

**Open University of Cyprus**

**Faculty of Economic Sciences and Management**

**Master's Degree in *Business Administration (MBA)***

**Master's Dissertation**



**Electronic Dance Music (EDM): From Plain Entertainment to  
Profitable Business**

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**Supervisor**

**Georgopoulos Antonios**

**May 2021**

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The present Master's Dissertation was submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the postgraduate degree in Business Administration.

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## Summary

Music is one of the main sources of income in the Entertainment Industry. It has created lots of jobs, thus it generated plenty of money. Since the music industry is always evolving and the trends keep changing, there is a sudden growth in the audience of the Electronic Dance Music over the last few years. That growth is examined in a global scale with respect to the market and the demographic of the genre's forefathers (the U.S. and the U.K.) during the past decade.

The goal of this study is to understand how the Electronic Dance Music (EDM) movement grew to what it has become today, if it is another temporary trend and if it will grow further in the near future. In order to understand the rapid development of this scene into one of the largest growing industries of the past decade, three approaches are used.

A socio-cultural approach, to identify whether this unexpected popularity is simply just another trend, or it gradually grew to a valuable form of entertainment. That is analyzed by studying the people who produce services and the consumers.

An economic approach, based on examining the funds spent and the profits gained from every relevant aspect in the industry. That includes an economic analysis on the finances of artists, managers, promoters as well as crazed fans and festival attendees.

A technological approach, in terms of the ways that the industry evolved. Also, the effect of that evolution to the people involved with this scene as mentioned before. Finally, a list of significant issues that led to massive losses is presented along with some certain temporary and long-term solutions.

The results of this study show that after the initial, yet rapid, growth of the overall EDM industry value until late 2015, a period of stabilization started for the past five years with a rough estimate of over 7 billion dollars (IMS Business Report 2019). Although there was a dip of 1% in the value during the last year, having a five-year stability in the industry value and considering the incidents of the global market in 2021, it is safe to say that EDM is still relevant. It is not just another trend and it will keep evolving. Even if that means that another subgenre of EDM might rise into popularity it is still the same outcome, concerning the value of the industry.

## Περίληψη

Η μουσική είναι μία από τις κύριες πηγές εισοδήματος στην Βιομηχανία της Διασκέδασης. Έχει δημιουργήσει πολλές δουλειές, έτσι παρήγε πολλά χρήματα. Εφόσον η μουσική βιομηχανία πάντα εξελίσσεται και οι τάσεις συνεχίζουν να αλλάζουν, υπάρχει μία ξαφνική ανάπτυξη στο κοινό της Ηλεκτρονικής Μουσικής τα τελευταία χρόνια. Αυτή η αύξηση εξετάζεται σε παγκόσμιο επίπεδο σε σχέση με την αγορά και τα δημογραφικά στοιχεία των προγόνων του είδους (την Αμερική και την Αγγλία) κατά τη διάρκεια της τελευταίας δεκαετίας.

Ο στόχος αυτής της μελέτης είναι να κατανοηθεί το πως το κίνημα της Ηλεκτρονική Μουσική (EDM) μεγάλωσε και έφτασε στο σημείο που είναι σήμερα, αν είναι άλλη μία προσωρινή τάση και αν θα αναπτυχθεί περισσότερο στο κοντινό μέλλον. Για να κατανοηθεί η γρήγορη εξέλιξη αυτής της σκηνής σε μία από τις μεγαλύτερες βιομηχανίες της τελευταίας δεκαετίας, τρεις προσεγγίσεις χρησιμοποιούνται.

Η κοινωνικοπολιτισμική προσέγγιση, για να εξακριβωθεί αν αυτή η απροσδόκητη φήμη, είναι απλά άλλη μία τάση, η αν σταδιακά μεγάλωσε σε μια πολύτιμη μορφή διασκέδασης. Αυτό θα αναλυθεί μελετώντας τους ανθρώπους που παράγουν υπηρεσίες και τους καταναλωτές.

Μια οικονομική προσέγγιση, βασισμένη στην εξέταση των χρημάτων που ξοδεύτηκαν και των κερδών που αποκτήθηκαν από κάθε σχετική πτυχή της βιομηχανίας. Αυτό συμπεριλαμβάνει μια οικονομική ανάλυση στα οικονομικά των καλλιτεχνών, υπευθύνων, διοργανωτών, όπως και των τρελαμένων οπαδών και αυτών που πηγαίνουν σε συναυλίες.

