

Premier US album chart revamped to include streaming

20 November 2014, by Shaun Tandon



The Billboard chart will next week start to include streaming in its measurements, indicating that the music industry is expecting a permanent role for streaming services

The Billboard chart, the benchmark for US music sales, will next week start to include streaming in its measurements to reflect the rapid growth of services such as Spotify.

Billboard magazine, which produces the weekly charts with tracking company Nielsen SoundScan, described the move Wednesday as the biggest overhaul in its methodology since 1991, an era when CDs were replacing cassettes.

The change indicates that the [music industry](#) is expecting a permanent role for streaming services despite the objections of a number of musicians—most famously current chart-topper Taylor Swift, who pulled her music from Spotify and complained of unfair compensation to artists.

The Billboard 200, starting with its December 3 chart which covers the previous week, will record one [album](#) sale for every 1,500 times that songs from a single album are streamed through Spotify

or its competitors such as Beats Music, Google Play and Xbox music.

"The new methodology for the Billboard 200 is a welcome and necessary evolution of Nielsen and Billboard's album chart data," said Darren Stupak, an executive [vice president](#) at Sony, one of three big music label conglomerates.

"The ways in which fans consume music, and the ways in which music is monetized, have grown beyond the traditional metrics of album sales," he said in a statement.

The chart began to look at digital sales of both albums and singles in July 2003 as Apple's iTunes became a major force.



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The chart creators said the latest overhaul would also slightly change the focus of the Billboard 200 by measuring how often people listen to the music—not just whether they bought it.

"While an extremely valuable measurement, [album sales](#) would mostly capture the initial impulse only, without indicating the depth of consumption thereafter," said Silvio Pietroluongo, vice president of charts and data development at Billboard.

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New chart, new chart-toppers?

Britain's Official Charts Company in July began to add streaming to its Top 40 singles chart, with 100 streams equivalent to one single.

The move has brought some new faces to Britain's Top 40. In September, American songwriter Meghan Trainor's song "All About That Bass" entered the chart based solely on streaming as the track had not yet been released in Britain for physical or digital sale.



The Billboard 200 overhaul presumably will encourage some artists eager to climb the charts to allow streaming of their works. But Taylor Swift's rejection of Spotify would have been unlikely to stop her dominance, with her album "1989" already selling a crushing two million copies in the United States over three weeks.

Swift remained at the top of the Billboard 200 in Wednesday's chart, with "1989" selling 312,000 copies last week. It was well above the 190,000 sold by the second-ranked album, "Sonic Highways" by the Foo Fighters, who are supporters of streaming.

Swift pulled her entire collection from Spotify shortly after the release of "1989." In an interview with Yahoo Music, Swift called Spotify "an experiment that I don't feel fairly compensates the writers, producers, artists and creators."

Spotify chief Daniel Ek responded that the service has paid \$2 billion to artists and songwriters since its 2008 launch and described the company as a rare source of growth in a [music](#) industry mired by weak sales.

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But it remains to be seen how much the changes will determine who tops the charts, especially for albums. The British tracking company said that streaming initially contributed 20 percent to the total sales on the single chart.

APA citation: Premier US album chart revamped to include streaming (2014, November 20) retrieved 14 November 2019 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-11-premier-album-revamped-streaming.html>

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