

Synchtank®

2023

ROUND UP

FEATURING:

- SYNCHTANK COMPANY HIGHLIGHTS
- LEADING INDUSTRY ANALYSIS

Synchtank®

The leading SaaS solution for optimizing music rights and media workflows

Synchtank offers SaaS solutions for entertainment companies to manage assets and rights, monetize content, and process revenue.



Key features

For music rights holders

- Centralize your assets and data
- Find music faster with AI tools
- Deliver your content at scale in any direction
- Maximize license revenue with automation
- Cut costs by eliminating double keying
- Unlock the full value of your assets and IP
- Run end to end rights and royalty processing

For music rights users

- Consolidate multiple music libraries and rights
- Save time with automated asset ingestion
- Manage users and permissions at scale
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- Expedite cue sheets with automation
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2023 Overview



Rory Bernard

Chief Executive Officer

2023 has been a rollercoaster year for the music and media industries, presenting a unique combination of tactical and strategic challenges but also plenty of opportunity.

First the writers strike, then the actors strike opened up existential questions about the future of entertainment and its potential development using generative AI technology. Long negotiations brought many productions to a standstill and although deals were eventually reached, the continuing rapid development of AI generated content remains the most hotly debated topic across the creative sector. Questions will continue to arise around who owns what, and what does or does not constitute fair use in the industry and compensate creators properly. This is by no means going to be the last of it and it opens up a whole new arena in copyright management and monitoring.

However, AI doesn't just generate content. Applied in other areas, it offers massive time and efficiency savings and how these training sets are developed, permissioned and used are important questions for the industry, with large data sets in themselves becoming valuable for training. Privacy and protection of private data becomes a key issue and increasingly a differentiator in the market. Synchtank's use of this technology is growing rapidly, not only in the area of audio analysis but also in royalty processing, identification and management, removing the need for large scale manual processing.

It's also been a year where inflation and macro-economic factors have driven the cost of money higher to a point not seen by a generation, yielding a lot of commercial models difficult to run. Music catalog acquisition and investment backed technology companies have had an increasingly difficult year and this will continue to shake up the industry. Many creators timed their catalog sales extremely well and it will be interesting to see if there's a swell of investment back into the industry by some of its old guard. Other companies in the music space will continue their flight to cashflow generation and operational efficiency to ensure they survive. A good example is Spotify with its recent redundancies and the positive market reaction afterwards showing support for such tactics. Meanwhile, there are super high-performance parts of the industry with Taylor Swift no doubt leading the charge here with her Eras tour grossing over \$1bn.

There have been huge leaps forward across Synchtank's product portfolio in 2023 as we come to the end of the first phase of a two-year investment in major R&D projects. We will be rolling out huge platform optimizations throughout 2024 that take advantage of technology advances and reflect the changing landscape in rights and monetization. Continuing rapid changes in how the commercialization of rights is managed means growing opportunities that well designed technology can enable for the industry.

2023 Operations Update



Chris Glasgow

Chief Operating Officer

In 2023 we remained committed to providing our customers with the best possible experience, which saw our overall improvements in our customer satisfaction score. We continued our investment in customer support overhauling our self-service knowledge base, to ensure our customers have the resources they need to succeed with the use of their systems.

Our marketing and product teams have been instrumental to the improvements of self-service options for our customers. Going into 2024 our goal is to provide more interactive step by step guidance, to assist our users with getting the most value out of their Synchtank system.

Security continued to be a top priority as a number of organizations face cyber attacks. To ensure the on-going security of our customer's data, we have completed another successful renewal of the AICPA Service Organization Control (SOC) 2 Type II audit. The audit confirms that our information security practices, policies, procedures, and operations meet the SOC 2 standards for security and ensures our customers' data is managed with the highest standard of security and compliance with continual monitoring.

Reliability and availability of our systems is also key to our customers' business processes. Our commitment to ensure the reliability and availability of our customers systems, through continuous infrastructure improvements and investment in a dedicated DevOps team, has seen overall uptimes of at least 99.9% MoM in 2023.

AI has also begun to transform the way our engineering teams work, providing our teams with tools to automate repetitive tasks, improve productivity and speed of development. In 2023 our engineering teams began experimenting with AI tools for automatic code generation based on natural language descriptions, to reduce the development effort associated with feature development. We see this as an important step to moving faster to market with new features for our customers.

Looking ahead to 2024 we are committed to investing in AI technology, training, safety, security and resources, to ensure our teams have the skills and tools they need to harness the full potential of AI. As a company we see the impact of AI extending beyond efficiency improvements and into fuelling innovation into our products and developing intelligent solutions, to meet the evolving needs of our customers alongside industry partners, while always ensuring that we protect the security and privacy of customer data and IP.

2023 Product Update



Janet Kirker
Chief Product Officer

First, we'd like to thank all our existing customers for another fantastic year! Our products continue to evolve because of you, and we appreciate all your valuable feedback.

With business intelligence at the forefront of everyone's mind this year, we launched a new product called Data Suite, an analytics and reporting tool that combines data from your Synchtank platforms and external data into one suite of business intelligence reports.

The impact this has had on our clients' decision-making has been phenomenal. We will continue to improve upon Data Suite in 2024, with additional integrations into enterprise platforms.

In 2023, we also made important updates to our Asset and Royalty Platforms, launching a plethora of new features and upgrading existing functionality, a few of which are highlighted here:



Strategic AI Partner Services

Our leading search interface is continually enhanced with best-in-class AI tools including auto-tagging, similarity search, and prompt search.



SyncUP

Our new, end-to-end sync licensing platform that allows rightsholders to manage opportunities in one easy dashboard.



D2C Licensing & Payment

Our platform supports self-serve, direct-to-consumer licensing (including subscriptions) and payment partners like Stripe.



Automated Library

We take care of your music library maintenance by combining multiple libraries into one searchable system with automated updates.



Edit Suite Integration

Our Adobe Premiere panel integration allows you to feed your content directly into the editor's suite for streamlined content workflows.



ISRC Assignment

Our platform now supports automatic assignment of ISRCs for sound recordings using custom prefixes that you can enter for each label.



Custom Delivery Mapping

Customers looking to deliver their catalog can now create custom formats using any data fields via CSV and deliver to any endpoint.

Finally, I'd like to touch upon a singular comment that we hear from our customers and colleagues throughout the supply and value chains at nearly every music conference we attend:

"The systems don't talk to each other. It just makes everything so unnecessarily complicated."

How true that is. This one phrase helped shape the foundation upon which our current roadmap is based. The focus of all our product lines in 2024 will be 'unification' – bringing rights and business processes together for both rightsholders and content users.

Look for exciting announcements next Spring!

