included a questionnaire, which I used to gather public perspectives on multiculturalism and linguistic diversity in music, providing both a Generation X and Generation Y perspective to my PIP, specifically looking into how different-aged audiences' expectations influence artist behaviour. In addition, I utilised interviews with musicians to gather qualitative data on how industry pressures and conformity affect artistic expression, particularly regarding voice and accent. Finally, I conducted a content analysis of selected songs to observe patterns in vocal delivery, lyrical structure, and stylistic choices, contributing quantitative and qualitative data that supported many trends of conformity that showed up in my secondary research.

During the process of completing my PIP, several challenges emerged. Among these was the scarcity of academic literature specifically relating to accents in music. As well, I found it difficult to secure interviews with popular artists as I did not have any major industry connections. Moreover, the project encountered conceptual challenges, as the success of music is influenced by a vast array of factors, making it difficult to isolate language as a singular determinant. These complexities required ongoing refinement of the research question and scope to maintain focus without oversimplification.

Despite these obstacles, I followed my project schedule by focusing on flexibility in responding to challenges without compromising the integrity of the research. Adapting the research question, expanding the methodological framework, and allowing for the exploration of different perspectives rather than a definitive conclusion which were all key in helping me overcome these limitations.

This project has significantly developed my personal, academic and research capabilities as well as enhanced my ability in critical thinking, refining skills in both qualitative and quantitative data collection. Allowing for a greater understanding of the music industry. The experience of encountering and overcoming research limitations has also strengthened my problem-solving skills and ability to adapt to adversity. Ultimately, the PIP has not only provided me with an awareness of the interplay between language and success in music but also an appreciation for the complexities involved in researching.

## **Chapter 1: Repeat to Compete! What are the key influences on the homogeneity of global music and the impact this has on the music scene?**

The music industry's formulaic and homogeneous style has been fundamentally influenced by musical factors such as enjoyable instrumentals as well as differing societal pressures. This has led to rapid commercialisation and commodification, culminating in the loss of individual cultures and conformity to a Westernised style of music in search of commercial success. The development of modern global culture, as well as the greater music industry, has been pervaded by the concept of westernisation, leading artists such as Snoop Dogg to state, “That’s what’s wrong right now, everyone trying rap the same style”.<sup>1</sup> The influences that lead to a change in the music industry are almost impossible to put into an exhaustive list, due to the nature of the pressures surrounding the development and control of the industry; however, the key influences include the audience, authority figures, quality of music and luck.

Homogeneity is described as “the quality or state of being of a similar kind or of having a uniform structure or composition throughout”.<sup>2</sup> This chapter focuses on how a homogeneous music industry affects popular music and diversity within music by analysing major influences which are broken down into two distinct categories: The musical factors and the societal expectations of the industry.<sup>3</sup> Musically, a song's success is largely tied to the opinions of the audience on the style and creation of the song, which involves aspects such as the quality of the music as well as the message that is shared with the audience. Society impacts the music industry through its use of authority and its role in the success of artists, as well as the effect of an artist’s geographic location on an artist's message and the way society perceives it. This demonstrates that the homogeneity of global music is shaped by how audiences judge certain music’s style and message, how industry authorities influence success, and how an artist’s location affects how their music is received — all of which impact the diversity of the music scene.

---

<sup>1</sup>S, Dogg, ‘Snoop Dogg Impersonates Today’s Rappers Sound-Alike Flow’ (14 October 2014) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g0OdmRtuQew>, Accessed 17 October 2024.

<sup>2</sup>Merriam-Webster, ‘Definition of HOMOGENEITY’ (2019) <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/homogeneity>, Accessed 17 October 2024.

<sup>3</sup> Primary Research: Interview 'Drones'

The importance of the audience cannot be underestimated when discussing the success of music. The audience is one of the key drivers of social change within society, forcing singers to adapt to specific styles of songs and create uniform music.<sup>4</sup> This culminates in the idea of how the audience views the creative process of creating art, and how it forces artists to adapt to fit songs that are more favourably viewed within society to have so that they are successful and can make money, furthering the commodification of the music industry.<sup>5</sup> Thus, encouraging artists into a cycle of ‘plagiarism, of similar sounds’, leading to more homogeneity within the industry by introducing a repetitive culture.<sup>6</sup> The idea of song plagiarism has been pervasive throughout the history of the modern music industry, as in the early 70s rock band Led Zeppelin released their song “Dazed and Confused”, which was later challenged by the American folk rock artist Jack Holmes to be a copy of his 1967 song by the same name.<sup>7</sup> The plagiarism within the industry is explicitly shown as the structure and sound of the song are nearly identical, yet the song released by Led Zeppelin received approximately 142 million more streams.<sup>8</sup> In more recent memory, Ed Sheeran’s hit “Thinking Out Loud” was claimed to be a rip-off of Marvin Gaye’s hit song “Let’s Get It On”.<sup>9</sup> During the trial, Sheeran claimed that “most pop songs can fit over most pop songs”.<sup>9</sup> Sheeran is claiming that the industry does not plagiarise but instead is subject to a limited number of enjoyable chord progressions. Despite the truth in this statement, a song cannot be exclusively defined by a chord progression, and plagiarism is still vital to be considered in the industry. Therefore, the homogeneity of the industry cannot exclusively be justified as

---

<sup>4</sup>A, Moore, ‘Exploring Current Music Trends: Impact & Influence on Artists and Audiences’ (Feedback Magazine, 17 April 2024), <https://feedbackmagazine.org/exploring-current-music-trends-impact-influence-on-artists-and-audiences>, Accessed 22 July 2025.

<sup>5</sup>Y, Gao and others, ‘Communication between Artist and Audience: A Case Study of Creation Journey’ (2019) 11577 Lecture Notes in Computer Science 33, [https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-22580-3\\_3](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-22580-3_3), accessed 17 October 2022.

<sup>6</sup>F, Chapin, ‘A Theory of Synchronous Culture Cycles’ (1925) 3 Journal of Social Forces 596 <https://academic.oup.com/sf/article-abstract/3/4/596/2225708?redirectedFrom=fulltext>, Accessed 22 October 2024.; C, Jenkins, ‘Welcome to the Age of Pop “Plagiarism”’ (1 April 2019), <https://www.vulture.com/2019/04/the-age-of-pop-plagiarism.html>, Accessed 22 October 2023.

<sup>7</sup>J, Blistein, ‘Jimmy Page Faces New “Dazed and Confused” Lawsuit from Jake Holmes’ (May 2025), <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-news/jimmy-page-dazed-and-confused-lawsuit-jake-holmes-1235331801/>, Accessed 10 November 2024.

<sup>8</sup> Primary Research: Content Analysis

<sup>9</sup>S, Cain, ‘Ed Sheeran Sings in Court as Part of Marvin Gaye Copyright Case’ The Guardian (28 April 2023), <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2023/apr/28/ed-sheeran-sings-in-court-as-part-of-marvin-gaye-copyright-case>, Accessed 10 November 2024; B, Lee, ‘Ed Sheeran Cleared of Infringing Copyright in Marvin Gaye Lawsuit’ The Guardian (4 May 2023), <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2023/may/04/ed-sheeran-verdict-not-liable-copyright-lawsuit-marvin-gaye>, Accessed 10 November 2024.



controlled by the audience, but audiences can reward unoriginal or copied work, thus encouraging unethical practices and limiting how experimental or diverse an artist can be when creating music.

Another major influence on the homogeneity of global music is the dominance of figures of authority within the music industry. Organisations such as record labels, broadcasters, and streaming platforms control a majority of the modern music landscape by managing the resources, connections, and promotional tools necessary for widespread success. Independent artists often lack the means to compete with major labels, which possess significant advantages in marketing and production, thus showing the power that organisations have taken within the contemporary industry. This results in a concentration of power that steers musical trends and public tastes. One key mechanism is preferential marketing, where consumer choices are subtly directed through market analysis and the shaping of public opinion.<sup>10</sup> Preferential marketing is a strategy in which authority figures tailor advertisements to align with a customer's specific preferences, allowing for more direct and personalised promotion. This practice often leads to a standardised, formulaic sound across mainstream music, contributing to a loss of diversity and originality in the global music scene. As a result of the homogenous music industry, it is nearly impossible for an artist to find success without the use of a figure of authority, as according to the international talent agency, MN2s, major labels have “an acute resource advantage when compared to individual labels in their ability to market and produce music.”<sup>11</sup> which enables them to use targeted marketing to attract specific audiences.

In the 1980s, the music industry was largely controlled by the major record labels such as “The Big Six.”<sup>12</sup> The Big Six refers to the six major record labels through the early 20th century: Warner Music Group, EMI, MCA Music, CBS Records, Ariola Records, and

---

<sup>10</sup> Q, UI Ain and others, ‘How Do Customers React to Preferential Treatment? An Affective Events Theory and Time-Lagged Survey’ (2024) 80 *Journal of retailing and consumer services*, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0969698924002236>, Accessed 6 November 2024.

<sup>11</sup> M, Mullen, ‘Extended Play: The Impact of Major Labels on the Modern Music Industry’ (24 May 2021), <https://mn2s.com/news/news/extended-play-the-impact-of-major-labels-on-the-modern-music-industry/>, Accessed 24 October 2024.

<sup>12</sup> S, Orr, ‘The History of Record Labels - Everything You Need to Know about Record Labels [2022]’ (2022), <https://www.otherrecordlabels.com/the-history-of-record-labels>, Accessed 22 October 2024.

