

Norway artists file complaint against Tidal over false streaming

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Beyoncé, seen here at Coachella, launched her album "Lemonade" exclusively on Tidal in 2016

Norwegian songwriters, composers and music publishers on Monday said they had lodged a complaint against Jay Z's music platform Tidal after a media report said its streaming statistics had been manipulated.

The financial daily Dagens Naeringsliv (DN) claimed last week that the streaming numbers for Kanye West's "The Life of Pablo" and Beyonce's "Lemonade" were inflated through manipulated user play counts on Tidal, allowing the stars excessive royalty payouts.

Rap mogul Jay Z bought Tidal, which has its roots and significant activities in Oslo, through his holding Project Panther for \$56 million in March 2015.

His wife Beyonce and his former protege West both launched their albums exclusively on the streaming platform in 2016.

In an email to AFP, the online music service rejected the allegations, calling them a "smear campaign" fed by "lies".

Tidal's lawyer Jordan Siev told DN that it denied any manipulation and said its data had been stolen.

But the Norwegian organisation Tono, which represents around 30,000 rights holders, said the streaming manipulation claims were "strong" and "apparently credible" as they filed a complaint with the Norwegian police.

"We have to protect the interests of the rights holders for whom we work, but we also believe that a complaint is in the interest of Tidal which says the data has been stolen and manipulated," Tono director Cato Strom said in a statement.

Based on an analysis provided by the Norwegian Center for Cyber and Information Security (CCIS), DN reported more than 320 million false plays of songs from the two albums over short periods, a manipulation which affected more than 1.7 million users.

This would enrich Beyonce and West at the expense of other artists as the platform redistributes a portion of its revenues in proportion to the number of plays.

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