

Who's Who in music streaming: Tidal, Spotify, Pandora & more

March 31 2015, by Anick Jesdanun



In this Jan. 6, 2015 photo, a model wears SMS Audio BioSport In-Ear Headphones at the Intel booth during the International CES, in Las Vegas. With paid subscriptions to music streaming services like Tidal, Spotify, Pandora and others, you can listen to as many songs as you want on a variety of personal computers, phones, tablets and other devices. (AP Photo/John Locher)

Since Apple shook up the music world with iTunes a little more than a decade ago, online music has exploded and become the central way many people enjoy and discover music. Internet services such as Pandora and Spotify have millions of users. Now, several high-profile

musicians are behind what's being billed as the first artist-owned music-streaming service.

Tidal isn't new, but it's getting a reboot from rapper Jay-Z, who bought the Scandinavian company behind it, Aspiro. Madonna, Rihanna and Beyonce are among the co-owners. That's notable because many artists complain about how little payment they get from other music services, such as Spotify. As owners, artists could insist on better deals.

There are now three main ways to get music, and many services offer a blend:

— Pay per [song](#). Apple's iTunes has made it easy to buy singles or albums. Many artists release new albums early through iTunes. Google and Amazon now compete, but the premise remains the same: Buy songs or albums to own forever.

— Unlimited listening. For a monthly subscription of about \$10, you can listen to as many songs as you want on a variety of personal computers, phones, tablets and other devices. Many also let you download songs for offline playback. Once you stop paying, though, you lose all your songs, even ones you've already downloaded. Some offer free versions with ads and other restrictions, such as song selection only on PCs.

— Internet radio. You can't choose specific songs or artists, as you can with the unlimited-listening services. But you can fine-tune your Internet stations by specifying a song, artist, genre or playlist. The station will then stream songs similar to your choices. You can personalize stations further by giving thumbs up or thumbs down to songs you hear.

Music services typically have deals with all major recording companies, so they differ mainly in features rather than song selection. That said, Taylor Swift took her music off Spotify last fall in a dispute over fees.

All but her most recent album are on Tidal, Rdio and Beats.

Here's a look at who's who in music streaming.

SPOTIFY

One of the most popular [music services](#), with 60 million active users worldwide, and a quarter of them paying subscribers. Just this week, Spotify launched an app on Sony's PlayStation game console. The two companies worked closely to make listening seamless, so music can be heard in the background while playing games, without losing the game's sound effects, for instance. Spotify offers unlimited listening and Internet radio. It's free with ads; on mobile devices, users are limited to Internet radio and can't choose songs. Paying \$10 a month gets you an ad-free premium service that offers song selection and offline playback on mobile devices.



In this May 28, 2014 file photo, Eric Soriano listens to music with a pair of Beats headphones at a Best Buy store in Orlando, Fla. With paid subscriptions to music streaming services like Beats Music, Spotify, Pandora and others, you can listen to as many songs as you want on a variety of personal computers, phones, tablets and other devices. (AP Photo/John Raoux)

PANDORA

Offers Internet radio only. More than 81 million active listeners. Free with ads, or pay \$5 a month for an ad-free premium service and higher-quality audio over Web browsers.

TIDAL

Unlimited listening. Among the few services offering high-fidelity

songs, which many audiophiles prefer over MP3s and other formats that reduce quality in the compression process. Offers music video and curated playlists from experts. \$10 a month for standard sound quality and \$20 for high fidelity. There's no free offering.

APPLE

Pay per song to download and own forever through iTunes. Free Internet radio through iTunes Radio on Apple devices. Also owns Beats Music, which offers unlimited listening for \$10 a month, with no free version. Beats touts its playlists and other recommendations curated by experts, not computers.

GOOGLE



In this April 12, 2014 file photo, Jay Z at the 2014 Coachella Music and Arts Festival in Indio, Calif. Jay-Z and other high profile musicians are co-owners of Tidal, a music-streaming service that's trying to challenge better-known offerings from Spotify, Pandora and others. (Photo by Chris Pizzello/Invision/AP, File)

Pay per song through Google Play. Google Play Music service offers unlimited listening for \$10 a month, with no free option. Google also offers YouTube Music Key for selected music videos, free of ads, for \$10. Paying for one gets you the other, too.

AMAZON

Pay-per-song offering. Amazon's \$99-a-year Prime membership comes with unlimited listening, though the song selection isn't as broad as what rivals offer.

SAMSUNG'S MILK MUSIC

Offers free Internet radio like Pandora and others, but tries to make it easier to find [music](#) to match your mood. Instead of typing in songs or artists to find matching stations, you spin an on-screen wheel to go through various genres until you land on something you like. Initially exclusive to Samsung TVs and [mobile devices](#), there's now a Web player for personal computers.

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