Polygram.<sup>13</sup> However, despite the dominance of the Big Six, in recent years, it can be seen that there has been a shift to independent labels as they allow artists “complete artistic freedom.” At the same time, “a smaller company size equates to less bureaucracy and complications.”<sup>14</sup> Additionally, the power of organisations can be accentuated by the difference between the Australian industries and the international industry, which can be seen in the Korean-New Zealander artist Rosé, who moved from Sydney to Seoul due to the lack of industry presence and later became successful with the Korean label YG Records, as supported by Professor Roald Maliangkay saying “Even if she had all the talents, there would not be a studio or agency here capable of training her.”<sup>15</sup> Hence, it can be deemed that authority plays a key role in the furtherment of artists within the music industry, largely due to their control of major resources, such as recording studios and marketing opportunities, as well as their control over relationships in the music industry. Therefore, leading to a commodified society that is inherently ignorant of an artist's cultural identity.

In conclusion, the global music industry is actively homogenised by both musical factors and societal pressures within our contemporary society, thus reshaping how the music industry operates today. Although, due to the nature of this chapter, there have been omitted factors such as luck, socioeconomic status, and the quality of production, this chapter aims to focus on how audience preferences push artists towards formulaic music.<sup>16</sup> It can be believed that authority figures like major record labels have a more significant impact due to their control of resources, marketing and connections that artists need to succeed. Culminating in a situation where musical diversity is ignored in preference of safe, predictable hits, which leads to music becoming sanitised and losing its cultural identity. This move towards conformity doesn't just reduce the variety of music we hear - it also damages the authenticity of music and the meaningfulness within a commodified industry.

---

<sup>13</sup> S. Orr, 'The History of Record Labels - Everything You Need to Know about Record Labels [2022]' (2022), <https://www.otherrecordlabels.com/the-history-of-record-labels>, Accessed 22 October 2024.

<sup>14</sup> Ilan Bielas, 'The Rise and Fall of Record Labels' (Open Access Senior Thesis, 2013) 13, [https://scholarship.claremont.edu/cmc\\_theses/703/](https://scholarship.claremont.edu/cmc_theses/703/), accessed 3 December 2024.

<sup>15</sup> ABC Radio, 'Evenings with Renee Krosch' (2 June 2025), <https://www.abc.net.au/listen/programs/sydney-evenings/evenings/105341558>, accessed 2 June 2025.

<sup>16</sup> Primary Research: Interview - Drones



## **Chapter 2: Accents for Sale! To what extent does language conformity lead to greater success for music artists at the detriment of excluded cultural heritage?**

The power of lyrics to convey meaning and emotion cannot be understated. If singing were removed from music, there would be a massive loss in the way that people understand the artist's message and the song in general. Similarly, if the listener were unable to understand the lyrics due to language barriers or accent issues, then this would impact the artist's intention. This language divide has significant implications for both commercial success and cultural authenticity in the global music industry. Thus, artists have been forced, or expected, to conform to specific language features in an effort to appeal to the wider industry, even if this leads to a loss of heritage.

The phenomenon of accent modification in singing represents a complex intersection of artistic expression and commercial strategy. Throughout this chapter is the underlying assumption that a version of American accent commonly known as Pop Song English (PSE) is inherently easier to sing with when compared to a variety of other accents. Research in the Sociophonetic field has revealed the increasing prevalence of this idea with artists unconsciously or deliberately adopting standardised vocal patterns that deviate from their natural speech.<sup>17</sup> Through the adoption of non-traditional accents, this can lead the way for the ignorance or erasure of cultural diversity within the music industry. Therefore, accent modification highlights artists' desire for success even if this comes at the expense of authenticity and self-expression.

The subconscious nature of this change is particularly significant. In the questionnaire, when participants were asked if they had ever been taught to sing “more American”, 100% stated that they believed they sounded American, even though they were given no formal training to do so.<sup>18</sup> This is further supported by my expert interview with the artist “Drones”, as he presented the idea of how “these are unconscious things... which are kind of mimesis”.<sup>19</sup> This automatic shift reveals the pressures of global marketability have become so deeply

---

<sup>17</sup>A, Gibson, ‘Pop Song English as a Supralocal Norm’ (2023) 53 *Language in Society* 1, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/language-in-society/article/pop-song-english-as-a-supralocal-norm/5E830B29413EA647269CCACB7E351F38>, Accessed 22 December 2024.

<sup>18</sup> Primary Research: Questionnaire

<sup>19</sup> Primary Research: Interview ‘Drones’

embedded in musical training and performance that artists instinctively conform to expected vocal patterns. Gibson observes that "The American-influenced accent is automatic in the context of singing pop music", indicating that the phenomenon extends worldwide, allowing international artists to adopt PSE techniques.<sup>20</sup> In addition, accent modification also acts to minutely improve singing ability by standardising vowel sounds and consonant pronunciation, making lyrics more universally comprehensible as accents such as PSE modify the frequency required to make a word into an easier register, as seen in Figure 1.

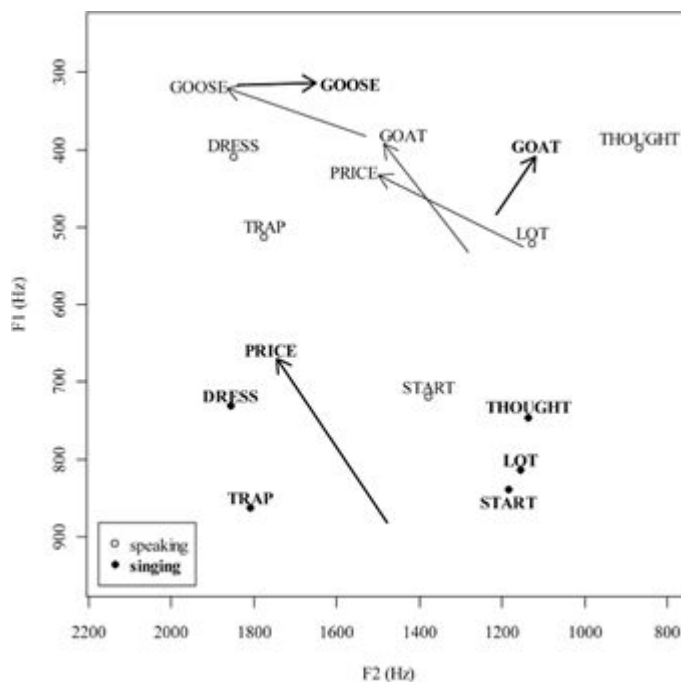


Figure 1: Graph showing the frequency(Hz) difference between spoken English (in this case NZE) and sung English (PSE) for an Auckland Singer, Dylan Storey.<sup>21</sup>

Singing teachers report little to no conscious effect on vocal training specifically targeting accent reduction.<sup>22</sup> This contradiction highlights the distinction between vocal improvement and the broader cultural implications of linguistic conformity. Thus, showcasing the musical impact that accent has in altering an artist's singing voice, increasing its ability to be commercialised, due to its minute ability to improve the singing ability of artists as well as

<sup>20</sup>A, Gibson, 'Pop Song English as a Supralocal Norm' (2023) 53 *Language in Society* 1, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/language-in-society/article/pop-song-english-as-a-supralocal-norm/5E830B29413EA647269CCACB7E351F38>, Accessed 22 December 2024.

<sup>21</sup> A, Gibson, 'Pop Song English as a Supralocal Norm' (2023) 53 *Language in Society* 1, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/language-in-society/article/pop-song-english-as-a-supralocal-norm/5E830B29413EA647269CCACB7E351F38>, Accessed 22 December 2024.

<sup>22</sup> Primary Research: Questionnaire

allowing audiences to further relate to the artist. Although this change in accent use cannot be credited to an active decision, and is instead subconscious. This is further supported by the fact that singing in an American accent often proves more marketable to wider audiences, creating a linguistic hierarchy that privileges PSE over other accents. Thus, reflecting broader patterns of cultural dominance, where PSE serves as the de facto standard for international communication and commerce. In addition, the genre of a song plays a key role in how an accent is perceived. Due to these reasons, it can be said that the commodification of the industry has forced artists to conform to specific accents if they are seeking success.

The industry has long been conditioned to prefer songs performed with American accents, as it is viewed as more marketable to a wider audience, although this specific preference for PSE cannot exclusively justify the effect accent has on success in the industry. Despite this, the use of PSE has been leading Western songs to consistently achieve higher streaming numbers and broader international recognition compared to those maintaining regional vocal characteristics, with Americanised songs achieving approximately double the recorded success on average.<sup>23</sup> Thus showing the importance of specific language conformity in marketing artists and how audiences relate to artists through language.

In the early 2000s, a linguistic hierarchy emerged as a way to show differing values of accents in society, reflecting broader social values regarding class and professionalism.<sup>24</sup> Within this hierarchy, certain accents are labelled “snooty” or “unprofessional,” mirroring how the music industry commodifies and stereotypes vocal styles.<sup>25</sup> Accents in music often become symbols of an artist’s perceived authenticity and link to genre; for example, a white Southern accent is widely accepted as a key feature of country music, despite the genre’s origins in African American culture. This selective association reveals how cultural ownership is developed by linguistic bias and commercial interest. Similarly, the “Pop-Punk voice” popularised by bands like Blink-182 reveals how vocal techniques can become genre markers, reinforcing a sense of belonging or rebellion. Ultimately, the interplay between linguistic hierarchy and musical genre highlights how different accents are not only a tool of

---

<sup>23</sup> Primary Research – Content Analysis

<sup>24</sup> National Public Radio , ‘Accentuating Accents: The Linguistic Hierarchy’ (26 March 2007), <https://www.npr.org/transcripts/9140305>, Accessed 21 March 2025.

<sup>25</sup> National Public Radio , ‘Accentuating Accents: The Linguistic Hierarchy’ (26 March 2007), <https://www.npr.org/transcripts/9140305>, Accessed 21 March 2025.

artistic expression but also a mechanism of social hierarchy, determining which voices are commercialised or marginalised within the industry.