Μια τεχνολογική προσέγγιση, όσον αφορά τους τρόπους με τους οποίους εξελίχθηκε η βιομηχανία. Επίσης, το πως επηρέασε αυτή η εξέλιξη τον κόσμο που σχετίζεται με την σκηνή που αναφέρθηκε πριν. Τέλος, παρουσιάζεται μια λίστα με σημαντικά μειονεκτήματα που οδήγησαν σε μαζικές απώλειες μαζί με κάποιες προσωρινές και μακροπρόθεσμες λύσεις.

Τα αποτελέσματα αυτής της έρευνας, δείχνουν πως μετά από την αρχική, και γρήγορη, άνοδο της αξίας της EDM βιομηχανίας μέχρι το τέλος του 2015, μια περίοδος σταθερότητας ξεκίνησε τα τελευταία πέντε χρόνια, με μια εκτίμηση περίπου πάνω από 7 δις δολάρια. Αν και υπήρξε μια πτώση του 1% τον τελευταίο χρόνο, έχοντας μια στασιμότητα πέντε ετών και παίρνοντας υπόψη τα γεγονότα του της παγκόσμιας αγοράς του 2021, λέμε με ασφάλεια ότι η EDM είναι ακόμα σχετική. Δεν είναι απλά άλλη μια τάση και θα συνεχίσει να εξελίσσεται. Ακόμα και αν αυτό σημαίνει πως κάποιο άλλο υπό-είδος της EDM θα γίνει πιο διάσημο είναι ακόμα το ίδιο αποτέλεσμα, όσον αφορά την αξία της βιομηχανίας.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

In a rare interview that was aired in 1996, Jim Morrison predicted the future of music by saying “the new generation’s music will rely heavily on electronics”. He continued by describing that he envisions one person with a lot of machines and electronic setups, singing and speaking. The now deceased front-man of the Doors, a music group that defined the youth subcultural movement of the 1960s made a prediction that turned out to be true (Weidman 2011). That truth, brought the evolution of this genre in the lens of the music industry, turning it into a viral topic of tremendous interest during the last decades. While many identify Electronic Dance Music (EDM) as a new and different genre and a form of culture in recent years, there is another point of view that enlists that genre as nothing more than some new experimental means for profiteering, in order to keep the music industry as a whole, on top of the main sources of income that consist the entertainment sector along with films and video games.

Being born in the late 1980s, Electronic Dance Music (EDM) was simply called electronic music back then, as a generic term since it was a new genre without any familiar sounds to the already existing music concepts. Considered as the continuation of disco from the early ages, it took the forms of the genres that are now known as “House” and “Techno” music, with the latter appearing shortly afterwards. The birthplace of these genres was the United States and specifically the city of Detroit. A few years later the United Kingdom developed a familiar taste for the genre and thus the creation of the so-called “rave culture” occurred.

With the initial ideas evolving into several subgenres over the years, the time comes in the late 2000s that the EDM genre progresses through a number of consecutive events into a trend. That trend attracted marketers into providing new innovative ways, mainly through technology, to grow that industry further in a shorter period of time. That brought enough importance and significant value to the subject, that led numerous companies to start investing in the industry.

The main goal of the study is to understand how EDM managed to appear in the map and blow up the music industry, while maintaining a gradual growth in its value for several continuous years. Many people called it a trend that will eclipse sooner or later, yet it has attracted millions of fans and created thousands of jobs. Its value will be examined along with the target audience and the profits generated throughout the years, as well as the role of technology in the matter.

Living in the post-digital era, the internet has been a huge asset (Cascone 2000) in music promotion and the discovery of new talents. Several platforms known for their media sharing services (Bernsen 2015) such as music streaming, buying, selling and distributing are used by young and aspiring artists as well as popular producers to promote or sell their material. Since the invasion of technology in the entertainment industry and by taking into consideration the U.S. market – as one of the most saturated markets around the world on that matter, the global value of the entertainment industry keeps rising gradually by \$0.1 trillion each year for the past five years and is expected to reach a worth of \$2.6 trillion U.S. dollars by the end of 2023(Watson 2019).

What considers this bold move as a successful endeavor from a marketing standpoint is the wide demographic range of the EDM audience. Some House and Techno producers have been performing in live shows since the late 1980s, which makes them over 55 years old today. That gives the chance to the younger audiences who are introduced to these subgenres of EDM to witness a live act from one of their new favorite artists in present days (Coulson 2018).

The power of technology and therefore the influence of the internet adjusted peoples' lives. Those adjustments started with a rapid switch in the pace of physical music purchasing. In early 2010s the market showed a significant reduction in physical music sales (CD and DVD). These sales turned into digital purchases that kept increasing in large numbers until the introduction of a newer service that would lead the consumers further away.

