

A look at how the iPod has remixed the music industry, 10 years later

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Ten years ago, a music device debuted. It was small enough to fit in a pocket, yet had enough space to hold hundreds of favorite tunes.

It was called the iPod, and it changed the [music industry](#) when it was introduced by Apple Inc. in October 2001. Along with the iPod came iTunes, a program that transformed the way [music](#) was sold, played and produced.

Perhaps most significantly, the iPod and iTunes brought about a resurgence of the single, said Steven Maxwell, Kansas State University assistant professor of music who teaches a class about the history of rock and roll.

"Everything has come full circle," Maxwell said. "When everything started in rock and roll music, the big thing was selling singles. Then in the '70s, it was full albums. The iPod has made the single come back again in the last 10 years in the industry, for both the good and the bad."

For the good, iTunes and the iPod have helped musicians develop ways to promote their music. Artists make most of their money by touring, and selling music on iTunes has become a way to advertise for an upcoming tour. Additionally, some artists are more successful at selling iTunes singles than producing entire albums.

"There may be more of a movement toward selling only on iTunes or

offering [free downloads](#) because there is no overhead cost of producing CDs and dealing with labels," Maxwell said.

Artists are also figuring out how to use iTunes as a form of advertising. Through iTunes, an artist can release a single several months before a new album, which helps to build hype for the upcoming album.

"The money an artist makes from that single also helps to cover the cost of the album," Maxwell said. "People may want to buy the whole album, so they might end up buying that single twice because they buy it with the album, too."

The iPod has also changed the concept of album artwork. With vinyl records, cassette tapes and CDs, a large part of buying an album was also buying the album artwork that came with it. As a result, many artists were very much against iTunes at first because it did not include album artwork, Maxwell said. They saw it as destroying the concept of the art they were trying to create.

But when newer versions of iTunes and [iPods](#) added the ability to include album images, more artists seemed willing to use iTunes to share and sell their music, even if it wasn't quite the same as holding a physical album.

"I think the nostalgia is certainly lost," Maxwell said. "I think that is part of rock-and-roll nostalgia. People like to have the vinyl in their hands."

While iTunes has evolved into a user-friendly way for listeners to access music, some musicians still refuse to release their music on iTunes. In the past, the majority of money from album sales would go to the label company and the remaining money would go to the musician. Now, sales money must go to the label and to iTunes, leaving even less profit for the artists. Musicians have to turn to other sources of revenue, such as

scheduling more tours or selling merchandise.

Despite the negativity among some musicians, iPod and [iTunes](#) have extended beyond the music world and led to new forms of advertising and technology. The evolution of the iPod into the iPod touch and eventually the iPhone and iPad have paved the way for mobile marketing as we know it today. Because these newer devices have some of the same capabilities as the original iPod, many wonder if the iPod will be around much longer, said Esther Swilley, assistant professor of marketing.

"Even Apple is saying that it is kind of cannibalizing on itself," Swilley said. "So, will the iPod continue? I think the smaller ones, the iPod nano and the iPod shuffle, will stick around at least, especially with people who exercise."

Swilley expects to see the iPod as well as other mobile devices morph into a Bluetooth device that integrates phones, music and other electronics into something smaller, such as a wristwatch. She also predicts an increase in cloud computing as a form of music sharing and mobile marketing.

Regardless of whether the iPod is around for the next decade, it still resonates with the music industry because it represents an evolutionary device with new possibilities.

"There are a lot of positives and some negatives with the iPod," Maxwell said. "It is changing the face of what industry is doing now. It will be interesting to see what new forms of technology evolve in the next 10 years."

Provided by Kansas State University

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