AND AS I STARED I COUNTEHHHD  
THE WEBS FROM ALL THE SPYDURRRS  
CATCHENG THEENGs AND EATING THEIR INSYDES  
LIKE INDECISION TO CALL YEUUUWWWW  
AND HEAR YOUR VOICE OF TREEEZAWNNN  
WILL YEW COME HOME AND STOP THIS PAIN TUHNYTE  
STOP THIS PAIN TUHNYTE

Figure 2 – Transliteration of an excerpt from “I Miss You” by Blink-182, sung by Tom DeLonge.<sup>26</sup>

Transliteration is the process of writing words in the same way they are pronounced.<sup>27</sup> The transliteration above showcases the adoption of a specific Pop Punk accent which works with the genre’s theme of being “sneering, whin[y] [and] bratty”.<sup>28</sup> DeLonge has changed from the American English Diphthong to monophthong as it is often more familiar to the lower class American population due to its ties to the Mexican American links. This creates a paradoxical situation where artistic success increasingly depends on cultural conformity, forcing artists to

---

<sup>26</sup> D, Nosowitz, ‘I Made a Linguistics Professor Listen to a Blink-182 Song and Analyze the Accent’ (18 June 2015), <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/i-made-a-linguistics-professor-listen-to-a-blink-182-song-and-analyze-the-accent>, Accessed 12 October 2024.

<sup>27</sup> D, Nosowitz, ‘I Made a Linguistics Professor Listen to a Blink-182 Song and Analyze the Accent’ (18 June 2015), <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/i-made-a-linguistics-professor-listen-to-a-blink-182-song-and-analyze-the-accent>, Accessed 12 October 2024.

<sup>28</sup> D, Nosowitz, ‘I Made a Linguistics Professor Listen to a Blink-182 Song and Analyze the Accent’ (18 June 2015), <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/i-made-a-linguistics-professor-listen-to-a-blink-182-song-and-analyze-the-accent>, Accessed 12 October 2024.

choose between authentic self-expression and commercial viability. By forcing artists to choose between their cultural expression and success, effectively excluding artists who prioritise their culture out of the industry.

The pressure to conform to standardised vocal patterns results in the systematic exclusion and erosion of cultural heritage within the global music industry. By adopting accents foreign to their native speech, artists risk severing connections to their linguistic and cultural origins, contributing to a homogenisation that threatens cultural diversity in popular music. Certain genres, such as hip-hop, have been strictly controlled to guarantee a specific Americanised rap accent, causing international rappers to seek to transform their voices out of fear of social exclusion.<sup>29</sup> Rap not only encapsulates an accent to speak in it is also a way of speaking as in my interview we spoke of one of the artists friends who was an up and coming London based rapper who “speaks in that kind of rap way” showing how the industry relies on certain sounds for artists to gain support within the genre’s audience.<sup>30</sup>

In contrast, Rihanna is an Barbadian pop musician that found her success in America after switching to follow a simplified version of PSE within her first album *Music of the Sun*, but later incorporating aspects of her natural Caribbean English Creole (CEC) within songs such as the 2016 song “Work” which acts a reclamation of her Barbadian heritage and has continued to become one of her most recognisable singles.<sup>31</sup> Accents act as a key identifier for artists, and for a long time, the music industry has aimed to eliminate the differences within accents in order to strive for a higher level of success by copying those who have already been successful.<sup>32</sup>

Within Australia, we can see how the choice to preserve or abandon one's natural accent becomes a statement about national identity and artistic integrity in an increasingly globalised music market. Rosalind Moran's analysis of singing in an Australian accent demonstrates the

---

<sup>29</sup> Dono, ‘How to Rap: Should You Fake an American Accent?’ (20 September 2017) , <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=paSm-553dYE>, Accessed 14 April 2025.

<sup>30</sup> Primary-Research Interview

<sup>31</sup> L, Jansen and M, Westphal, ‘Rihanna Works Her Multivocal Pop Persona: A Morpho-Syntactic and Accent Analysis of Rihanna’s Singing Style’ (2017) 33 *English Today* 46, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/english-today/article/rihanna-works-her-multivocal-pop-persona-a-morphosyntactic-and-accent-analysis-of-rihannas-singing-style/38E62910167A86F253384150950CE117>, Accessed 17 April 2020.

<sup>32</sup> H, Gibsone, ‘Talking Tactics: Rihanna and the Pop Stars Who Change Accent’, *The Guardian*, (4 February 2016), <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2016/feb/04/talk-that-talk-rihanna-the-cunning-linguist>, Accessed 12 December 2024.



political dimensions of this issue, arguing that maintaining an authentic accent represents a form of cultural resistance against homogenisation.<sup>33</sup> The loss of accent diversity in music represents a broader pattern of cultural homogenisation that threatens the richness of global musical expression. This pressure to conform creates a loop where artists model successful vocal patterns, thus influencing emerging musicians to abandon their cultural heritage in pursuit of similar success.

The music industry acts as a complex web of commercial pressures, cultural identity, and artistic expression that largely shapes the current music landscape, as revealed by examining accent modification in popular music. Due to the commodification of music, artists now have to choose between genuine self-expression and financial success, as cultural conformity is now seen as a prerequisite for artistic success. In the end, the language used by an artist speaks to more general concerns about cultural identity and artistic integrity in a globalised world, necessitating constant critical analysis of the ways in which linguistic decisions influence artistic expression and cultural representation in the modern music business.

---

<sup>33</sup> Rosalind Moran, 'You Beauty: The Politics of Singing in an Aussie Accent', *The Music*, (7 March 2023), <https://themusic.com.au/features/you-beauty-the-politics-of-singing-in-an-aussie-accent/borMYGNiZWQ/07-03-23>, Accessed 23 September 2024.

### **Chapter 3: Ctrl+C Creativity! Evaluating the role of new technologies in forcing conformity within the music industry**

Technology has played a major role in transforming the modern music industry as it shapes both the production and distribution of music. Technologies have acted to include new artists with diverse cultural backgrounds who were excluded by the major music industry, as well as exclude musical creativity, leading to repetitive and “overproduced music.”<sup>34</sup> Some key technologies that are increasingly present in the music industry are social media, as it changes the way that music is marketed specifically to younger audiences, as well as streaming services have taken the role of a key distributor from radio thus reinforcing listeners music taste. As well, these changes in marketing have created a need for perfection and homogeneity of musical styles. Therefore, it can be said that technological advancements in the music industry have fundamentally altered the music industry's ability to accommodate diversity.

It can be said that marketing is the most crucial aspect of a music artist's success within the industry. This can be seen as marketing has been prevalent throughout the inception of the music industry, in the 1980s, MTV arose as one of the most influential marketers of music.<sup>35</sup> This can be seen in the modern day with the rise of Social Media as a key marketing tool for artists. Social media has long been guided by its algorithms, enabling the presentation of the idea in which artistic direction is determined by virality, resulting in a uniform creative output. Song structures are altered by TikTok's algorithm, which prioritises brief, engaging content, making the song's "hook" the main focus and frequently overpowering musical nuance.<sup>36</sup> This changes the focus from creating enjoyable music to creating short hooks that

---

<sup>34</sup> ClintMusic, 'What Is Overproduction? How to Avoid It' (1 June 2017), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5g7ltPxxv1ZY>, Accessed 19 May 2025.

<sup>35</sup> L, Wayte, 'The 1980s and 90s: Consolidation and MTV Pop Superstars' University of Oregon (15 May 2023), <https://opentext.uoregon.edu/payforplay/chapter/chapter-15-the-1980s-and-90s-consolidation-and-mtv-pop-superstars/>, Accessed 21 May 2024.

<sup>36</sup> L, Burkersroda, 'TikTok's Transformation of the Music Industry: A Double-Edged Sword' (14 February 2025), <https://festivaltopia.com/tiktoks-transformation-of-the-music-industry-a-double-edged-sword/>, Accessed 21 April 2024; D, Madden, 'TikTok Is Changing the DNA of Hit Songs, and Artists Are Taking Note | Berklee' (24 October 2023), <https://www.berklee.edu/berklee-now/news/tiktok-is-changing-the-dna-of-hit-songs-and-artists-are-taking-note>, Accessed 21 April 2025.

"sound good to users."<sup>37</sup> As musicians try to please the algorithm rather than experimenting with novel approaches to music production, they choose to adopt conformity over creativity, as artists preferentially decide to focus on a song's virality. This adaptation to a shorter form can be seen in the transformation of music from the 1980s to the 2020s, as in a comparison of a Spotify 1980s top 30 songs playlist had an average duration of four minutes and 10 seconds, while the 2020s top 30 playlist had an average duration of 2 minutes and 56 seconds, showing how the music industry has evolved to accommodate the shorten attention span that social media has created.<sup>38</sup> By prioritising "similar-sounding hooks and audio," social media's algorithmic design adds to the "homogenization of musical tastes," limiting variation in the popular music industry.<sup>39</sup> TikTok influences artists to create "for success rather than artistic innovation," thus "stifling creativity" and causing the "diversity of music [to] suffer."<sup>40</sup> Ultimately, it can be said that the introduction of social media as an influencer of music has fundamentally forced conformity within the industry through its subversion of publicly accepted trends and further accommodating artists who can work with the algorithms over artists who strive to create better music.

Another important technology in the music industry has been streaming platforms, their algorithms, designed for personalisation, often inadvertently limit musical diversity, creating "filter bubbles" and reinforcing existing preferences, thus contributing to conformity. At the heart of streaming services such as Spotify is a "personalised recommendation" algorithm aimed at enhancing user satisfaction.<sup>41</sup> However, Spotify's own research reveals a critical paradox: "algorithmically-driven listening... is associated with reduced consumption

---

<sup>37</sup> J, Zimmerman, 'The "Tiktokification" of Modern Pop Music: How Tiktok Changed the Music Industry', The Miami Student ,(2 November 2023), <https://www.miamistudent.net/article/2023/11/tiktok-effect-on-popular-music>, Accessed 21 April 2025.

