Music Blogs and the Music Industry: Collusion or Independence?

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Abstract
As the music blogging culture is becoming a core component of the musical experience of many music listeners slowly replacing more traditional forms through which the audience experience music, this article explores how music blog practices fit into the broader discourse of music promotion and how their relationships with the music industry are articulated. Ideally music blogs should operate with values that are distinct from those of the record companies, but because they often rely on record companies for access to material, that relationship might be a source of tension. This article argues that music blogs enter into a series of collaborative relationships that are one aspect of their practices. In particular, they collaborate with labels and PR sponsors to determine the kinds of materials they will present on their sites, importantly connecting these materials with their posts.

Keywords: Music blogs, music industry, ethnography, cultural intermediaries, fans cultures

1   Introduction

Over the last few years there have been numerous examples of independent bands whose sudden fame has been attributed to music blogs. Clap Your Hands, National, Sufjan, Arcade Fire, Vampire Weekend, Kid Cudi and Band of Horses are only few examples of indie bands whose success has been mainly attributed to the combined praise of a number of small blogs with significant followings (Bemis 2005; Fink 2011). The above bands exemplify what, in the last few years, have been informally

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called blog bands. A blog band is a band that is discovered and becomes well-known or famous thanks to the hype generated by music blogs. These bands tend to succeed because one blog discovers them first and from there they spread all over the Internet (Fink 2011).

Quite large claims have been also made in the press about the significance of music blogs, without much being known about them. Rolling Stone calls them *"The best place to get free music, from hot rap remixes to garage-rock obscurities"* (Verde 2004); the Guardian calls them "The Internet DJ" (Alden 2005), and CNet News calls them "The New Wall of Sound" (Sandoval 2008), while The Times alludes to them in the title "Is the party over for the NME" (Dalton 2008).

Music blogging is a phenomenon, which started to emerge as a consequence of the fragmentation of the musical landscape into smaller niche markets (Anderson 2006; Jennins 2007). Music blogs are challenging the authority of traditional media as they can appeal to specific music tastes with greater ease than large publications. It is very unlikely that national music magazines would be able to give any sort of deep coverage to alternative or underground music scenes, or obscure music genres (Weiner 2009; Wodtke 2008). The rise of blogging has created the potential for informed, localised and free information on music, especially for niche communities and specific music scenes (Anderson 2006; Lenarcic & Sarkar 2008; Jennings 2007).

The discussions and debates surrounding music blogs and their potential impact, either positive or negative, on the discourses on popular music have been prominent in the press, music forums, websites and the music blogosphere itself since 2004. Although music blogs have received some attention as personal music diaries (Morris 2008), as spaces for fan interaction (Baym 2007; Hodkinson 2005) and as an alternative way of promoting and discovering new music (Wodtke 2008), little has been published about their interaction with the music industry. Other research provides empirical evidence on the impact that music blogs have on music promotion and consumption (Dhar & Chang, 2007; Dewan & Ramaprasad 2009) as well as on their presumed legality in relation to copyright infringement (Goldstone 2006).

Given the preceding literature, the aim of this paper is to examine the relationship between music blogs and the music industry. In particular, it will be argued that music blogs, born mainly out of music fandom and fans' impulses, have become an important source of information for music scenes and fans communities. Eventually, they also became a crucial promotional space for the music industry. Music blogs' relevance in promoting music will be confirmed by a detailed analysis of how industry professionals develop strategies to pressure and influence music bloggers to cover specific content.

The paper is organised in three parts. The first part contextualizes music blogs within fans cultures. It describes their emergence as a new category of intermediaries challenging the consolidated authority of traditional media. The second part, discusses the research methodology and data collection. The third part, drawing on primary data, provides a detailed analysis of how the relationships between music blogs and industry professionals are articulated. Some implications on music blogs independence from the music industry are drawn in the conclusive part.

2   Music blogs as music fans

Music blogs represent a digital manifestation of a participatory culture that has emerged over the past decade (Jennings, 2006). Blogs are commonly defined as frequently updated web-based chronological publications, logs of personal thoughts and web links, a combination of what is happening in one's personal life, and reports or comments on what is happening on the web and in the world (Lovink, 2008). Typically, blogs are published by individuals and their style is informal and personal. They first appeared in the mid-1990s and became popular as easy and free publishing tools became widespread.