Synchblog highlights

Synchblog®

From interviews with leading executives to in-depth analysis and coverage of industry trends, we've put together some of the best Synchblog content of 2023 for you to enjoy.

synchtank.com/blog

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5 media industry trends and their impact on music licensing and clearance

Written by Emma Griffiths

April 4, 2023

As our **latest report**, *Complexities and Solutions in Music Rights Clearance* explores, clearing music for use in productions typically involves a fiendish mass of complexities.

Here, we take a look at some of the developing trends across the media and entertainment space and examine their potential impact on music licensing and clearance.

“Linear TV and satellite is marching towards a great precipice and it will be pushed off,” exclaimed Disney CEO Bob Iger at the **Code Conference** last September, adding, “I can’t tell you when, but it goes away.” Earlier that year, Netflix CEO Reed Hastings **predicted** that linear TV would be dead in “5 to 10 years.”

This vision for the future of television is reflected in the latest statistics from **Nielsen**, which show that streaming had its most competitive month ever in February 2023, accounting for a record 34.3% of overall TV usage.

For now, linear and on-demand are co-existing in the media ecosystem, but it’s clear that the latter will account for the bulk of consumption in the near future.

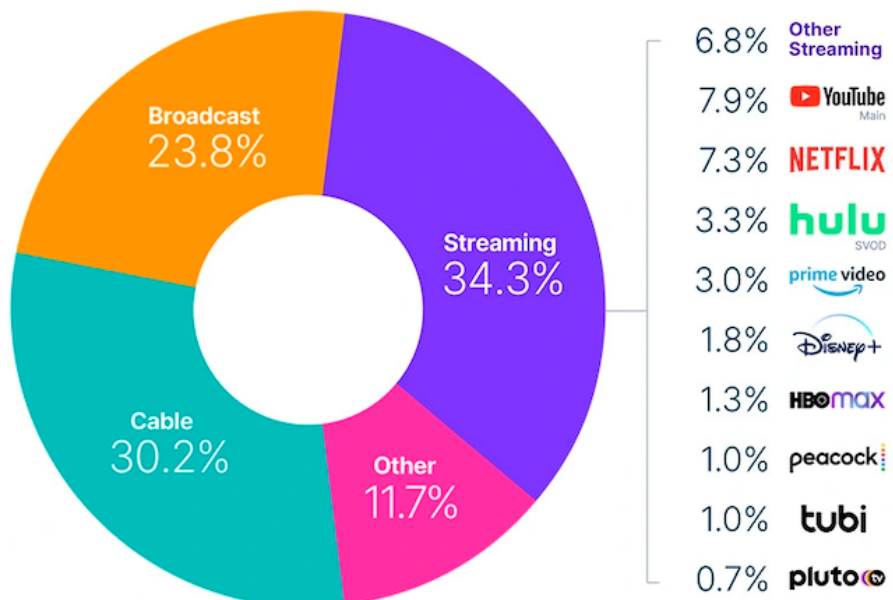
But what does that mean for music?

Before streaming, music rights were typically cleared on a territorial basis for certain media during a given period but, given the global and more permanent nature of on-demand, rights typically have to be cleared on a worldwide basis, for all media, and in perpetuity.



February 2023

Total Day | Persons 2+



"It's harder to get companies to agree to all media perp [in perpetuity] terms for what we see as agreeable fees, or agreeable timelines where we're having to chase writers or chase people for approvals. We just don't have that luxury in the same way that we used to."

– Senior music supervisor

These deals are, of course, more costly and complicated to maneuver given the complexities of global licensing and could remove commercial music from the equation altogether for the majority of productions. Time is also a big factor here – in a fast moving, high volume environment, one-stop production music presents a painless alternative.

"It's harder to get companies to agree to all media perp [in perpetuity] terms for what we see as agreeable fees, or agreeable timelines where we're having to chase writers or chase people for approvals," said one senior music supervisor interviewed for our report. "We just don't have that luxury in the same way that we used to."

A streaming-led future also calls into question the value of European blanket licenses. Will these agreements, designed for linear TV consumption, adapt for the streaming age or be no longer fit for purpose?

An increased focus on efficiency and cost-saving

Media companies are increasingly tightening their pursestrings in the current economic environment.

With subscription growth stalling, the focus has now shifted to user retention, efficiency, and cost-cutting, and streamers are being forced to **reevaluate their business models**.

In recent months we've seen significant **job cuts** across media and content spend is **predicted to flatten** in 2023 as companies look to do more with less.

All of this is likely to have a knock on effect for music, both from a budgetary perspective but also from a volume perspective if less new content is created.

While there will always be significant music budgets for the biggest films, TV shows, commercials and games, across the full gamut there is likely to be a further tightening of budgets, requiring music supervisors to get more even sonic bang for their bucks.

"In terms of pricing, yes, it is very challenging because, sometimes we have to compromise on rights; (for example) instead of perpetuity, cut it for a shorter term to stay on budget since synchronization fees are high," explained one music rights executive from a US broadcaster in **our report**.

Keeping track of music budgets and spending will be increasingly essential in this new media environment, and music teams will be looking to optimize their deals with production music libraries and even build up their own custom in-house libraries for use internally, for monetization externally, or **both**.

Legacy content going further

If it feels like almost everything new is old on streaming platforms, it's because we're seeing more opportunity for content to be revived and repurposed across media outlets.

While 'exclusive' and 'original' content used to be the holy grail of the TV business and streamers have been singularly focused on building up their own libraries, **large content owners** are starting to look more at licensing to third parties.

This is all part of a strategy to spend less on new content and monetize existing content more effectively. As James L. Dolan, the interim executive chairman of AMC Networks, put it **earlier this year**, "Most media companies [are] beginning to course correct to better monetize content and improve the economics of their business."

A driving factor here is the rise of FAST (free ad-supported streaming TV) platforms like Tubi and Roku, which largely offer licensed or library content at no cost to viewers. This is creating more opportunity for streamers to **offload risky and expensive content** rather than keeping everything in-house, and creating monetization opportunities in the process.

[Read the full article](#)

Reimagining rights clearance for the digital era

Written by Emma Griffiths

November 16, 2023

A new report released by Variety's Intelligence Platform is shining the spotlight on an often overlooked yet essential aspect of the entertainment industry – rights clearance – and the urgent need for technical innovation in this space.

Rights Clearance for Film & TV: Embracing technology to fuel clearance's impact on profitability and business outlook is written by media and tech general counsel Joy R. Butler, who has over two decades of experience in copyright and licensing law and conducted over 40 in-depth interviews with clearance professionals.

The report comes a year after the release of Synchtank's own publication on the subject, **Communication Breakdown**, which explores the "fiendish mass of complexities" in music rights clearance specifically and explores the technology solutions addressing these.