<sup>38</sup> Primary Research: Content Analysis

<sup>39</sup> J, Zimmerman, 'The "Tiktokification" of Modern Pop Music: How Tiktok Changed the Music Industry', The Miami Student ,(2 November 2023), <https://www.miamistudent.net/article/2023/11/tiktok-effect-on-popular-music>, Accessed 21 April 2025.

<sup>40</sup> L, Burkersroda, 'TikTok's Transformation of the Music Industry: A Double-Edged Sword' (14 February 2025), <https://festivaltopia.com/tiktoks-transformation-of-the-music-industry-a-double-edged-sword/>, Accessed 21 April 2024

<sup>41</sup> J, Wong, 'Algorithmic Symphonies: How Spotify Strikes the Right Chord – USC Viterbi School of Engineering' (21 January 2024), <https://illuminate.usc.edu/algorithmic-symphonies-how-spotify-strikes-the-right-chord/>, Accessed 21 April 2025.

diversity."<sup>42</sup> User-driven, "organic" listening from curated playlists is "typically much more diverse."<sup>43</sup> Users' increasing diversity tends to "drift away from algorithmically-driven listening" towards organic consumption.<sup>44</sup> Thus, highlighting that personalised algorithms engage conforming listeners, fostering "focused" consumption rather than broad exploration, limiting exposure to new genres and leading to "homogenization of tastes."<sup>45</sup> <sup>46</sup>Beyond individual consumption, streaming algorithms exhibit a "popularity bias," favouring already popular items and "reinforcing or amplifying the success of the most successful."<sup>47</sup> These disadvantages largely affect smaller or niche artists, making discovery harder and reinforcing mainstream trends.<sup>48</sup> In the 1980s, radio played a similar role in the music industry to the role that streaming services play today. Independent marketers influenced radio by making deals that required radio stations to play specific songs as part of this agreement; it can be said that "local and new artists [were] sidelined in the discussions, and how international 'classic hits' dominated the airwaves."<sup>49</sup> Thus, showing the pervasiveness of conformity within the music industry, as this is not different from what can currently be seen in streaming services. Algorithms thus act as a new form of gatekeeping, filtering and amplifying content based on pre-existing success, creating a self-reinforcing "global mainstream" and a homogenised culture.

---

<sup>42</sup> Ashton Anderson and others, 'Algorithmic Effects on the Diversity of Consumption on Spotify' [2020] Proceedings of The Web Conference 2020 2155, <https://dl.acm.org/doi/10.1145/3366423.3380281>, Accessed 26 April 2024.

<sup>43</sup> Spotify, 'Algorithmic Effects on the Diversity of Consumption on Spotify - Spotify Research' (3 December 2020), <https://research.atspotify.com/2020/12/algorithmic-effects-on-the-diversity-of-consumption-on-spotify>, Accessed 3 February 2024.

<sup>44</sup> Artist Vanguard, 'The Spotify Controversy: How the Platform's Algorithm Shapes Music Discovery – Artist Vanguard' (3 December 2023), <https://artistvanguard.com/spotify-algorithm/>, Accessed 3 February 2024.

<sup>45</sup> Artist Vanguard, 'The Spotify Controversy: How the Platform's Algorithm Shapes Music Discovery – Artist Vanguard' (3 December 2023), <https://artistvanguard.com/spotify-algorithm/>, Accessed 3 February 2024; J. Wong, 'Algorithmic Symphonies: How Spotify Strikes the Right Chord – USC Viterbi School of Engineering' (21 January 2024), <https://illumin.usc.edu/algorithmic-symphonies-how-spotify-strikes-the-right-chord/>, Accessed 21 April 2025.

<sup>46</sup>

<sup>47</sup> <https://liafistudio.com/how-auto-tune-changed-the-music-industry-a-revolutionary-shift-in-sound/>

<sup>48</sup> J. Wong, 'Algorithmic Symphonies: How Spotify Strikes the Right Chord – USC Viterbi School of Engineering' (21 January 2024), <https://illumin.usc.edu/algorithmic-symphonies-how-spotify-strikes-the-right-chord/>, Accessed 21 April 2025.

<sup>49</sup> L. Giuffre, 'Richard Kingsmill's Radio 2SER Documentary on the 1980s Music Industry' (National Film and Sound Archive of Australia 2025), <https://www.nfsa.gov.au/latest/richard-kingsmills-radio-2ser-documentary-1980s-music-industry>, Accessed 12 October 2024.

Advancements in music production technology have profoundly influenced vocal performance. Tools like Auto-Tune, initially designed for subtle correction, have evolved to contribute to a more standardised and "perfected" soundscape, inadvertently fostering creative conformity. The first form of auto-Tune was created in 1997, initially as a subtle tool for "precise pitch correction."<sup>50</sup> However, Cher's 1998 hit "Believe" popularised its use as a "prominent effect," leading to widespread adoption across pop, R&B, and hip-hop by artists like T-Pain and Kanye West.<sup>51</sup> Beyond its iconic effect, Auto-Tune enhances production efficiency by enabling "pitch-perfect takes without numerous retakes."<sup>52</sup> The omnipresence of Auto-Tune creates an implicit expectation of vocal perfection, shifting focus from unique human voice qualities to a digitally "corrected" ideal. This can erode vocal nuance and individuality, smoothing out "imperfections and nuances that make human creativity resonate deeply," potentially leading to a more uniform vocal aesthetic.<sup>53</sup> Auto-Tune has become "more entrenched than ever" and "contributed to the blending of genres."<sup>54</sup> Despite this preconceived notion that artists are required to be perfect, a respondent in my questionnaire stated that "It seems everyone is trying to commodify through auto tune, basic drum and bass sounds, and taking someone else's songs and just modifying the lyrics" when asked about traits that make artists seem passionless.<sup>55</sup> This shows that despite the stress, the industry places on artists to be perfect, it can lead to discontent between artists and their audience. The capability for perfection has become a new metric for commercial viability. Artists are incentivised to produce flawlessly tuned and mixed music, even at the expense of raw or experimental qualities. This creates a "standardised aesthetic" where music across genres

---

<sup>50</sup> Artist Vanguard , 'The Spotify Controversy: How the Platform's Algorithm Shapes Music Discovery – Artist Vanguard' (3 December 2023), <https://artistvanguard.com/spotify-algorithm/>, Accessed 3 February 2024.

<sup>51</sup> Thewebico, 'How Auto-Tune Changed the Music Industry: A Revolutionary Shift in Sound' (4 March 2025), <https://liafistudio.com/how-auto-tune-changed-the-music-industry-a-revolutionary-shift-in-sound/>, accessed 27 December 2024.

<sup>52</sup> Thewebico, 'How Auto-Tune Changed the Music Industry: A Revolutionary Shift in Sound' (4 March 2025), <https://liafistudio.com/how-auto-tune-changed-the-music-industry-a-revolutionary-shift-in-sound/>, accessed 27 December 2024.

<sup>53</sup> Thewebico, 'How Auto-Tune Changed the Music Industry: A Revolutionary Shift in Sound' (4 March 2025), <https://liafistudio.com/how-auto-tune-changed-the-music-industry-a-revolutionary-shift-in-sound/>, accessed 27 December 2024.

<sup>54</sup> Thewebico, 'How Auto-Tune Changed the Music Industry: A Revolutionary Shift in Sound' (4 March 2025), <https://liafistudio.com/how-auto-tune-changed-the-music-industry-a-revolutionary-shift-in-sound/>, accessed 27 December 2024.

<sup>55</sup> Primary Research: Questionnaire

sounds increasingly similar in technical polish, contributing to a broader homogenization of the industry.

In conclusion, new technologies have played a decisive role in shaping the music industry towards conformity, while the creation of new technologies such as social media, streaming platforms, and vocal production tools has expanded access to music distribution; they have also acted to homogenise popular music, creating a standardised industry.

## **Conclusion**

This Personal Interest Project has explored how language use and conformity influence the success of music within a globalised industry, with a focus on commodification and cultural erasure. Through this project, I have determined that language choices play a significant role in shaping commercial success, often at the expense of cultural identity. In addition, this project has revealed the innate complexity of the music industry, leading me to understand the multitude of factors affecting musical conformity. This project examined how the industry has adopted a homogeneous culture, specifically focusing on language conformity the detrimental effects it has on an artist's culture.

Secondary research was fundamental in the creation of this topic. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the topic, I reviewed Academic articles such as Andy Gibson's paper and Lisa Jansen and Michael Westphal's article published in *Language in Society* and *English Today*, respectively, as well as various blog posts, statistics, and video clips. Sociophonetic studies found that artists adopt more "neutral" accents as they become more successful, and literature highlighted the role of Western labels in setting global standards. Thus showing that linguistic conformity is not only artist-driven but also imposed by the music industry. Utilising these secondary sources, I gained insights into music production and the way the industry forces commodification, thus enabling me to generate Primary research methods, which reinforced my understanding and formed new understandings that I had not previously found in secondary sources.

Primary research, including a questionnaire, interviews with artists and content analysis, supported the exploration of my hypothesis. My questionnaire examined the difference between Generation X and Generation Y's opinions on the industry. This questionnaire supported much of my secondary research and showed differences in audience opinions, revealing a strong link between music that lacks cultural authenticity and commercial success, suggesting success can come at the cost of creativity. In addition, I set out to interview artists to understand how the music industry works for artists. Ultimately, this was a struggle as I only completed one interview; however, it highlighted the challenges faced by smaller artists trying to break into the music industry. Finally, my Content analysis was used to find statistics that were rarely reported on and gave me a quantitative way of determining an artist's success.