Music blogs have also been defined as a combination of music magazine, personal diary, fanzine, and pirate/alternative radio because they combine elements of all of them (Wodtke 2008). The term music blog is, in fact, quite broad. It comprises a number of different types of music blogs: personal music diaries, more professional sites discussing music

news, blogs discussing a particular music genre or music scene, review blogs, mp3 blogs, and blogs which are a combination of all or some of the above. Despite such a variety, most music blogs have quite similar formats. According to O'Donnel & McClung (2008: 57):

"A band, artist, or song is introduced with a paragraph or two detailing some biographical or background information. A description of the music, often with comparisons to similar sounding bands, followed by a link to download a few songs in MP3 format from that artist often follows […] MP3 blogs rarely feature music found at the top of the current popular charts. Instead, the blogs showcase independent bands or obscure hard-to-find songs from the past. Many of the most popular MP3 blogs focus on up-and-coming bands in the indie music scene".

Music blogs first emerged from a passionate community of music lovers whose personal touch made them comparable to musical diaries (Morris 2008). Soon music blogs started to spread across fans communities and music scenes as a major communication platform for fans to interact with each other and share information (Hodkinson 2006; Baym 2007). Bloggers are seen as ordinary people and, because of their transparency grounded in their personal tone of communication, they are often perceived as representing greater credibility since most audience find them more accessible than faceless institutions or elites of experts (Pasick 2004). Jennings (2007) calls music blogs: savants, music experts, and musically literate opinion leaders who occupy an important and persuasive sphere between the music and the wider public. They are people that others will turn to for advice on record purchases. According to Jennings (2007: 146-147) a blog:

"has the personal touch that lends it an immediacy and authenticity we don't get from more mass-scale professional media [...] Blogs represent a refreshing a credible source of information. Readers are more likely to believe information in an opinion-leading third-party blog than in an ad, whilst the informal style of avoiding sales-speak and overt promotion in business blogs enhances the credibility of the medium".

The important role that some music blogs played in the discovery of new talents, which eventually got signed to record companies, contributed to their relevance as intermediaries. This sort of indirect artist promotion made the music industry recognise their importance in promoting new music and convinced record companies and others to include music blogs in their promotional strategies (ibid.: 83). Duncombe (1997: 155) argues, once the commercial industry recognises that some form of underground indie media starts to become influential within music scenes, they will attempt to incorporate them into the system through a co-option process. Ideally, intermediaries should retain critical independence if they are to be considered as a trusted source. If this autonomy is compromised blogs risk becoming like traditional music journalism, which is commonly dismissed for selling out and serving the record labels' interests (Frith 2001; Negus 1992, 1996). In theory, music blog should operate with distinctive values from those of the record companies and mainly embedded in music fandom and indie culture (Baym 2007; Wodtke 2008). Record companies, want their acts to be promoted in music blogs, while music blogs theoretically should write about what is of interest to themselves or to their audience (Jetto 2010). The ideological discourse of music blogs draws upon indie culture, generally empathising with both the independent artist and the reader in creating the perception of independence from the labels (ibid.). The centrality of values such as authenticity and integrity are in opposition to the nature of the music industry (Fonarow 2006: 26-27).

While literature on blogs mostly presents blogs as a form of "autonomous'," or "citizen's'' media which participates in a kind of counter public sphere struggling against a hegemonic cultural environment (Fairchild 2005), the model of a counter public is not uniformly applicable when studying the social and cultural practices of music blogs. More traditional counter public models of independent media, such as pirate radio, do not reflect the layers of collusion that make the music blogs here under scrutiny what they are (Fairchild 2005). In particular, in this paper, it will be argued that music blogs often enter into a series of collaborative relationships with the music industry for the promotion of

artists. Drawing from information collected through semi-structured interviews and online observations, this article examines how such a relationship is managed on both sides.

3   Research methodology and data collection

The analysis centres primarily on an ethnographic study of Australian indie music blogs and, to an extent, of the music blogosphere at the broader level. Ethnography describes particular cultural practices, grounded in data obtained through fieldwork and situated in conversation with a broader theoretical framework (Boyd 2008: 46). Ethnography makes possible the analysis of the complexity of culturally driven practices and norms and produces a topological map of a particular set of cultural practices (ibid.: 47). As a methodology for investigating the relationship between music blogs and the music industry, ethnography provides a mechanism for determining the norms and processes that inform the ways blogs select content as well as the values and routines that shape their practices.

