

Matching fans to music tops record industry agenda

February 1 2012, by Audrey Stuart



French Culture minister Frederic Mitterrand (R) visits the MIDEM music trade fair, on January 28, at the Palais des Festivals, in Cannes, southeastern France. After a decade-long battle against file-sharing, music and technology giants are now pushing users to share to their hearts' content, with online music recommendations a key issue at the MIDEM trade fair that wrapped up Tuesday.

After a decade-long battle against file-sharing, music and technology giants are now pushing users to share to their hearts' content, with online music recommendations a key issue at the MIDEM trade fair that wrapped up Tuesday.

Record industry executives were in a buoyant mood for the four-day Riviera event, boosted by figures suggesting music lovers are slowly turning their backs on piracy and that legal digital music is finally taking off.

Last year saw a jump in the reach of digital music services, with streaming sites such as Spotify and Deezer, or Sony's Music Unlimited making vast music catalogues available in 58 countries worldwide, against 23 a year ago.

And with legal online music catching on, all eyes are on the role of social media -- and sophisticated new recommendation technologies -- in helping people find, and hopefully buy, music to suit their tastes and moods.

"Music is about recommendations, just like with movies and books, Scott Bagby, vice president of strategic and international partnerships at the new music streaming subscription service Rdio, told AFP.

"With a library of 14 million songs, it would take 100 years to listen to all the songs so [music recommendation](#) is really important," said Bagby, whose firm was set-up by the founders of Internet voice and video giant Skype.

This is where social media step in.

Facebook's vice-president of partnerships, Dan Rose, was one of the keynote speakers at a day of addresses at MIDEM, dubbed Visionary Monday, by technology players who are shaping the new digital music landscape.



Last year saw a jump in the reach of digital music services, with streaming sites such as Spotify and Deezer, making vast music catalogues available in 58 countries worldwide. After a decade-long battle against file-sharing, music and technology giants are now pushing users to share to their hearts' content, with online music recommendations a key issue at the MIDEM trade fair that ended Tuesday.

Rose told a packed auditorium that a massive five billion songs have been shared on Facebook since the social network incorporated two popular streaming services, Deezer and Spotify, just four months ago.

"This is word of mouth at scale," Rose said, arguing that the industry had entered what he called the social distribution curve.

In practice, when someone logs into Facebook and listens to a song on Deezer, their friends on the service are immediately notified in their news feed and can start listening in as well.

When they do so, their friends find out about the album or artist as well, and so on, with a ripple effect reaching out across Facebook's global network of 800 million users.

"For the first time, music is finally available online and in the way it was

always meant to be available," Rose said. "It's social, it's shared with your friends and discovered through your network of friends and family."

Rose argued that the number of people sharing a given song or artist on Facebook was emerging as "a new currency" for the music industry.

[Facebook](#), however, faces stiff competition for the favours of people searching for an ideal spot to find and share music.

There are a host of music recommendation services out there, including heavyweight Apple's iTunes Genius, the user-friendly iLike, the highly popular Last.fm, and new arrivals such as Rdio.

Machines, as well as networks of friends, play a key role in helping people find music that suits their tastes.

Gracenote -- which is part of Sony -- maintains a vast database of metadata about [digital music](#) tracks, and has been at the forefront in developing technology to provide music recommendations.

"Machines by themselves can't predict taste," Gracenote's president, Stephen White, told AFP.

In practice most music prediction software relies on a combination of algorithms, user input on what they do or don't like, and database information.

Last.fm, for instance, builds music recommendations based on reports of its users' habits -- which it calls "Scrobbling" -- offering them suggestions from the libraries of people who have some tastes in common with them.

And Pandora Radio, an automated service available only in the United States, plays selections similar to songs entered by a user, relying on a vast database listing precise characteristics about pieces of [music](#), from the level of distortion on the guitar, to the gender of the lead singer.

(c) 2012 AFP

Citation: Matching fans to music tops record industry agenda (2012, February 1) retrieved 27 March 2023 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-02-fans-music-tops-industry-agenda.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.