Overall, this project deepened my understanding of the Society and Culture course by applying key concepts to real-world scenarios. The global music industry mirrors wider social structures, where language, instead of simply expressing culture, is often reshaped to fit commercial expectations. This reveals how success in a creative field can depend not just on talent, but on strategic conformity to dominant cultural norms. As stated in the non-expert interview, “This would have been the perfect topic 10 years ago”, as there have been greater strides towards social inclusion in the music industry, and I can only predict that this will continue similarly throughout the future of the modern music industry making the way for more diverse artists and more artist expression within music.<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>56</sup> Primary Research: Non Expert Interview.



## **Reference List**

### **Primary Research**

#### **Questionnaire conducted with Generation X and Generation Y respondents, October 2024 to March 2025**

This questionnaire was designed to gain quantitative and qualitative data on the way that Generation X and Generation Y view music from different cultures and the way they view language techniques in music. This questionnaire collected 36 responses 20 from Generation Y and 16 from Generation X, the difference is roughly equal and therefore there is little skew affecting the data. Respondents were collected through school connections, Social media posts and family connections which allowed for the aforementioned number of respondents. The responses to this questionnaire were fundamental in the refinement of my PIP's topic, responses provides a variety of key insights into peoples personal preferences regarding language in music as well as providing key insights into a range of music genres and the way they are affected by commodification. Unfortunately the questionnaire provided limited data to be used in my PIP but was fundamental in my research process. The questionnaire is reliable as it was conducted over multiple months and collected anonymous data, in addition the number of respondents makes this questionnaire valid as there is a moderate amount of data which should accurately reflect trends in modern society. Although it is important for bias to be considered as the questions are largely reflective of my own personal experiences with music and the experiences I had read about in my primary research, this means that the data could not be reflective of certain groups or individuals.

#### **Interview with Steve Grocott from Drones band, 16/04/2025**

For my PIP I conducted an interview with Steve Grocott, a lead singer and guitarist of the band 'Drones', to gain qualitative perspectives of an independent artist within the commercial music industry. The purpose of the interview was to explore themes of language use, artistic authenticity, and the pressures of conformity, particularly within his genres of folk, country, and rock. The interview was semi-structured and conducted via zoom, allowing for open-ended responses and follow-up questions tailored to Grocott's experiences. The questions focused on vocal manipulation and industry pressures, Grocott provided a number

of reflective and personal insights that aligned with broader themes uncovered in my secondary research. While the interview reflects the views of a single artist, it was valuable in offering an authentic, real-world perspective from within the industry and helped deepen my understanding of how commercial pressures can conflict with cultural or creative expression. The interview is somewhat limited in its usability due to the singular perspective, however, it remains a reliable source as it is a direct account from a musician. The interview's bias must be accounted for as the interviewee was only able to comment on his own experience, and due to him never signing with a major record-label was unable to comment on the way the industry functioned, as well there was likely a Social desirability bias as the interviewee is likely to provide answers they believe are socially acceptable or will be viewed favorably by the interviewer. Nonetheless, the interview served as a critical piece of primary research, informing the direction and focus of my PIP.

**Content analysis, *Nostalgia 90s Mix*, and *Nostalgia 2010 Mix*, and *A various other songs from Spotify***

This content analysis was conducted to examine common traits within lyrics, vocal delivery, and artist success across a sample of songs and from both mainstream and independent artists. The sample included 100 songs from genres such as rock, pop, country and rap, chosen based on relevance to my topic and date of release. These texts were selected from Spotify and analysed using a coding sheet featuring both qualitative and quantitative data, developed around key concepts including language conformity, commodification, and cultural representation. The analysis revealed that repeated use of standardised English in vocal delivery led to more common and greater success. These findings directly supported the perspectives explored in my secondary research and highlighted the ways in which language and image are shaped by commercialisation. While this method is limited by subjective interpretation, it remains a valid and reliable form of primary research due to its structured approach and focus on relevant content. Potential bias must be acknowledged, as my coding sheet was influenced by the themes already identified in my PIP's secondary research, which may have led to a selective focus bias. Nevertheless, the content analysis provided crucial evidence for linking language, representation, and success within the music industry.

**Non-Expert interview with secondary school teacher, 7/05/2025.**

This Interview was informally conducted, between me and a high school Commerce and Geography teacher. This interview was started while I was talking about my pip process, I had asked what he thought about my pip process and he shared how he thought “This would have been the perfect 10 years ago” expressing how diversity had already been increasing in the music industry. This source offers has limited use as it was only the 1 quote but I found it very useful counter argument which can be used to create a prediction. This source’s validity is questionable as the teacher has no formal training in society and culture and music, in addition there is little bias present in the source.

## Secondary Research

**ABC Radio, 'Evenings with Renee Krosch', *ABC Listen* (2 June 2025),  
<https://www.abc.net.au/listen/programs/sydney-evenings/evenings/105341558>  
, accessed 2 June 2025**

An interview between ABC host Renee Krosch and Professor Roald Maliangkay speaking on the rise of Korean-New Zealander artist *Rosé* following the release of her song '*APT*' and how the Australian music industry has been unable to develop diverse musicians. This source provides a useful case study that allows us to look at the Australian music industry, but it also explores what makes the global music industry more ideal to artists. This source seeks to connect with older audiences as a form of news. As this source has been created by the ABC, it can be considered a reliable and credible source, as it platforms educated professionals in an informal structure. This source contains little to no bias due to Maliangkay's professional status. This source has been relevant to my PIP as it provides me with a relevant example that can be used to support my hypothesis.

**Anderson. A. et al., 'Algorithmic Effects on the Diversity of Consumption on Spotify', *Proceedings of The Web Conference*, in press, (2020), 2155 - 2165,  
<https://doi.org/10.1145/3366423.3380281>**

This source explores how Spotify's algorithmic recommendations influence consumer diversity in musical taste and how this affects the commodification of language in music. The authors employ a large-scale dataset uses "high-fidelity embedding of millions of songs based on listening behaviour on Spotify to quantify how musically diverse every user is". They show that algorithm-driven listening is significantly less diverse than organic, user-driven listening, and that higher diversity correlates with premium subscription conversion and retention. A randomised experiment further confirms that while recommendations enhance short-term engagement, they reinforce narrow listening, highlighting an inherent tension between commercial utility and cultural diversity. This article was published in the proceedings of the Web conference, which highlights prominent technological studies. By featuring in this conference, it is clear that the source is able to provide reliable data. In addition, this is a peer-reviewed article thus supporting its claim of reliability. This source can not be seen as bias due to its rigorous editing and peer review, featuring many educated authors from different cultures. This source utilises clear graphs and tables, demonstrating how algorithmic control can limit linguistic variety and shape consumption patterns. Overall,

this source can be used to comment on the effect of music algorithms on the commodification of a global music industry.

**Artist Vanguard, 'The Spotify Controversy: How the Platform's Algorithm Shapes Music Discovery, Artist Vanguard' (3 December 2023),  
<https://artistvanguard.com/spotify-algorithm>, accessed 3 February 2024**

This article explores Spotify's recommendation algorithm and how it is effective at curating user-specific playlists like Discover Weekly and Release Radar, in addition raising concerns regarding cultural and linguistic variety in music. It outlines that the system's reliance on prior listening habits and how they can produce a "filter bubble" effect, keeping users to listen to similar genres and thus, languages. Therefore, it can be said that algorithmic curation reinforces mainstream language dominance in music. In addition, the article critiques the power imbalances within the industry, such as the difference between high-profile artists receiving more attention and compensation than smaller artists who may struggle to gain visibility. The source offers a narrative analysis of how streaming platforms, shaped by market incentives, may unintentionally suppress linguistic diversity. Due to this narrative style, the source's reliability is questionable, and therefore, the source will not be used to develop my idea and instead will act to support other known claims. This text presents little bias but it is important to consider that the lack of author listed might be understood as an issue with bias. This suppression aligns with the theme of commercialisation, illustrating how algorithmic structures can prioritise profit over cultural inclusivity. Overall, it offers a critique that supports my hypothesis that technology is built on commercial frameworks that can influence language use and musical diversity within streaming.

**Bielas. I, 'The Rise and Fall of Record Labels ', Open Access Senior Thesis, in press (2013) ,[https://scholarship.claremont.edu/cmc\\_theses/703/](https://scholarship.claremont.edu/cmc_theses/703/), accessed 3 December 2024**

This source examines the change of the music industry as new technologies like the Internet and file-sharing were introduced into the industry and they acted to undermine record labels. The thesis argues that these technologies enabled artists to connect directly with audiences, bypassing major labels and diminishing the labels' dominance over music distribution and promotion. As an undergraduate thesis, the text offers valuable insight for on the economic importance of commodification in music, as it highlights how distribution structures

influence which languages and artists get visibility. The intended audience is scholars and students in economics, media studies, and music industry analysis. Bielas concludes that record labels have become increasingly irrelevant due to their slow adaptation to shifting consumption patterns, and that market inefficiencies were filled by private entrepreneurial ventures responsive to changing demand. This conclusion supports commodification and access by outlining structural shifts in how music circulates. This source has little visible bias due to its academic nature. Overall, it provides a strong macro-level context for understanding how control over music distribution can shape linguistic representation and power in the global music economy as well as commenting on the importance of record labels as a figure of authority .

**Blistein. J, ‘Jimmy Page Faces New “Dazed and Confused” Lawsuit from Jake Holmes’, Rolling Stone (5 May 2025),**

**<https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-news/jimmy-page-dazed-and-confused-lawsuit-jake-holmes-1235331801>, accessed 10 November 2024**

This source presents the legal battle between Jake Holmes and Led Zeppelin guitarist Jimmy Page and other entities, including Sony Pictures and Warner Chappell Music. The suit claims that Led Zeppelin copied the song “Dazed and confused”, specifically claiming that holmes was uncredited in the creation of Led Zeppelin’s song. The article focuses on appealing to music fans and those interested in legality in music. As a reputable music-industry news narrative, the text is reliable for factual recounting and legal context; it contributes directly to my PIP by highlighting how copyright has influenced which songs gain visibility in a wider industry. Its narrative clarity and detailed overview of settlement history and current claims make it a strong resource. In the past Blistein has been actively critiqued for a perceived bias for older songs although there is little reliable evidence to prove this. Overall, the source offers a case study in how legality plays a role in the commodification of music, and showing how plagiarism is prevalent in the industry.