The focus of this paper is on Australian indie music blogs because of their reflection of a specific music scene. Choosing to concentrate a part of the analysis on Australian music blogs was an intentional act of defining the boundaries of observation to a particular music scene. The music blogosphere is too big and diverse for a consistent and homogeneous analysis. Additionally, such an approach is consistent with emerging trends of media fragmentation and long tail scenarios, which suggest that the true potential of blogs lies in the millions of blogs that only get a few views per day (Anderson 2006). Finally, the fact that ethnographic research requires interviewing people in person, a geographical constraint was necessary. Not only do Australian music blogs have a significant role in the coverage of Australian and international indie music at a local level, but they also present a serious opportunity for Australian music to get exposure at an international level. Nonetheless, the Australian music blogging community is also linking to the international mu-

sic blogosphere and to minority blogging communities all over the world (Jetto 2013).

The data, consistently with Liav Sade-Beck's (2004) integrated ethnography, came from a variety of sources and were collected during an extended period of time. Liav Sade-Beck (2004) provides a good framework for developing an integrated ethnography. In her analysis of people behaving on the Internet, she relied on online observations, offline in-person interviews, and the analysis of a mixture of documents: traditional, hard copy press, the online press, internet databases, etcetera (ibid.: 10). In this article, such an integrated approach was fundamental in the analysis of music blogs practice. Online postings, interviews, discussions in forums, online and offline press were all taken into considerations when examining music blogs' interaction with the music industry.

Specifically, ethnographic data collection took place over a period of two and a half years, beginning in March 2009. The body of data that informed such analysis consists of digital content captured online, semi-structured in-person interviews, and both online and offline press content analysis. Data from both online and offline observations also shaped the descriptions and analysis.

From May 2009 to April 2010, 30 semi-structured interviews were conducted: 18 with Australian music blogs, three with PR companies, two with independent record labels, one with a major record label, and four with Australian artists. Semi-structured interviews allowed an understanding of the practices of music blogs from the subject's point of view (Bogdan & Taylor 1975) and provided a fuller understanding of their viewpoints on a number of issues. Interviews were crucial because they provided information on the bloggers' practices, allowing the researcher to draw conclusions about what music blogs do, why they do it, and how they are organised. This information provided a comprehensive understanding of bloggers' intrinsic motivations and views on the role of blogs in relation to the music industry and the overall perception of their own work within the space in which they operate. Content analysis of coverage of music blogs in the press usefully complemented the subjects' points of view, either confirming or invalidating the set of social

and cultural practices revealed in the interviews. Finally, content analysis of the Vanilla forum was conducted. As interactivity in music blogs has been shown to be quite limited (Nardi et al. 2004), the Vanilla forum was thought to be the perfect setting to observe how music blogs were openly voicing their very divergent opinions in relation to how blogs should interact with music industry professionals.   Comments, opinions and judgments, all central constituents of the information found in the forum, were analysed through a discourse analysis (Brown & Yule 1983). Overall, the forum was a perfect space to identify the values and principles that guided music blogs in interacting with music industry professionals.

4   The relationship between music blogs and the music industry

As previously argued, most music bloggers are music fans and they find in blogging a chance to write passionately about the music they like. They can indulge in writing about acts that have a limited cult appeal and sell no more than a few dozen albums. Such a commitment to the music they like, or that they consider to be aesthetically important, often clashes with the interests of PR firms and labels. Music bloggers often have different values from the record labels. Promoters work with the economic goal of selling their artists; music blogs ideally should work as intermediaries ensuring that the economic goal of promoting an artist is filtered through their own taste and through notions of what is good and important. As Jason from the blog One Louder says (2006: 1):

"Promoters want real fans to talk up bands. Bloggers achieve what a PR release could never do, speak with the voice of a loyal supporter who promotes the music because it's good".

This quote shows how music blogs, like other media, have become an essential outlet in the promotion strategies of record companies and PR companies, which started to consider music blogs as key outlets for their promotion strategies. In particular, the increasingly important role

of PR companies focusing on music blogs means that the relationship between the two sides requires frequent contact and resources. Krissy (2010) from Delinquents, a Sydney-based PR company focusing only on *"below the line promo"*, says:

"The main aim of my role is getting news up to blogs before it's released to mainstream media. So the idea is music labels or band managers come to me immediately before they release a new single or before an album is released, or if a band's going on tour. The idea is that we try and get this news out to the blogs before the mainstream media gets hold of it".