Echoing our own findings on the topic (though covering more than just music), the report finds that rights clearance "overwhelmingly relies on outdated, inefficient systems that require repetitive and potentially error-introducing manual work."

Despite the crucial role of rights clearance and the risks at stake – including whether or not a production can be completed at all – there is a startling lack of technical adoption resulting in costly inefficiencies.

According to Variety's analysis, on average 20% to 33% of tasks performed manually by rights clearance professionals could be automated with technology that's available now. Meanwhile, manual work accounts for up to \$37,000 in worker costs per year per clearance professional.

These inefficiencies – as the report explains – will only increase along with higher demands placed on clearance professionals and increasing industry complexities as more content is licensed and distributed across more platforms and territories.

Add **current media dynamics** to the equation and the need for greater efficiency becomes all the more apparent. "With increased content production, wider distribution and budget tightening, the manual, static approach to rights clearance is unsustainable," the report states.

Thankfully, as Variety outlines, there are technologies – both existing and emerging – available today that have the potential to transform these workflows including both SaaS platforms and proprietary, in-house systems. The next big challenge, of course, is getting the industry to actually implement these.

Another key step towards efficiency is integration. The report warns against siloing rights clearance operations and extolls the benefits of proper communication and information sharing between creative and other operational functions. "The best digital tools facilitate communication and workflow between these groups," it says.

This aligns with one of the key takeaways of our own report, which outlines the risks and inefficiencies associated with a lack of centralization and calls for more integration of interoperable systems to streamline clearance workflows.

"On average 20% to 33% of tasks performed manually by rights clearance professionals could be automated with technology that's available now."

Joy R. Butler, Variety



[Read the full article](#)

How AI is revolutionizing music discovery and unlocking more value from catalogs

Written by Meg Adams

November 30, 2023

Let's talk about catalogs. Depending on where you work, be that a label, publisher or production music library, your catalog is likely to contain thousands, if not hundreds of thousands (and maybe even millions) of tracks, combining frontline hits with historic gems and multiple variations in between – from instrumentals to 30 second versions and remixes.

So what has that got to do with metadata, AI, and search? Well, everything!

AI – and AI generated music specifically – is undoubtedly the most hotly debated industry topic of the moment. But as the panic surrounding the impending explosion of AI-created tracks intensifies, it's easy to forget the vast archives of human-created music that already exist. Music that could be put to use and monetized, but instead might be left to simply gather dust.

That's where AI comes in. Thanks to a growing wave of companies pioneering AI recommendation, tagging and search solutions, music catalogs have never been more discoverable, and therefore their revenue potential has never been greater.

And while fear mounts around AI generated music displacing parts of the sync industry, the reality remains that there are complex legal and copyright issues surrounding this type of music – issues that may take months or even years to resolve. This means the best, safer choice for content producers remains music from trusted industry suppliers.

In this article we break down the meaning and importance of AI-powered search and discovery solutions and how anyone working with music – on the buy or sell side – can harness them to streamline their day-to-day lives.

Metadata

Metadata, (our favorite word here at Synchtank – we even have the caps to prove it) is essentially data that provides information about other data. In music, metadata provides the digital tags that sit behind a track and help provide crucial information about it, from factual data (e.g. song title, artist), and ownership data (rights and clearance information) to descriptive data (e.g. genre, mood, keyword).

Without accurate metadata, the track becomes impossible to find, be that on streaming platforms or within an internal catalog and – most important of all – the copyright owners cannot be paid when it gets used commercially.

When it comes to descriptive metadata (the focus of this article), consistency is key. But tagging a catalog manually has its limitations – human error gets the best of us all and we tend to be subjective in our descriptions, leading to inconsistency. And then there's the time factor – imagine how long it would take to tag thousands of tracks individually.

All this can be eliminated and updated in a matter of seconds with AI, which leads us to the next section...

Tagging

One of the primary uses for AI here is its ability to **automatically tag** large catalogs in seconds, creating huge time savings and efficiencies for anyone working with music.

This AI technology is capable of analyzing catalogs and instantly providing comprehensive, descriptive metadata specifically tailored to meet the search needs of those working in sync and media productions.



Tagging gives you the power to easily explore the depths of your catalog and return more accurate search results to cater to the growing needs of content creators, playlist curators, and music supervisors with unparalleled precision.

And as catalogs continue to grow through new signings and acquisitions, they can be continually optimized through automated AI tagging.

But still, the technology doesn't stop there...

Sonic Similarity

With sonic similarity or similarity search, you can instantly discover tracks similar to a reference track by simply pasting a link or uploading a file. For instance, if you're eager to use a Red Hot Chili Peppers track but lack the budget, you can effortlessly find comparable tracks in your catalog using a system equipped with sonic similarity search.

You can even go further and search particular segments of a song to return similar results, and suppress vocals when searching for more accurate instrumental identification.

The time saving benefits here are obvious – those using systems with this functionality report time savings of up to 90% on searches, enabling faster responses to briefs and more accurate pitches. It's a win-win situation.

This technology truly has the power to unlock the full revenue potential of any catalog by unearthing hidden gems and even the most obscure remix or song version.

But let's say you don't have a reference track in mind and want to search using a specific phrase or description, well there is the technology for that too...

Natural Language Search

As AI technology progresses so do the search interfaces available. Thanks to the likes of ChatGPT we're becoming increasingly familiar with conversational, prompt-based searches and these can also be applied to music.

While keyword searches in music can be extremely effective, they have **their limitations**.

Natural language search allows users to go one step further and search music catalogs using their own words, whether that's a particular phrase, sync brief, or even a scene description. For example:

- "Tumbleweed rolling along an empty highway"
- "Snowflakes falling on a frozen lake"
- "Summery, a light pop featuring a groovy acoustic guitar"

Again these capabilities provide huge time savings and the ability to super serve clients and productions with more accurate searches and faster turnarounds.

Who provides this technology?

There are a growing number of companies and technologies that are helping to redefine music search with AI.

At Synchtank we've been honing our best-in-class search interfaces for over a decade to provide scalable and configurable solutions to the largest rightsholders and buyers.

We also work with best in-class partners, including **AIMS** and **Cyanite**, to seamlessly integrate these cutting-edge AI functionalities into our platform and help our clients make their catalogs more searchable and accessible.

As content volumes continue to explode, these technologies will only become more essential to music and media workflows – and even more crucial in unlocking much needed value for rightsholders.

AI of the storm: artificial intelligence and the music industry in 2023

Written by Eamonn Forde

December 13, 2023

To find a single issue that has so dominated the music industry discourse like AI has in 2023, one would have to look back to the early 2000s when P2P and digital piracy were the center around which everything else seemed to revolve.