**Cain. S, ‘Ed Sheeran Sings in Court as Part of Marvin Gaye Copyright Case’ The Guardian (28 April 2023),**

**<https://www.theguardian.com/music/2023/apr/28/ed-sheeran-sings-in-court-as-part-of-marvin-gaye-copyright-case>, accessed 10 November 2024**

This article reports on the 2023 copyright trial where Ed Sheeran was accused of copying Marvin Gaye's classic "Let's Get It On" in his hit "Thinking Out Loud." The lawsuit alleged that Sheeran mirrored the melody, harmony, and rhythm of the Gaye's song. During the trial, Sheeran took the witness stand and played guitar, performing the chord progression and singing in court to illustrate that the elements were common musical building blocks. Subsequent appeals affirmed that the similarities involved unprotectable structural elements. The text provides narrative detail and anecdotes from the courtroom that underline the complexity of plagiarism in the music industry. The text is highly reliable, drawing on court proceedings and public statements. The author has no relevant bias towards the topic of the article which means it can be omitted. This has distinct value in my PIP as a case study which illustrates how legal frameworks interact with questions of ownership and the effect of plagiarism on how the industry is becoming more commodified.

**ClintMusic, 'What Is Overproduction? How to Avoid It', Youtube, (1 June 2017) ,**

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5g7ltPxv1ZY>, accessed 19 May 2025**

The video created by 'Clint Music' goes over what overproduction is from the perspective of a sound engineer explaining different ways in which it can occur and the side effects of overproducing music. This video is aimed at up and coming music producers but also provides value when exploring the technologies and the way they force conformity within the industry. Due to the nature of this being presented in the form of a video it is important to consider the validity, the creator has no formal education in the music industry but does claim to have "Over a decade of experience producing music". This video was useful as it provides a in-depth understanding of overproduction that is also easy to understand. This source has a direct bias to encourage the use and creation of record labels within the industry due to his status as a music producer. This source links to my understanding of conformity that is present within my PIP while also allowing me to better understand the role that technology plays in the development of music. This source despite its questionable validity is a solid framework for my understanding and therefore can be considered useful throughout my PIP.

**Dogg. S , 'Snoop Dogg Impersonates Today's Rappers Sound-Alike Flow',**

**Youtube, (14 October 2014) ,**

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g0OdmRtuQew>, accessed 17 October 2024**

This video is a clip of a group of rappers on a livestream that are talking on authenticity in the music industry, largely the clip involves rapper ‘Snoop Dogg’, talking about how everyone raps the same and that rappers should be more authentic. This source is largely for entertainment purposes but allows topic they are discussing links directly into my PIP as it discusses conformity and changing of language styles to adopt a specific genre style. This source features a range of validity issues, such as ‘Snoop Dogg’s’ position of power within the rap industry as he has a direct link towards the way the industry is shaped and showcases this bias towards his particular style of rap. In addition the video format must be considered as youtube allows anyone to upload their own content meaning this clip could be edited or doctored. Finally, one issue to the validity of this source is that the video was recorded while the rappers were under the influence of drugs and alcohol meaning that it is important to understand the effects of drugs on their systems and how this changes the way that they present information. This source provides a clear example from an artist in the industry on how the effect of my topic.

**Dono, ‘How to Rap: Should You Fake an American Accent?’, Youtube (20 September 2017) ,<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=paSm-553dYE>, accessed 14 April 2025**

In this video, creator ‘Dono’ explores the idea of rapping in an accent different from your natural accent specifically in an americanised accent, in this he provides 5 reasons why commodification can be detrimental to cultural identity. The creator concludes that singing in an unnatural accent is “harder to build a local fan base”, “difficult to maintain”, “not authentic”, leads to less confidence and can negatively affect pronunciation. This source is largely aimed at people with an interest in conformity and rap music as well as up and coming rappers. This video is an educational exploration of conformity in rap music, one key issue with the reliability of this source is the creator who has no formal music education and has not released music since 2014. Despite this the way he talks about is in depth and will be useful for my understanding of a variety of genres as well the video relates explicitly to commodification of the music industry and detriment of language conformity which is directly related to my topic. This source shows limited bias but must be used carefully due to the authors non-professional status. Despite the concerns about reliability this source can provide a basis to my research and understanding of conformity in rap.



**Stuart Chapin. F, 'A Theory of Synchronous Culture Cycles' (1925), Journal of Social Forces 3/596, in press,**

**<https://academic.oup.com/sf/article-abstract/3/4/596/2225708?redirectedFrom=fulltext>, accessed 22 October 2024**

This article presents an understanding of cyclical cultures proposing that cultures evolve in cyclical phases of collective behavior that happen simultaneously across societies, driven by interaction patterns. Chapin argues these synchronicities emerge from similarities commonalities within groups. The intended readership includes scholars in sociology, anthropology, cultural history, who are interested in macro-level cultural processes. Chapin concludes that understanding these cyclical dynamics offers a predictive framework for cultural change and cohesion. Due to the age of the text, its reliability must be questioned; the text reflects the opinions and sociology of its time period, but its reliability can be supported by its involvement in modern sociology such as in the Society and Culture syllabus. For my PIP, it provides an explanation of social theory that can assist in the prediction of how language dominance and marginalization in musical consumption will evolve and repeat over time. The author's age must be acknowledged when exploring bias as the text is likely relevant to its time period which could lead to the use of outdated arguments. Overall, this piece provides a unique perspective on social theory which can relate to the evolving nature of the music industry, as I seek to explore the change in the music industry and if it reflects past conditions of the industry<sup>6</sup>

**Gao. Y, et al., 'Communication between Artist and Audience: A Case Study of Creation Journey' Lecture Notes in Computer Science, 11577/33, in press,**

**(2019) [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-22580-3\\_3](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-22580-3_3)**

This study introduces a framework exploring how “the conception of the artist affects the creation process and how the creation process is understood by the audience”. The authors argue that by structuring artistic production and intentional emotional meaning, the artist more effectively communicates with their audience. The chapter concludes that their framework enriches understanding of how meaning is made in creative contexts, and suggests broader applications in diverse creative areas, such as music. The text can be seen as highly reliable due its inclusion in a globally respected conference, but its inclusion in this could be problematic as the original paper focuses on traditional art and provides no relation to the scope of the global music industry. This source's bias is limited but exclusively provides a

south-east Asian perspective and mentions no reference to more globalised industry. In addition it provides analysis of how audiences interact with different artworks depending on how they reflect the artists context. In relation to my PIP, the study offers a theoretical analysis through which to consider how musical language is intentionally interpreted across cultural divides. Overall this

**Gibson. A, 'Pop Song English as a Supralocal Norm', *Language in Society* 53/1, in press, (2023) <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404523000131>**

This source explores how commercial pop performers worldwide adopt an American-influenced singing style known as Pop Song English (PSE), particularly analyzing the pronunciation of the bath vowel and non-prevocalic /r/ in performances by U.S. and New Zealand artists. The study reveals that nearly all New Zealand pop singers incorporate PSE features, reflecting greater conformity to American norms in pop. The intended audience includes sociolinguists and music scholars interested in language performance across genres. Gibson concludes that pop music functions as a norm that standardizes linguistic expression globally, reinforcing homogenization in the sound of singing voices. As a peer-reviewed article Gibson's text can be seen as reliable while presenting detailed analysis. This source has been directly relevant to my PIP due to its exploration of accent modification and conformity. It demonstrates how accents are commodified through different styles featured in global pop production, aligning with themes of language conformity shaped by the industry's commercialisation. Gibson provides a variety of graphs showing the altering of specific vowels between spoken english and sung english. This source provides limited bias due to its academic nature . Overall, Gibson's study is critical to my understanding of accent modification as well as provided many critical terms such as PSE, and can also be used as a case study to show accent modification.

**Gibson. H, 'Talking Tactics: Rihanna and the Pop Stars Who Change Accent', *The Guardian* (4 February 2016), <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2016/feb/04/talk-that-talk-rihanna-the-cunning-linguist>, accessed 12 December 2024**

This source presents a case study of how prevalent language commodification within mainstream pop music is, the article explores how Rihanna's lyrical and stylistic choices; particularly in songs like "Talk That Talk" and "Cockiness (Love It)" highlight how she uses

vocal techniques to regain her cultural heritage. The intended audience is largely readers interested in popular music criticism, gender studies, the way language is used in music. The author argues that Rihanna's bold linguistic innovation, her manipulation of language techniques such as slang, metaphor, and tone functions to deliberately encourage commercial success and dissuade personal autonomy, positioning language as a marketable asset. This source comes from Guardian which is a reputable news outlet due to this the text is reliable for cultural commentary and offers rich examples that directly feed into my PIP. It underscores how language is created for consumption and how a person's voice can become a commodity. Source contains as the author is of an Australian background while commenting on Rihanna's Barbadian culture. Overall, it offers an argument that language and vocal style in pop can be commodified and deployed to shape identity, challenge industry norms, this will be used as part of a case study on Rihanna as a musician.