PR agencies and record labels started to approach music blogs around 2004, generally via standardised mass mail-outs containing press releases, and sometimes MP3s or videos and photos, with the aim of having their artists featured in the blog. However, this practice proved to be not particularly effective since music bloggers felt like labels and PR companies were not considering their musical taste or personality at all. Bloggers felt as if they were being exploited as a marketing tool. Steven from the blog Letters Have No Arms commented on the Hype Machine blog (Volodkin 2009: 1):

"When we started we naively expected to get mainly personal messages from smaller bands, perhaps with a link or a song or two attached. We also hoped to get RELEVANT stuff, i.e. bands with some form of affinity with the stuff we actually post. What's happened however is that now we seem to be on just about everyone's mailing list. These mailing lists are just run by labels, usually by the designated 'blog person', whose job it is to basically spam us half to death".

From a PR perspective, though, the most time-efficient way to communicate with bloggers is, once new content is received from an artist or a label, to get exposure for the artist by sending out the same email to everyone in the hope that many blogs will post the story. However, this approach did not seem to be positively embraced by music blogs. Niklas from Discobelle – an influential blog based in Sweden – states:

"When you, like me, get around 300 emails a day it is hard to keep up with it all and if you don't address me directly I won't even read the email" (Utwom 2009: 1).

Bloggers seem primarily concerned about keeping their taste consistent. Many blogs express disapproval if they receive information that is not in line with their focus – what they like and write about. Understanding a blogger's individual subjectivity is therefore crucial for PR firms aiming at building personal relationships with them. As Niklas articulates (Utwom 2009: 1):

"Of course the more personal a connection I feel with the PR person the better, but I understand that for them it's a job and they're interacting with MANY other people besides me. Anyone that I develop a friendship with certainly tends to get more of my attention though and I'll give their e-mails a read almost all the time".

Accordingly, recently PR managers and labels appear to have adjusted their contact strategies with blogs. They are more attentive of a blogger's taste and they try to build long-term relationships with them. Will from Heapflash, a PR company based in Melbourne, comments:

"We don't do it by some massive send out, I send out every email individually and so I go through my database and I check out people's blogs and stuff and I just find out what sort of music they like, because I don't want to send them something they don't like because they're not going to read my emails and they're going to mark me as spam. Heapsflash is all based upon the personal relationships. So ultimately what I'm trying to do is really just get people to respond to me and then try and develop actual relationships with them from music exchange and not disband them".

Identifying the taste of the blogger and keeping track of his work over time becomes, consequently, a crucial task for PR firms and it increases their chances of success.

Another crucial aspect of how PR firms manage their relationships with music blogs is the offer of freebies such as CDs, merchandise, free

tickets and invitations. These might appeal to music bloggers since they could increase their status as professionals in the local music scene. As Jason (2006: 1) from the blog One Louder writes:

"It's no secret that if you run a music blog of any note, promotion companies will offer to supply you with the latest news, free CDs, tickets to shows, MP3 streams, contests and other wares. Who doesn't like free stuff? If you happen to already like the band, even better. You just want to help your favourite bands get heard".

Dan from The Boudist affirms the point made by Jason:

"As soon as you are a music blog you start receiving free CDs, tickets to shows, people offer you merchandise to give away, they invite you to listening parties. The PR industry has realised how influential a music blog can be and they are now chasing music bloggers as back then the traditional press".

It can be argued that this type of influence is a sort of payola with no direct cash exchange, or "blogola", as some bloggers calls it. For some bloggers, the immediate payoff is increasing their professional status:

"If you're breaking the news – supplied by PR releases – going to all the hot shows – with free tickets – offering exclusive contests – with prizes supplied by promoters – then you are seen as an insider. The audience might also drastically increase" (Jason One Louder 2006: 1).

The above quote seems to suggest that the relationship between bloggers and the record labels they endorse (openly or otherwise) is one of mutual benefit. The PR companies supply the freebies and exclusives whereas the bloggers legitimise their music by obtaining street credibility. Due to the large number of requests music blogs get every day, especially the more established ones, bloggers can select and decide which promotional occasions they want to take advantage of. For many bloggers therefore, the blog become more than a special space in which to express their music taste. It becomes a platform to gain professional status in the music industry. Amanda (2010: 1), a Brisbane music blogger, recently wrote:

"With all the hype dedicated to the music industry, I've found that everyone wants to be a part of it. I've had friends state to me that they wish to become music bloggers purely because they will get free passes to gigs … They don't care about giving an honest and unbiased opinion about a band's performance; they'll do anything to get access. And that, to me, is the flipside of blogging; sure, it gives everyone the opportunity to express themselves, but it can also be a part of the problem. Fans who blog are giving assurances to their idols that anything they write will be positive; it's like unpaid PR".