Unlike P2P, with AI it only took the music industry a matter of months, rather than years, to work itself through the **seven stages of grief**. From initial **shock** at the end of 2022 (when everyone really started to take on what AI, for good and ill, could mean), by the middle of 2023 the industry was accelerating itself to the **testing** stage (but full **acceptance** is still a little way off).

Inevitably, different divisions of the industry are moving at different speeds here. There are the artists jumping in and seeing AI as a new creative tool that must be experimented with. There are rights companies and platforms who are willing to experiment as long as it is conditional. And there are the companies and bodies who wish to put strict rules/commandments/guidelines in place before things race forward and they are left playing a desperate form of catch up.

We will look at what each constituency is doing here, and what their beliefs around AI are, in turn. Only in understanding what all these different sections hope to get out of AI (or how they hope to bring AI to heel) can we truly grasp both the complexities at play here and what is at stake for the industry as a whole.

AI and the artist: a whole new canvas and set of paints

It is telling that the first major artist to embrace the **creative and financial possibilities of music NFTs** in early 2020/2021 is the same major artist now seeing AI as a new form of creative liberation.

In April, Grimes posted that she was happy for anyone to use her voice to generate AI songs as long as they **split royalties 50/50** with her. "Feel free to use my voice without penalty," she tweeted. "I have no label and no legal bindings. I think it's cool to be fused w a machine and I like the idea of open sourcing all art and killing copyright."

Soon after, she felt compelled to add in **some caveats** to her AI openness. She said she would issue "copyright takedowns ONLY for rly rly toxic lyrics w grimes voice". She stressed "no baby murder songs plz" and no "Nazi anthem unless it's somehow in jest a la producers I guess" (a reference to the **1967 movie**).

She formalized the AI licensing structure later in the year through a deal between her own **Elf.Tech platform, CreateSafe and Slip-stream** (which operates a music library that is used by over 300,000 online creators). Alive to the possibilities of AI, she is the rare example of an act going far, far beyond lip service to actually put systems in place to make the hypothetical actual.

Other acts were not necessarily as gung-ho as Grimes, but they were all publicly exploring and debating what new shapes AI could allow them to sculpt.

Holly Herndon, partly in response to what Grimes was doing, sounded a note of caution to other musicians, warning them to not get too caught up in the Utopianism being talked up here by some. "Artists, for the time being it is a good idea not to sign any contract regarding usage of your voice in an AI context," **she tweeted** in May. "There is so much room for exploitation between general confusion about AI and FOMO. There is plenty of time. Don't sign anything until things settle down, or always consult a lawyer."



"There is so much room for exploitation between general confusion about AI and FOMO. There is plenty of time. Don't sign anything until things settle down, or always consult a lawyer."

Holly Herndon

Like Grimes, however, she went from words to actions here. She had already created a "deepfake twin" in 2021 (Holly+), but in November spoke about expanding her existing Spawn tool into **Spawning** that she said was "building the consent layer for AI". Within that is the **Have I Been Trained?** tool that claims to do the forensics to help artists see if their work has been used in **AI training datasets**.

David Guetta was also looking at the AI options. He declared, "I'm sure the future of music is in AI [...] But as a tool." To show he was fully on board, he teased a clip of a track which he claimed used AI to create a track **in the style of Eminem** with an artificial recreation of the rapper's voice. He did stress, fully aware of the copyright implications and the possible threat of legal action, that it would not be commercially released.

As the pop world becomes more global and the lingua franca of music becomes less Anglophonic, AI can become an important lyrical tool for musicians. Nowhere was this better illustrated in 2023 than what Lauv did with AI company Hooky and K-pop singer Kevin Woo where they created a Korean-language version of his track 'Love U Like That'. It essentially involved Woo translating the lyrics and then using a "**Lauv AI effect**" to make his singing voice sound like Lauv's singing voice. We can expect more AI-powered pop polyglottism in the coming years.

A number of artists toyed with AI to deploy it as effectively a new type of remix tool. Roberta Flack came out in support of Endel and Warner Music's Rhino division who took stems from '**Killing Me Softly With His Song**' to generate three "soundscape" albums based around different activities (focus/productivity, relaxation, sleep). Meanwhile, **The Orb and David Gilmour** (via Sony Music) worked with AI company Vermillio to let fans create their own "personalised AI track and artwork" for their **Metallic Spheres In Colour** album.

It was not just living artists who were part of the great AI experiments of 2023.

The "new" Beatles song '**Now & Then**' (which went straight to number 1 in the UK on release) was only possible because AI technology (**developed by director Peter Jackson** and his team for the 2021 **Get Back** documentary) was able to separate out John Lennon's voice from his piano on a home recording dating back to 1977. This enabled the surviving Beatles, Paul McCartney and Ringo Starr, to finish the recording that was technologically impossible in the 1990s when they (and George Harrison) first worked on it.

Around the same time as the release of 'Now & Then', the **estate of Édith Piaf** (who died in 1963) and Warner Music Group announced that AI would be used on archive recordings of her voice to enable her to "narrate" a new documentary about her life and music.

The Beatles and Piaf are two strong examples of the mainstreaming of AI with regard to deceased artists, making the impossible possible by creating new products that were inconceivable even a decade ago.

Not all artists felt the same way about AI.

The controversy around what became known as the "Fake Drake" and The Weeknd track '**Heart On My Sleeve**' by Ghostwriter977 hit critical mass and put **Universal's lawyers** into scramble mode, demanding it be pulled from DSPs. **Ghostwriter977's (unnamed) manager** was taking the long view on it all, arguing this will become the norm and that they were merely first out of the trenches and so were taking most of the bullets.

"I like to say that everything starts somewhere, like Spotify wouldn't exist without Napster," they said. "Nothing is perfect in the beginning. That's just the reality of things. Hopefully, people will see all the value that lies here."

Nick Cave, when asked about ChatGPT and its ability to pump out lyrics in the style of any writer, did not hold back. He referred to a ChatGPT-produced set of "Nick Cave" lyrics as "bullshit" and a "grotesque mockery of what it is to be human".

[Read the full article](#)

AI and the future of music distribution: a conversation with TuneCore CEO Andreea Gleeson



Written by Emma Griffiths

August 3, 2023

TuneCore has been at the forefront of the DIY artist movement since 2006 and recently struck a first of its kind partnership with musician Grimes.

So, we sat down with CEO Andreea Gleeson to discuss this new project and the potential opportunities and challenges surrounding AI and music.

You recently announced a partnership with GrimesAI. How did that come about?

What really brought AI to the forefront in music was Ghostwriter putting out that song using Drake and The Weeknd's voices. That was problematic because one, neither of those artists provided consent for their voices to be used, two, they had no input or control in the creative, and three, they were not participating in the revenue.