**Giuffre. L , 'Richard Kingsmill's Radio 2SER Documentary on the 1980s Music**

**Industry', National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, (2025)**

**,<https://www.nfsa.gov.au/latest/richard-kingsmills-radio-2ser-documentary-1980s-music-industry>, accessed 12 October 2024**

This article platforms a radio series by Richard Kingsmill which examines the Australian music industry of the 1980s starting by exploring the influence of "the music press", the dominance of FM radio, music retail dynamics, and ultimately exploring how different types of music work in the global industry. This narrative highlights how gatekeepers restrict diversity, particularly sidelining local or independent artists in favour of international artists; thus, amplifying mainstream language and stylistic norms. Although produced in a pre-digital era, the article offers reflections on biases and differing promotional structures that shaped musical visibility. This article was curated Dr Liz Giuffre, to ensure accessible preservation of Kingsmill's radio series on how power dynamics determined which music and by extension which linguistic and cultural forms gained exposure. Its reliability can be as the article showcases Kingsmill's perspective as a professional radio broadcaster through the 1980s up until 2023. Little bias is present within this series as it is a professional exploration of the music industry from insiders. For my PIP, this series offers a cross cultural perspective of how institutions shape the movement and marginalization of musical diversity.

**Jansen. L and Westphal. M , ‘Rihanna Works Her Multivocal Pop Persona: A Morpho-Syntactic and Accent Analysis of Rihanna’s Singing Style’, English Today 33/46, in press, (2017), <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266078416000651>**

This study analyzes Rihanna’s vocal performance, noting how she incorporates both features of a Caribbean English Creole alongside standard English in songs like “Work,” making her language an example of multivocal identity expression. It argues that pop music now serves as a highly transnational space where different accents are used, and performers act to encourage or discourage this, for example Rihanna channels elements of her Barbadian heritage as her music circulates globally. The article is aimed at sociolinguists, and scholars interested in language variation in global pop. The authors conclude that Rihanna’s multivocal stylistic strategy is intentional and marketable, blending authenticity with global appeal. As a peer-reviewed journal article, it is a reliable source that presents a perspective on how language can be commodified in music through stylized performance. The article provides detailed sociophonetic transcriptions which I have used to gain a better understanding of how language can change. This article has provided insights into how artists use linguistic features to commodify their music, which I will use in my case study on Rihanna.

**Jenkins. C, ‘Welcome to the Age of Pop “Plagiarism”’, Vulture, (1 April 2019), <https://www.vulture.com/2019/04/the-age-of-pop-plagiarism.html>, accessed 22 October 2023**

This article explores how the pressure to sell modern pop music often clashes with the struggle between being original and imitating. Jenkins argues the pop music industry operates as an “economy of the familiar,” where there are finite musical structures such as notes, chord progressions that producers repeatedly rely upon. He positions successful artists as people who are legally borrowing other people’s work thus ignoring the line where inspiration can change into a case of plagiarism. Intended for readers interested in music criticism and industry dynamics, the article concludes that copying can be both lucrative and legally problematic, and that originality in contemporary pop is increasingly difficult to find. Jenkins offers a compelling narrative enriched by examples like Drake and the Weeknd, whose vocal trends are rapidly reproduced across genres. This text platforms arguments about how

musical and linguistic styles are treated as replicable commodities, in my PIP I will seek to greater explore this idea of music plagiarism.

**Lee. B, 'Ed Sheeran Cleared of Infringing Copyright in Marvin Gaye Lawsuit'**

**The Guardian (4 May 2023),**

**[https://www.theguardian.com/music/2023/may/04/ed-sheeran-verdict-not-lia](https://www.theguardian.com/music/2023/may/04/ed-sheeran-verdict-not-liable-copyright-lawsuit-marvin-gaye)  
**ble-copyright-lawsuit-marvin-gaye, accessed 10 November 2024****

This article reports on the court case for copyright infringement over allegations that Ed Sheeran's 2014 hit "Thinking Out Loud" copied Marvin Gaye's 1973 classic "Let's Get It On.". The article details how Sheeran's defence highlighted that the copied elements, especially the four-chord progression, are common, non-protectable expressions but part of basic songwriting. Sheeran performed in court, playing his guitar and addressing the jurors directly, highlighting industry-wide concerns about stifling creativity if such common musical patterns were deemed proprietary. Intended for readers interested in music industry law and cultural dynamics, the article offers a reliable and vivid account of how legal frameworks shape notions of ownership, originality, and the commodification of musical language. This case connects with my PIP by exemplifying how legal mechanisms determine which musical linguistic elements are deemed marketable or permissible, and how the threat of copyright can define creative boundaries. Overall, it's a compelling narrative that showcases the threat of plagiarism to the uniqueness of the music and the damage that musical conformity can have.

**Von Burkersroda. L, 'TikTok's Transformation of the Music Industry: A**

**Double-Edged Sword', Festivaltopia, (14 February 2025) ,**

**[https://festivaltopia.com/tiktoks-transformation-of-the-music-industry-a-do](https://festivaltopia.com/tiktoks-transformation-of-the-music-industry-a-double-edged-sword/)  
**uble-edged-sword/, accessed 21 April 2024****

This article examines TikTok's impact on the music industry, highlighting both its influence and the challenges it presents to aspiring artists and the diversity of musical expression. The platform's algorithm has helped to propel songs like Lil Nas X's "Old Town Road" and Doja Cat's "Say So" into success in the global industry. The algorithm can offer indie artists increased exposure. However, the emphasis on short, catchy hooks may encourage artists to prioritize virality over musical depth, potentially leading to a homogenization of musical

styles. Additionally, the pressure to produce “TikTok-friendly” content can contribute to burnout among musicians. The intended audience includes music industry professionals, artists, and scholars interested in the intersection of social media and music. The article concludes that while TikTok has altered the way music is discovered, it also poses challenges that could affect the diversity and authenticity of musical expression. The text is questionably reliable, as the author has little professional training in journalism or music. Here the author is offering a perspective on TikTok's role in the music industry, particularly discussing the platform's influence on musical trends and artist experiences is particularly useful for research on the commodification of languages in music. The article's analysis of the pressures faced by artists provides valuable insight into the complexities of modern music promotion. Overall, it offers a balanced view of TikTok's impact, making it a pertinent resource for exploring the evolving dynamics of the music industry.

**Madden. D, ‘TikTok Is Changing the DNA of Hit Songs, and Artists Are Taking**

**Note, Berklee’ (24 October 2023),**

**<https://www.berklee.edu/berklee-now/news/tiktok-is-changing-the-dna-of-hit-songs-and-artists-are-taking-note>, accessed 21 April 2025**

This article explores how TikTok has influenced the structure of popular songs, emphasizing its role in shaping musical trends. The author discusses how elements like song length, lyrical content, have been adapted to fit the platform's shortform style. The intended audience largely includes musicians, and songwriters. The article concludes that TikTok has become a significant factor in songwriting, forcing artists to tailor their music to align with the platform's format. The text is reliable as it is published by one of the most respected music institutes in the world, as well as offering insights from industry professionals and songwriters. Its discussion on the adaptation of musical elements for TikTok provides valuable context for understanding the commodification of music through social media. This source is important to my research on how changing technologies like TikTok influence the production and commodification of music, aligning with themes of language and identity in my PIP.

**Merriam-Webster, ‘Definition of HOMOGENEITY’, Merriam Webster (2019) ,**

**<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/homogeneity>, accessed 17 October 2024**

This dictionary entry defines "homogeneity" as "the quality or state of being of a similar kind or of having a uniform structure or composition throughout". The term is often used in sociology to describe groups that have similar characteristics. In the context of this pip Homogeneity is used to describe the similarity of the music industry and how different songs and artists conform to this homogenised industry. The definition provided is reliable, coming from a reputable source. The definition will be useful to provide context to my pip as well as being useful for understanding discussions about uniformity and diversity in music production and consumption.

**Moore. A, 'Exploring Current Music Trends: Impact & Influence on Artists and Audiences', Feedback magazine (17 April 2024) ,  
<https://feedbackmagazine.org/exploring-current-music-trends-impact-influence-on-artists-and-audiences>, accessed 22 July 2025**

This article provides an overview of evolving music trends, highlighting how shifts in societal preferences, technological advancements, and cultural movements influence both artists and audiences. It discusses the dominance of streaming platforms, and the rise of indie artists, showcasing how these changes reflect broader societal transformations. The intended audience includes music fans, industry professionals, and people interested in understanding the dynamics of contemporary music culture. The article concludes that music trends mirror changes within society, offering insights into the differing perspectives over time. The text is reliable, drawing on historical and current examples to support its analysis. Its discussion on the impact of streaming services and the emphasis on individual expression provides valuable context for examining the commodification of music and language. This source is beneficial for research on how industry practices shape musical and linguistic expressions and how the commercialization of music influences the representation and commodification of language in the industry.

**Moran. R, 'You Beauty: The Politics of Singing in an Aussie Accent', The Music, (7 March 2023) ,  
<https://themusic.com.au/features/you-beauty-the-politics-of-singing-in-an-aussie-accent/borMYGNiZWQ/07-03-23>, accessed 23 September 2024**

This article explores why Australian singers often adopt American accents in their music, examining both vocal mechanics and cultural influences. Moran discusses how the physical

aspects of singing, such as the need to elongate vowels and maintain specific rhythms, can make it challenging to sing in a natural accent. Additionally, she highlights how historical and market norms have shaped the expectations of vocal performance, often favoring accents perceived as more neutral. The piece also explores the implications of these practices for the Australian music industry, suggesting that embracing Australian accents could contribute to a inclusive musical landscape. The intended audience includes musicians, music educators, and listeners interested in the in culture. The article concludes by encouraging audiences to reevaluate their views of the music industry and consider the potential benefits of celebrating linguistic diversity in music. The text is reliable, offering insights from a reputable source known for its coverage of Australian music and culture.