If the relationship between music blogs and the music industry is one of convenience, it is also one of struggle because the two sides operate with very different values and develop different perspectives on the same subject. Therefore, conflicts often arise. Although both parties may be equally interested in maintaining the relationship, often their interests might diverge. Music blogs are eager to receive content from PR companies, which is in line with their personal taste and agenda. In particular, they like to receive personal emails as well as build a proper collaborative relationship with the PR firm, which makes them feel important and unique. On the other hand, for the PR firms, individual blogs are not crucial for their success. It is the combination of a number of blogs discussing the same topic that helps in generating hype. The reality is that the more blogs exist, the less each one of them matters on its own to a PR publicist. So publicists might prefer to send mass mail outs rather than personal emails, not only for efficiency, but for effectiveness. Some blogs seem to be aware of this, as shown in the following quote taken from the thread "The blogs are in charge" in the Vanilla forum:

"I personally dislike pr campaigns because I like to discover new music myself and not have it force fed to me. I have no interest in writing about a band that's been covered dozens of times in the last week alone and that's what you get with these PR driven bands" (Songsillinois 2009).

In addition, because of the often unmanageable quantity of emails that music blogs receive, blogs might still not take them into considera-

tion. This generates a sort of disappointment among PR persons. For example, Will says:

"It's a long an arduous process in sending out sometimes over 100 to 150 emails to individual people and trying to make them so that like, you know I know particular things about all the people and I have some level of relationship with them but in terms of response rate I'd say maybe about 15–20 percent of every email I send out".

According to Will Alexander (2010) the relationship between the industry and music blogs is structured as follows: PR firms send copies of new releases, promotional material, MP3s and press releases to music blogs. Additionally, they may also invite bloggers to attend gigs and events. These acknowledged practices occur through two types of communication. Firstly, there is a formal style of contact. An example of formal contact is the announcements on new releases or upcoming events, which are communicated through press releases or by sending emails to mailing lists, which include all music blogs. In this approach, the PR firms make sure that the information reaches all members of the blog community, and that the information reaches the largest possible number of blogs. Some PR companies will take into account the blogs' taste and will deliver the information only to those blogs, which they believe are more likely to post the content.

Personal emails or mass mail outs, though, are not the only type of contact. Another form of contact practice is becoming far more relevant to understanding the ambivalent relationship between PR firms and music blogs. This is the more informal contact, through which PR firms choose a music blog to which they will provide information first hand. They are free to give the privilege of first-hand information to whichever amateur critic they believe is most suited to covering or reviewing their artist or event. PR firms with a developed knowledge of the music blogosphere will be able to identify the blogger who will be most useful to cover a certain act. A blogger may be targeted if he specialises in a certain area, has a particular taste, or simply because he/she is well regarded. "Privileging" one source is the perfect alibi for the PR firms to pro-

mote their acts in the way that best suits their interests. It creates the illusion that the bloggers are being privileged in a legitimate way when it is the labels' goal of promoting their acts through the right channel that is being fulfilled. According to Krissy from Delinquents:

"So, we want the track to get to them before it gets to anyone else. Before it's on the bands My Space. The more exclusive the more interested the blogs are going to be in it".

Giving information first hand can be a very effective way for PR firms to win the trust of music blogs. Blogs, on the other hand, might become dependent on the PR firm for exclusive access, making the relationship between the two unavoidable. Being the first to post about a new song, album or artist, viewed favourably, especially in the music blogosphere, as it might drastically increase a blog's popularity. As Stuart (2009) from New Weird Australia (a Sydney-based music blog featuring experimental Australian music) says in his interview: *"blogging is becoming pretty much chasing the exclusive"*. He adds:

"Blogging it very much became about cachet based on being the first as opposed to cachet of having a good volume of curatorial work behind you. It became this kind of race and now there are way too many blogs which do that maybe taking a far less serious and professional approach to the leaking of track as well".

Stuart seems to criticise the emerging practice of "chasing the exclusive". He sees it as a destabilising factor to the original purpose of music blogs of offering a consistent and genuine curatorial approach. In particular, new bloggers, since they need to build a following, have been criticised as being the ones who are more likely to post whatever PR firms give them, just to boost their popularity. Krissy believes that:

"If they're really established blogs then you tend to find they're already receiving a lot of information from labels and everything like that, so sometimes I'll get responses sometimes I won't. If they're up and coming blogs, like they're just starting out, they're always like super keen

to be getting that new information and getting whatever they can get their hands on".