Fast forward a few weeks later and Grimes **came out and said**, "I've already been training AI on my voice, here's the technology and if you want to use it you just need to pay me 50% commission." I was in Ibiza for IMS at the time and Grimes' manager and CreateSafe founder Daouda Leonard was also there.

We synced up because I felt that what they were doing was really positive in setting the principles around engaging with AI responsibly, and I knew we could create a way to power what they wanted to do at scale. And thus, the partnership began.

This is the first scale initiative we're doing with AI and it's still very much in a pilot phase. We're working to optimize it further to make it more available at scale, and for more artists to participate in. But really, we wanted to test how we do this responsibly.

How does it work?

Any TuneCore artist that wants to use Grimes' voice is directed to Elf.Tech. She trained the AI on her voice and music that she owns 100% which is key because as we start to think about creating a better structure for monetization, it's really important to have the rights to train the AI with that music.

From there the artist can transform an audio file into Grimes' voice or sing directly into the app and then export it. Then once the music is ready, they would go through the usual process in TuneCore, listing GrimesAI as the primary or featured artist and setting a 50% revenue split. The content is then reviewed by Grimes' team for approval and then us to ensure it meets our DSP requirements.

It's been exciting to see the results. Whilst in some cases the music being released only features Grimes' voice, I think the more interesting music is the duets or where Grimes is a voice among other voices. That's really cool.

What are the benefits of this model?

What we're achieving with this is a couple of really great things. One is that Grimes has provided consent. Any music that's coming through this technology has full clearance.

Then her team is receiving all the content to review prior to its distribution, so there's control. And then there's revenue share participation, so there's compensation.

And finally, because we are asking for all of this to be documented correctly, we are creating transparency.

Every opportunity that we're doing around AI really does have to pass those four principles to make sure that there is a responsible way to participate that is scalable.

"This is the first scale initiative we're doing with AI and it's still very much in a pilot phase. We're working to optimize it further to make it more available at scale, and for more artists to participate in. But really, we wanted to test how we do this responsibly."

As a distributor, what are the challenges you foresee when dealing with AI-generated music? For example, how do you deal with the huge scale of new music and obviously all the regulatory and administrative challenges?

I think the immediate fear is there's going to be poor content flooding through, but that's not the case.

We still have to figure out how to scale the control side of it, but the goal here isn't to have a bunch of low-quality content flooding the DSPs. And that's why we put that control step in there. We want to make sure this is good content that the artist wants to get behind.

In terms of the regulatory steps, we're watching this get figured out in real time. The White House had a press hearing just last week, and the week before the EU put out their stance on policy relating to AI.

We don't know exactly how it's going to play out, but if you are making sure that everything you're engaging with is going to have the potential to create a more responsible ecosystem, then that's how you can start participating early like we're doing.

It's important not to be afraid of new technology. I see AI as a great way for artists to be able to create better music. It's not to replace human creativity, it's how do we help enhance ourselves to do our jobs better? That's the use case that I get very excited about.

And it's opening up new ways for creators to be able to create in a way they couldn't before. Cherie Hu from Water & Music just created a song with GrimesAI called "Eggroll", and it's really great. It's amassed thousands of streams already.

The self-releasing DIY artist is the fastest growing segment of the industry. What is your take on the direction of travel for companies like TuneCore?

I joined TuneCore seven and a half years ago and the things that got me excited about the company continue to be the same, which is that there are no gatekeepers, and anyone can put out music. The artist is not worried about fitting into a box. They're putting out what they feel and that tends to create more innovative music.

I think there are two big inflection points that happened simultaneously over the last few years to make self-releasing artists the fastest growing segment. Ultimately streaming has created more access to music around the world, so that has really grown the pool of listeners. And then platforms like TikTok and Shorts and Reels have enabled artists to have their music rise based on the merit of their music and the listener's affinity for it.

At TuneCore we're very leaned into, "How do we help artists grow? How do we do what labels historically used to do, but do it with technology?"

How we're thinking about it is we are not just a distributor. We have moved into and have built programs that help drive artist development at scale in places where listening and discovery is happening.

Earlier this year we launched a program called **TuneCore Accelerator** where we work with all our DSP partners on their betas and opt our artists into those, and we are in the process of scaling those programs even further.

What are your goals for the future?

Everything's moving more and more into digital and that's where we're innovating and really working with our partners to build not just discovery but development.

Our goal is to give artists a technology-based solution. And it's up to the artist if they want to stay self-releasing and just hire a team around them, like Chance the Rapper or Russ, or move to a place where they can get more services.

"We want to make sure this is good content that the artist wants to get behind."

[Read the full article](#)

Sync in 2023: opportunities, challenges, uncertainties and revisions

Written by Eamonn Forde

October 26, 2023

To say that sync in 2023 is a mixed bag is an understatement of significant proportions. There is a lot going on – some positive, some negative and some still fuzzy – and a lot of forces simultaneously pulling the sector in multiple directions.

We spoke to key players in the sync world to better understand all the factors at play, how they are shaping the business today and what this could mean for it tomorrow.

Industrial inaction: the impact of the strikes

The after-effects of [the writers' strike in the US](#) are still being felt, with a multitude of productions – and therefore a multitude of synchronization opportunities – put on hold. The [actors' strike, however, is ongoing](#) so the US film and TV industry is going to be caught in limbo for the foreseeable future.

While the strikes are dominating the news agenda here, the sync business is finding new ways to adapt and to seek out/maximize new opportunities.

“With the strike, we are just starting to see a slow down in film and TV opportunities, but that doesn't mean they've come to a screeching halt either,” says Jessica Vaughn, head of sync at Venice Music and president of Head Bitch Music. “I am seeing a huge uptick in gaming, advertising and non-scripted requests come in.”

Taylor Amazan, head of sync at Riptide Music Group, says that the strike obviously reduced demand for sync deals in certain areas (i.e. scripted drama), but there was a growth in uses in other areas.

“We've seen a general boost in requests for music for reality shows and documentaries, as many of those productions have been able to continue,” she says.

“We've also found more opportunities in network branding sizzle reels, as networks are trying to market their existing content to keep audience viewerships engaged.”

Amazan is confident that, when the actors' strike is resolved, there will be a massive swing back into action as the TV and film businesses seek to make up for lost time. In lockstep with this, she believes that sync requests and sync deals will experience a post-strike boom – but this will also come with whole new characteristics as the business looks to recalibrate itself.

“It's the same sort of growth boom that we saw after Covid restrictions were lifted last year,” she says. “For example, a theatrical release that has been delayed or paused for a few months because of the strike may end up creating additional trailers or extra marketing materials, on top of what they normally would, as a way to pull audiences back into the fold. Many of these campaigns will, in effect, have to start over – paving the way for more sync opportunities than what is normally standard.”