**Mullen. M, ‘Extended Play: The Impact of Major Labels on the Modern Music Industry’, mn2s, (24 May 2021)**

**,<https://mn2s.com/news/news/extended-play-the-impact-of-major-labels-on-the-modern-music-industry>, accessed 24 October 2024**

This article contrasts the roles of major and independent record labels in shaping the contemporary music landscape. Major labels like Universal Music Group (UMG), Sony, and Warner Music dominate the industry with substantial financial resources, extensive distribution networks, and global reach. The article discusses how major labels often prioritize mass production and commercial success. This approach can limit artistic freedom, as they are frequently guided by the commercial interests of the label. While independent labels often offer artists greater creative control and a more personalized approach to music creation. The text is reliable, providing insights into the economic disparities and operational differences between major and independent labels.

**‘How Auto-Tune Changed the Music Industry: A Revolutionary Shift in Sound’, Liafi Studio, (4 March 2025) ,**

**<https://liafistudio.com/how-auto-tune-changed-the-music-industry-a-revolutionary-shift-in-sound>, accessed 27 December 2024**

This source explores the historical development and widespread use of Auto-Tune as both a corrective tool and a stylistic choice. Aimed at music enthusiasts and general readers, the article outlines how Auto-Tune has moved from pitch correction to a vocal effect. The author concludes that Auto-Tune has reshaped vocal expectations in popular music, blurring the line



between authenticity and commodification, and reinforcing the industry's pursuit of perfection. While the article lacks academic citations and depth, making it's reliable questionable, it was still useful to my PIP as it provided accessible insight into how vocal modification technologies influence conformity in the global music industry. The source clearly tracks the evolution of Auto-Tune's cultural perception, directly connecting to the themes of commodification and music technologies explored in my PIP, highlighting how technological intervention can impact both artistic identity and commercial success. Overall, the text presents an overview that supports the broader argument of my project regarding the industry's prioritisation of standardised sound over artistic authenticity.

**National Public Radio , 'Accentuating Accents: The Linguistic Hierarchy' (26 March 2007) ,<https://www.npr.org/transcripts/9140305>, accessed 21 March 2025**

This transcript from NPR's Talk of the Nation explores the social perceptions and hierarchies associated with various American accents. Linguistics professor Dennis Preston discusses how accents influence perceptions of intelligence, class, and credibility. He notes that accents from New York City and the American South are often ranked lower in prestige, while New England accents are sometimes perceived as more refined, though potentially aloof. The discussion also touches on the myth of a neutral "accentless" Midwestern speech, which is often idealized in media and broadcasting. The intended audience includes linguists, sociologists, and the general public interested in language and social dynamics. The transcript provides insights into how accent biases can affect personal and professional interactions. Its reliability is supported by the credentials of the speaker and the reputable platform. While the transcript lacks visual aids, its content is valuable for understanding the intersection of language, identity, and societal perceptions. This source is pertinent to discussions on how linguistic features, such as accents, can be commodified and influence cultural and economic outcomes. Overall, the transcript offers a nuanced perspective on the complexities of accent-based judgments in American society.

**Nosowitz. D, 'I Made a Linguistics Professor Listen to a Blink-182 Song and Analyze the Accent', Atlas Obscura, (18 June 2015) ,<https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/i-made-a-linguistics-professor-listen-to-a-blink-182-song-and-analyze-the-accent>, accessed 12 October 2024**

This article explores the vocal style of Blink-182's lead singer, Tom DeLonge, focusing on his exaggerated Californian accent. The author, includes a transliteration of DeLonge's lyrics from the song "I Miss You," highlighting the unique pronunciation and vocal inflections characteristic of the pop-punk genre. The piece includes insights from linguistics professor Penelope Eckert, who attributes DeLonge's vocal style to the California Shift, a regional vowel change in American English. Eckert explains that DeLonge's exaggerated accent is a deliberate stylistic choice, influenced by his desire to emulate the vocal style of punk rock bands like The Descendents. The intended audience includes sociolinguists and readers interested in the accent modification in different genre . The article provides an examination of how regional accents and personal influences shape an artist's vocal identity. It can be considered reliable due to the inclusion of expert commentary and cultural references. This source is important to my research on the commodification of linguistic expression in the music industry, illustrating how distinctive vocal styles can become iconic and the way they can be commodified.

**Orr, S, 'The History of Record Labels - Everything You Need to Know about Record Labels', Other Record Labels, (2022),**

**<https://www.otherrecordlabels.com/the-history-of-record-labels>, accessed 22 October 2024**

This article provides an overview of the evolution of record labels, The article examines the rise of major record labels and their influence on the music industry, noting how technological advancementssshaped the development of record labels. It concludes by reflecting on the current state of record labels, emphasizing the contemporary impact of these institutions on the production and distribution of music. The article explores the foundational aspects of the music industry, providing context for understanding contemporary practices. Its reliability is supported by the author's expertise as a professional musician and producer, although this connection to the music could lead to biased opinions. This source has allowed me to discuss the commodification of music, showing how record labels have played a central role in shaping the music industry. Overall, the article offers a detailed and informative account of the history of record labels which will be useful when discussing authority figures.

**Qurat. U, et al. , 'How Do Customers React to Preferential Treatment? An Affective Events Theory and Time-Lagged Survey' Journal of Retailing and**

**Consumer services 80/1, in press, (2024),**  
**<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2024.103927>**

This study investigates how customers respond to preferential treatment in service encounters. The authors propose that such treatment can lead to positive emotions, enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty. Conversely, perceived unfairness in preferential treatment may result in negative emotions, potentially damaging the customer relationship. The study relates to music as it is important for record labels and musicians to promote to audiences who are responsive to a specific type of music. Its reliability is supported by the use of social theory and its inclusion in the journal of retailing and consumer services. Due to the analytical nature of this source there is little to no bias present. This source contributes to understanding the. Overall, this article offers a unique social theory to my PIP and allows me to better understand preferential marketing as a whole before studying how it is prevalent in music.

**Spotify, ‘Algorithmic Effects on the Diversity of Consumption on Spotify’, Spotify Research, (3 December 2020),**  
**<https://research.atspotify.com/2020/12/algorithmic-effects-on-the-diversity-of-consumption-on-spotify>, accessed 3 February 2024**

The study examines how Spotify's recommendation algorithms influence the diversity of music consumption among users. By analyzing over 850 million playlists. The study found that users with diverse listening patterns were more likely to convert from free to premium subscriptions, suggesting a positive correlation between listening diversity and user retention. However, the research also revealed that algorithmic recommendations often lead to less diverse listening. Users who engaged more with algorithm-driven content exhibited lower diversity scores, indicating narrower listening habits. Users who increased their listening diversity did so by shifting from algorithmic to organic listening, such as exploring user-curated playlists. Though authored by Spotify researchers and thus potentially biased, it has a highly reliable methodology and provides quantitative evidence relevant to my PIP. The article includes helpful figures such as GS-score distribution plots to visual diversity metrics and experimental outcomes. It connects directly with my theme of how technology acts to homogenise music. Overall, it offers a useful case study supporting my thesis that algorithms tend to prioritise homogeneity over diversity.

**Wayte. L, ‘The 1980s and 90s: Consolidation and MTV Pop Superstars’,  
University of Oregon, (15 May 2023),  
<https://opentext.uoregon.edu/payforplay/chapter/chapter-15-the-1980s-and-90s-consolidation-and-mtv-pop-superstars>, accessed 21 May 2024**

The source examines how the record-labels underwent consolidation through acquisitions while MTV’s launch transformed music marketing by including visual features into the music industry. Aimed at people within the music industry and students, the chapter argues that consolidation of corporations produced a few global superstars but also marginalized smaller labels and artists; the author concludes that while the format rescued the industry financially, it concentrated power and cultural homogeneity in the hands of authority figures. The author has little relation to the major music industry therefore bias is negligible. The text is reliable drawing on historical data and industry reports and included a useful chart tracking merger values and sales rebound. The sources overview of technological, economic, and cultural shifts provided a strong basis for my PIP’s exploration of how global industry’s enforced standardised pop images, linking directly to themes of homogenisation. As I researched my PIP, it proved invaluable by consolidation and MTV aesthetics shaped late-20th-century pop culture.

**Wong. J, ‘Algorithmic Symphonies: How Spotify Strikes the Right Chord’, USC  
Viterbi School of Engineering, (21 January 2024),  
<https://illumin.usc.edu/algorithmic-symphonies-how-spotify-strikes-the-right-chord/>, accessed 21 April 2025**

Jonathan Wong's article explores the workings of Spotify's recommendation algorithm, highlighting its transformative impact on the music industry. He explains how Spotify employs machine learning techniques, such as collaborative filtering, hybrid recommendation systems, and feedback loops, to curate personalized music experiences for its users. Wong argues that Spotify’s algorithmic design revolutionised music discovery by continually refining suggestions through feedback. As a student-written piece it lacks peer-review, but its detailed descriptions allow it to be reliably used in my PIP. This source will be helpful for my PIP by demonstrating how algorithms can change the way that people consume music. The article aligns closely with my PIP themes of technology leading to a lack of diversity in music, as well providing a case study of how recommendation systems alter the way that people interact with music.

**Zimmerman. J, 'The "Tiktokification" of Modern Pop Music: How Tiktok Changed the Music Industry', The Miami Student , (2 November 2023), <https://www.miamistudent.net/article/2023/11/tiktok-effect-on-popular-music> , accessed 21 April 2025**

In this article, Josie Zimmerman examines the impact of TikTok on the contemporary music industry. Zimmerman discusses how TikTok's algorithm favors "catchy hooks and short, engaging clips", leading artists to prioritize this in their songwriting to achieve virality. This shift has led to a homogenization of popular music, with many songs following similar structures to cater to the platform's trends. Zimmerman concludes that while TikTok creates opportunities for up and coming artists to gain exposure, it can also encourage formulaic songwriting reducing music to a focus on virality. Its reliability is moderate due to it being a journalistic opinion piece that provides little to no factual evidence; nonetheless, it proved useful in my PIP by illustrating how algorithms reshape music industry norms. The source connects strongly with themes in my PIP around homogenisation in pop music production.