This extract shows how the articulation of the dynamics generated around the circulation of exclusive content among PRs and bloggers is, in fact, quite complex. Because of the hyper-immediacy of the music blog-osphere (Wodtke 2008: 64), being the first one to post new content will boost traffic through increased readership and incoming links (ibid.: 65). As a general rule, the more traffic a blog has, the more its popularity in the blogosphere will increase. Therefore, one reason why blogs try to showcase new music before others is because they are likely to quickly achieve popularity in the music blogosphere. Cameron (2009) from Before Hollywood thinks that:

"If the blog has the scoop or the exclusive, that denotes status to me because it means a lot of other people are reading it and taking note of what it's saying, circulating that throughout the internet".

Exclusives, though, will not only confer to bloggers popularity but they will also increase the sub-cultural status of the blogger in the indie community, especially if the new artists and music are considered to have indie credibility and the blogger will gain credit of being the first to discover them. In fact, as Will and other PR professionals put it, there are bands that are more likely to appeal to bloggers than others. As Will explains:

"It all depends upon the band. If you've got a band, particularly a band that talks to blogs themselves, or is blog friendly, I mean a band that has a bit of Indie cred and that sort of stuff, you're going to do a lot better but if you're trying to service a blog with music that's either too mainstream or a little bit too out there the response rate is going to be tiny. The best response rate I've gotten is with Indie cred bands".

Will's quote seems to suggest that not every artist/music will appeal to music blogs: indie bands which are not too mainstream but, at the same time, not too unknown either, are the ones that are more likely to succeed.

5 Conclusion

This article has argued that music blogs, through their subjective curatorial work, represent an important space not only for fan communities but for the music industry as well. The interest of the music industry in music blogs caused a significant shift in music blogs' practices. The altruistic promotion of music that the mainstream media ignores is one motivation, which contrasts with the fact that often bloggers are blogging to promote themselves and achieve recognition. Music blogs achieve autonomy in relation to the industry when blogs are able to define their agenda according to a set of criteria they have themselves devised as opposed to an agenda imposed from outside. Instead of approaching music blogs either in a positivistic way, as autonomous cultural intermediaries, or in a cynical way as by-products of the music industry, a discerning examination should consider the degree of autonomy achieved by bloggers and view it against the constraints of operating within the music industry, whose main purpose is to maximise audiences and make profits. The answer to the question of whether music blogs are independent from the music industry or not lies not in whether music blogs can operate outside of a relationship with the labels. It lies, instead, in the ability of the blog to manage that relationship by matching a good use of resources with their sub-cultural values. As Eric Harvey (2006: 1) writes:

"Music blogs exist in a parallel universe to the methodologies of music promotion, criticism and distribution, and it's crucial to acknowledge that that they have internalised large amounts of both forms, reforming them through the lens of fandom".

The rapid development of digital communication is having a massive impact on the music industry. In an age where online media is becoming more popular than print media, music blogs are becoming the prime portals for accessing new music information. In response to this situation, this article examined how entities in the industry – PR agencies in particular – are taking advantage of the new media. As the music industry is embracing the new digital culture, it is important to acknowledge

that PR agencies need to find new ways to reinvent themselves. From the analysis it has also emerged how PR companies need feedback as they are trying to find new ways to harmonise with such changes.

To conclude, this article has shown how the interest of the music industry in music blogs was a determining factor in their evolution from fan-based personal outlet toward a more professional outlet centred around ideas of becoming popular and collaborating with the commercial interests of the industry. The fact that the music industry, which prosecuted thousands of file sharers for copyright infringements, started to provide music blogs with music that might end up in the same file sharing communities, was a further sign of the indisputable power of blogs.

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7 Appendix

The sample for the 18 semi-structured interviews with bloggers was chosen to ensure a representation of a range of cultural settings. Precisely, 10 interviewees were from Sydney, 4 from Melbourne, 2 from Brisbane and the remaining 2 from rural areas. The recruitment was done using a combination of networks of personal contacts and emails introducing the research and the researcher.

The 85 percent of the interviewed bloggers was males and the remaining 15 percent females. The majority of the bloggers was aged between 25 and 35 years old. Only four of them were younger than 24 and five older than 35. They were all English native speakers, coming from a mid-high socio-economic background.

Four of them were still studying and university and the remaining 14, they all had tertiary education, working in professional roles. However, only three of them worked in the music industry and only one as a journalist. Two of them considered themselves as musicians, 3 had their own radio show consistent with the content covered on their blog and one involved in radio programming.