Evolutions #1: new trends, new opportunities

Tim Hayes, VP, Creative Sync at Hipgnosis, says certain parts of the rights business are focused on pushing new releases as a priority for sync deals.

“Many of these campaigns will, in effect, have to start over – paving the way for more sync opportunities than what is normally standard.”

Taylor Amazan, Riptide Music Group



“Opportunities are constantly growing and evolving in non-traditional media and there’s also a big rise in content being created in territories which previously weren’t as active.”

Tim Hayes, Hipgnosis

The focus, however, at Hipgnosis is on what he terms “evergreens” – the older and established songs that have deep cultural resonance.

These songs open more doors more quickly and more assuredly, he argues.

“Our focus is on iconic songs that have had extraordinary success and are of cultural importance,” he says. “They are the definition of evergreen, so everyone knows them and loves them already. We don’t have to spend time convincing people our songs are great so we can focus on finding the right opportunities. Our priority is finding the perfect fit and servicing sync clients to the highest possible order with our great songs. We spend our time proactively working with media partners to facilitate the pairing of the best songs in the world with media content that compliments them.”

While Hipgnosis might be focused on working older songs, its emphasis beyond its actual catalog is firmly on the new: namely new markets and new use cases.

“As SVOD [subscription video on demand] platforms continue to grow, they continue to create opportunities in territories that previously weren’t as relevant or lucrative for long-form media,” he says. “Opportunities are constantly growing and evolving in non-traditional media and there’s also a big rise in content being created in territories which previously weren’t as active.”

While covers are a key part of the Hipgnosis business model within sync, Hayes says the market is evolving far beyond the ‘straight’ cover version.

“The trend of licensing covers is still as prevalent as ever and we’ve recently noticed a lot of creatives requesting nostalgic, recognizable [music] to be interpolated in new and innovative ways,” he explains.

“Hipgnosis’ songs are prime for these opportunities and we’re constantly seeing new recordings being created, new tracks interpolating our evergreens, and new remixes of our works dropping, inspired by our influential and seminal writers and artists.”

He also singles out artist-centric documentaries as a rapidly expanding area. Documentaries have been a constant in music since the 1960s, but the rise of streaming services has ushered in a golden era for the medium, with big-budget productions around megastars but also a sharp rise in documentaries around niche artists and niche genres. The canvas for documentaries has become incrementally wider and richer in the streaming age.

“One trend that has picked up across SVOD platforms recently are artist-focused documentaries,” Hayes says. “These have been very successful, as seen by the Lewis Capaldi: How I’m Feeling Now [on Netflix] documentary win at the 2023 National Television Awards recently. We’re actively seeking opportunities like this and other avenues of portraying our catalogs, writers’ and artists’ incredible works and stories via our new Content Creation department, who are partnering with creative minds all over the world to bring these projects to life.”

In 2019, Billboard wrote, “**Boom times are here** when it comes to music docs.” It added that the competition is heating up so much here that it is being seen as a “land grab” where producers seek to get major projects off the ground and sign up a multitude of artists.

Four years later, things, if anything, have become even more accelerated as there is a proven audience for music-centric documentaries and no one in the sector wants to see that interest start to ebb away.

Evolutions #2: new challenges, new concerns

Beyond the impact of Covid and then the Hollywood strikes (writers and actors) putting productions on ice, there are wider challenges and worries for the sync business that are becoming more apparent as the business evolves and adapts.

Hayes suggests “the traditional licensing process seems a bit broken” and so companies like Hipgnosis are having to proactively work with new initiatives “to explore alternative ways of streamlining the process to facilitate more opportunities”, all the while ensuring it stays in control of, and protects, its song catalog.

[Read the full article](#)

Production values: strikes, AI and the future for production music

Written by Eamonn Forde

September 28, 2023

With the [Production Music Conference](#) taking place next week in Los Angeles, we check in with key players in the market to understand the evolving challenges and opportunities.

The five-month strike by the Writers Guild Of America (WGA) is now over, with the union's leaders approving an agreement with the Alliance Of Motion Picture & Television Producers. A new three-year contract with the Hollywood Studios still needs to go to its members for ratification, but it all appears to have been finally resolved.

The WGA has, reports The Guardian, "[won concessions](#) on writers' payment, terms with streaming shows, and the use of artificial intelligence".

While the main focus, rightly, has been on protecting screenwriters in the streaming age, the strike has meant that a major force in global TV and film production ground to a halt for the second time in three years (with Covid in 2020 forcing everything to immediately shut down for months). Songwriters and production music companies were also directly affected by these shutdowns: if no shows or films were being made then no music was being used either.

The issues underpinning the strike are highly contemporary and affect the very future of the whole sector. As such, the strike placed many burning issues front and centre of the discussion.

One of those issues was generative AI and its implications for music creation from the perspective of creators. It has become, in recent times, an utterly unavoidable matter.

Earlier this month, the Council of Music Makers in the UK published what it called its "[five fundamentals for music and AI](#)" covering just how and where AI-generated music can work while simultaneously ensuring that creator rights are protected.

This followed moves in the US seeking to [update the Protect Working Musicians Act](#) to cover AI. This also chimes with the goals of the [Human Artistry Campaign](#) to put copyright and legislative safeguards in place around generative AI technologies.

All these hot-button issues are directly impacting the production music world and shaping its future.

Speaking before the resolution of the WGA strike, Adam Taylor, president of APM, spoke to SynchronTank about the impact and implications for his company in particular and the production music sector in general.

"If a company's primary business is working just in film and TV then they're certainly going to be impacted by the writers' strike," he says. "Certainly there were a number of things that were already in production or post-production [...] that will impact people. Most of the larger companies have business in so many different areas that the writers' strike isn't going to have a major impact. We're in a lot of different areas, so there's no real impact that is really meaningful for us."

For John Clifford, founder and manager of True Road Music, the strike was an important wake-up call for all players in the space, exposing just how critical it is for them to keep evolving and adapting to external forces.

"For as long as I've been in this business – 30 years – I've heard that the production music business has always been 18 months away from demise and total disaster," he says. "But guess what. We're all – well, most of us! – still here. As well as challenges there are also great opportunities. There is more 'content' being made than ever before. But we need to learn to adapt."



"For as long as I've been in this business – 30 years – I've heard that the production music business has always been 18 months away from demise and total disaster. But guess what. We're all – well, most of us! – still here."

– John Clifford, True Road Music

He adds that, from speaking to his company's clients, it was "in the area of scripted content where the hit is being felt" with regard to the strike but they noted that "the same amount of unscripted TV show content is being made".

Randy Wachtler, president of 11 One/Music, argues that one door being (temporarily) shut does not mean all doors are shut for production music companies.

"The strikes in LA have slowed down the production of scripted television and films," he says, "but we are seeing demand in other areas such as reality TV and advertising."

The WGA strike ending means there will be a heavy swing back into creating shows and films. As such, there will be a lot of music deals happening. That is one issue that is (for now) resolved; but another – much more existential – issue rolls on with no firm resolution in sight.

Art or artificial: solving the AI conundrum

While there can be a tendency to slip into dystopian discourse when discussing generative AI – that, in a worst-case scenario, it will replace most, if not all, human creativity – many in the production music world are more sanguine about it.

Clifford says that it is impossible to accurately predict what AI will mean for creators here and, as such, perspective is needed.

"Clearly AI-generated music proposes some level of threat, but how much of a threat is really yet to be seen," he proposes. "Legislation around AI generally will be key. As I have said, the production music business has always been 18 months away from imminent disaster, so I don't think all the current discussion around AI will be any different. I hope I'm right."

There is a need to not view AI + music in homogeneous terms and understand that it can take many forms and have many uses. There are risks and challenges around AI as a music creation tool, but it is already proving its worth under the hood in terms of sourcing and licensing music.

"I think there are opportunities to use AI, which is really just computer software, to impact music," says Taylor. "We use it for tagging, harmonic analysis, audio manipulation, for changing speeds, tempo and duration, automatically creating stems and being able to have an easier way that somebody can take a track and they could fit their needs. What we are not doing is generating new music with it – new copyrights."

Clifford expands on this. "It presents great opportunities particularly in revolutionising the way editors can now search for music," he says. "I am proud to be a part of **FreshTracks Music**, which is the first company worldwide to introduce large language AI-powered search to our website and the service we provide to clients."

Wachtler adds that there are benefits around AI, but that regulatory safeguards must also be put in place to ensure that the negatives do not wash out the positives.

"We believe AI can provide benefits for our composing teams in various ways," he says. "We hope that governments around the world will put up strong guardrails and policies to protect copyright by humans versus machines."

This can be all part of a wider technological shift within production music, spotting and harnessing the tools that can streamline, grow and benefit the business.

Speaking to Synchtank in May, **Alec Sharpe, head of business development & operations at Warner Chappell Production Music** (a Synchtank client), said, "We're in the process of transitioning to being a much more tech-focused business, and we're excited about the changes ahead for Warner Chappell and Warner Music Group with Robert Kyncl as CEO [having previously been at YouTube]. We want to simplify our production music business and be better equipped to adapt to the changing needs of the marketplace. Tech innovation provides the tools to do so."

[Read the full article](#)

Supercharged sync: how UnitedMasters is connecting artists and brands at scale

Written by Emma Griffiths

August 31, 2023

Launched by industry heavyweight Steve Stoute in 2017, **UnitedMasters** has been making waves in the label services space with the value-add opportunities it offers artists – most notably through sync and brand partnership deals.

Dan Hostetler is Head of Marketplace at UnitedMasters where he oversees products at the intersection of artists and brands, and is focused on building a technology platform to facilitate and grow those connections.

Here, we catch up with Hostetler to learn more about the company's vision, the development of its sync and brand services, and how it's leveraging Synchtank to scale music licensing and get more artists paid.

At what point did UnitedMasters start working with brands?

At the beginning we focused on building out the quantity and quality of the artists on our platform, and building tools for them. We wanted to realize our vision of what a record label would look like today if you built it from scratch.

We launched our SELECT plan in 2020 which gave independent artists access to distribution and promotional tools. The highlight of the plan quickly became the brand deals that we were doing.

For example, we soundtracked the NBA2K franchise for a couple of years. Artists could submit their songs for consideration on our platform and we built promotional content around the ones that were selected, and ultimately they saw lots of viral growth from their music being in the game. That was our proof of concept of what this intersection of artist and brand could be.

Since then we've gotten independent artists synced with Apple, the NBA, Snap, ESPN, Beats by Dre, Warner Bros. for The Matrix Resurrections, and a lot of other iconic brands. Most recently we did a great collaboration with the Big 12 Conference and BigXthaPlug.

Where did the idea for a licensing subscription come from?

We're always thinking about how we can double or triple an artist's income, and one way is by licensing their music for sync.

We looked at the market and realized that we have something really unique that a lot of other production music catalogs don't have. We have a pipeline of new, fully cleared music where we are the distributor, we administer content ID, and so we can create this library of very unique, culturally relevant, independent music. We know brands on the rise are looking for artists on the rise, so it's a perfect match.

So, we decided to curate music from the up-and-coming artists on our platform into a library for brands to pull from. Artists get paid, brands get unique music that makes their work stand out, and content makers pay a fair price for licensing. It's a win-win-win.

"Artists get paid, brands get unique music that makes their work stand out, and content makers pay a fair price for licensing."

[Read the full article](#)



Client sync spotlight: Warner Music Group x Ted Lasso

Written by Emma Griffiths

July 3, 2023

Music has played an integral role in the success of *Ted Lasso* from day one, with each season combining an eclectic mix of musical theater numbers, classic needle drops, and custom songs.

Here, we catch up with Ana Lenuzza Ross, VP – Creative Sync, Licensing & Soundtracks at Warner Music’s 300 Elektra Entertainment, to discuss the creation of two bespoke tracks for the show’s third season – Sam Ryder’s “Fought & Lost” and Brandi Carlile’s “Home”.

How did the opportunities first come about?

Sam Ryder’s “Fought & Lost”

Tony Von Pervieux, the music supervisor of *Ted Lasso*, knew he had some pivotal moments and scenes that he would need great songs for in season 3.

Back in the summer of 2022, he gave some creative direction to the show’s composer Tom Howe, who enlisted his friend Jamie Hartman to help him write a bespoke song for the show. Tom and Jamie got together and started writing the foundation of “Fought & Lost” – the opening verse and the chorus – then recorded the demo with a scratch vocal.

The song just kind of existed in this state for a while, until September 2022, when Jason brought Tom to the Taylor Hawkins Tribute Concert at Wembley Stadium. Sam Ryder was also at the show, performing “Someone To Love” with Brian May, Roger Taylor and the Foo Fighters.

Tom and Jason were blown away by Sam’s vocal performance and ended up meeting him backstage. Later, Tom called Jamie and said Sam was the guy – the voice they needed on their song!

But what’s wild is that Jamie and Sam were coincidentally, if not serendipitously, already scheduled for a writing session together a few months from then! When Sam and Jamie finally got together, they finished writing the song, tweaked a few bits, then recorded a new demo with Sam’s vocals on it.

Brandi Carlile’s “Home”

It was actually Jason Sudeikis’ idea! He asked Brandi to cover “Home,” for the scene himself. Diana Ross made the song famous in the 1978 film *The Wiz*, so it fit seamlessly within the musical DNA of the show, as anyone who watches knows, they love to feature songs from musical theatre.

What did the process look like?

After Sam and Jamie finished writing “Fought & Lost,” Tom put in the finishing touches, added strings and cut it to picture. The whole song took about a year from start to finish.

“Home” was really a collaboration between Brandi and Jason. They worked on the creative direction together and of course Tony had to secure the publishing rights to make it all possible. Brandi then enlisted a band and string section, they recorded at ShangriLa Studios, and Brandi produced the final track.

“We didn’t know if “Fought & Lost” was going to make the final cut until a few weeks before the episode aired, so we only had a couple weeks to get all the deals done, clearances in place, and our marketing plan figured out.”

[Read the full article](#)



Client spotlight: Warner Chappell Production Music's Alec Sharpe on industry challenges and tech innovation



Written by Emma Griffiths

August 31, 2023

We recently sat down with Alec Sharpe, Head of Business Development & Operations at our client **Warner Chappell Production Music**, to talk global expansion, industry challenges, and tech innovation.

Let's kick off with Warner Chappell Production Music's recent expansion to Brazil. What was the impetus behind that move and what does it mean for the company?

Brazil is a vast, diverse market with some of the largest media organizations in the world. Production is booming with more and more international companies building their presence in Brazil to serve local audiences. We want to be a part of that.

Warner Chappell has teams across South America, but it's our first local office for our production music division, and one we're particularly proud of and excited about with Renato Moraes at the helm. It's a great opportunity to collaborate more with our Warner Chappell Brazil team members, and work with local artists and producers to create authentic Brazilian music. This will allow us to better serve our clients there and share that music with the rest of the world.

Is further global expansion on WCPM's agenda?

We're always exploring options to grow and expand our business, and increasing our footprint is a consideration as part of that, where it makes sense. With the changing landscape in content production and media consolidation, we see a need from some of our clients to have an expanded presence to match their workflows and service their teams wherever they might be. South America is a step in that direction, with more to come.

What sets WCPM apart from other companies in this space?

As part of Warner Music Group, we have the backing and resources of a major music publisher and record label, with the global infrastructure that comes with that. But we also have flexibility to adapt and change, which creates a lot of exciting opportunities to evolve in parallel with the wider industry at large. We have production teams working out of London, Paris, Hamburg, and now Brazil to bolster our international repertoire. On top of that, we have two full-time recording studios and production teams between Hollywood and Nashville, providing an impressive capacity for custom music services, scoring, and top-notch album production.

Warner Chappell and Warner Music Group also have a workplace culture that I think is unmatched, and the best I've experienced across my career. There's been so much change and progress within Warner during my time here, and it's been a privilege to be a part of that.

What role does tech innovation play at WCPM?

An important one! We're in the process of transitioning to being a much more tech-focused business, and we're excited about the changes ahead for Warner Chappell and Warner Music Group with Robert Kyncl as CEO. We want to simplify our production music business and be better equipped to adapt to the changing needs of the marketplace. Tech innovation provides the tools to do so.

[Read the full article](#)

How That Pitch became the B2B music distributor of choice for production music libraries

Written by Emma Griffiths

September 13, 2023

That Pitch was launched by music producer and accidental music tech entrepreneur Mark Eckert (pictured left) in 2017.

Created to bring more licensing opportunities to independent artists, it enables them to distribute their music to the world's top music libraries and take home 100% of their earnings.

Here, Eckert takes us through the evolution of the platform and how the technology has scaled to bring more value to artists and music libraries alike.

Where did the idea for That Pitch come from?

As a music producer I was working with independent artists all over the world, and that led to a bunch of music supervisors asking me if I had any music for sync. Word got out and I started getting lots of briefs, so I sent an email out to my mailing list and I got hundreds of submissions in less than 24 hours, and a lot of it was really good.

I thought, this could help a lot of people, how can I keep this going where it pays for itself at least? So I launched a paid email list for \$15 a month, the price of a burrito and guac. We landed a bunch of syncs, but I only had so many deals from music supervisors and sync agents, and they take a cut. I wanted to see if there was a way to get everyone paid 100%.

I looked to YouTube and the creator economy where licensing is going and ended up meeting Soundstripe founder Travis Terrell through friends. They were having an issue getting the music they needed cleared and with all the metadata and media assets, so I said, I can do it.

I built out my own system where our members could upload tracks and Soundstripe could pick the music they wanted. We paid out 100% to members and within a year it was hundreds of thousands of dollars.

So I started working with more libraries like Feed.fm and tunestock as their exclusive B2B music distributor.

How has the technology evolved and when did you start using Synchtank?

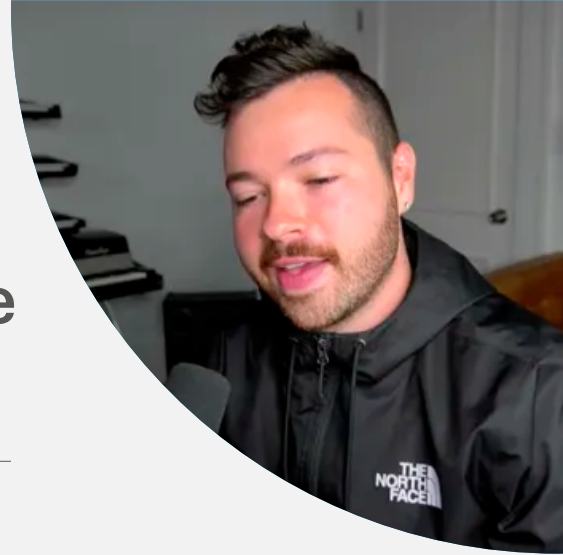
I kept growing the number of systems I had in place, but my tech stack was automations, Zapier, and hope. It could not scale. I started building out a new platform, but the amount of bandwidth I had to put into managing developers was taking away from the business. I realized Synchtank could do all of it and I could get started really quickly, so I made the switch.

With the new Synchtank system, we can onboard a new library on the same day and our users have a much better experience because it's purpose built for them – once they're in the platform there's a music catalog management system that's tailor fit to work for an artist. And we can offer a lot more sync capabilities to these artists that we couldn't before.

Once the tracks are in there, everything is automated. All the metadata, all the information that's needed just shows to the music libraries who want to see it. And then they just pick whatever they want. Everything is self-serve.

"With the new Synchtank system, we can onboard a new library on the same day and our users have a much better experience because it's purpose built for them."

[Read the full article](#)





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from
Synchtank®

On behalf of the entire Synchtank team we would like to thank all of our customers for their continued support and partnership. Wishing you and yours a happy holiday season and a prosperous 2024!