A report that appeared in 2010 showed the first analysis of the digital market in a global scale. After the loss of physical sales, the global digital revenue shares placed the music revenue to a remarkable 27%, which was only surpassed by the digital game sales revenue with a 32% high (Kennedy 2010). Those numbers were the highest in the entertainment industry, being followed by a 5% digital revenue in films. In addition, the US music market value consisted of a wholesome 40% digital revenue shares in the beginning 2010. The only way to profit more out of digital revenue, was another innovative idea that transferred the audience to a new source of entertainment. That source is called music streaming.

It is really hard to keep track of streaming services considering the fast pace in which they are developed, but nowadays there have been over 30 websites or platforms that are currently actively used and offer unlimited streaming, free of advertisements with a paid subscription. That is the main source of income for the companies and the labels involved with the artists at the moment. On the other hand, since labels own the rights to the artists' material, the main source of income for the producers are the live shows. The prices vary for all performing musicians and events, which would suggest that the label with the most capable marketing team would offer a better deal to its collective of artists signed to the company, raising the value of the artists' shows.

Last but not least, there have been several issues throughout the years of activity that led to huge losses to the labels, the artists and the festival organizers, with the latter being in the superior position amongst the rest when it comes to losses. Those types of incidents could include minor events such as a contract breach between the artist and the label that could lead to legal actions or a major event such as the cancellation of a festival, which would lead to severe losses and possibly impactful disagreements between the production team and the sponsors involved to conduct the event. One of the greatest factors to ever bring a disastrous and pivotal impact to the EDM industry took place in the beginning of 2020 and is the so-called COVID-19 pandemic (Chandran 2020). An alarming global catastrophe that led several industries to an economic downfall.

Many countries started the initiation of a lockdown to stop the spread and keep its citizens safe. Although those were chaotic times, once again marketing possibilities started to emerge since the music industry was driven into immediate cancellation of all events that would result in the gathering of large sums of people. Staying at home became a number one priority, thus the labels figured out some ways to connect the artists with their fans and maintain their presence through online live-streaming performances and more (Bain 2020).

# Chapter 2

## Identification of Electronic Dance Music

By now every single soul around the world that is interested in researching the world of music, already knows that the term EDM stands for Electronic Dance Music. Although, the etymology of the word might seem blank and somewhat indefinite. Since forever, music was created and served to the world through hearing. Those who expressed their likeliness to some particular type of music always wanted to listen to more. But what happens when you want to search for specific music without knowing its label?

This is the part where labelling started. The word genre was used to define the differences between unrelated types of music. Those genres were still heard as a bunch of sounds and words that could either bring people together sitting at a table, drinking wine and having a laugh or shaking their heads up and down with rage while jumping around each other. In order to avoid mixing these encounters the labelling was established with the initial genres being named. Then people would be pleased to be able to recognize whatever is reaching their ears.

Electronic music started with disco somewhere between the 1950s and the 1960s, which came as a derivative of the French word *discothèque*, meaning a place for discs and vinyl records at the time (Glazer 2014). After the 1970s era the disco genre was one of the top choices of the crowd in nightlife. Although it was one of the most successful sounds to make the audience dance, during the early 1980s there was a number of subgenres or even similar-sounding genres that started emerging in the U.S. nightlife. That was the introduction of “House” music, which was later on followed by “Electro” and evolved to the creation of “Techno”. While that was a successful era regarding the introduction of new subgenres of electronic music to the world, there appeared to be a frequent issue with the labelling.

The issue began when that kind of music started being distributed. From a marketing point of view, it really gave a hard time to the industry to separate the subgenres without having the proper labelling for the people to realize the content they were given. In order to identify what they were selling, they needed better categorization. That led to the invention of the term “rave music”, which was the vast majority of subgenres played during nighttime parties that would end up with endless dancing until the early morning hours.

One of the most dominant terms in that scene used by corporations to market these genres was electronica. The reasoning behind it was simply because people cannot identify music without lyrics and humming could never help to identify those subgenres clearly. In the year 1985 the acronym EDM started being used by marketing companies as a title that contains all types of electronic music under one label. That was the introduction of the term EDM, which started as early as 1985 and ended up being out of context somewhere in the early 2010s.

The term EDM has been used constantly throughout all these years to describe the vast majority of electronic music. Furthermore, a new genre appeared that goes by the name of “Big Room House”, which was initially a subgenre of “Electro House” and ended up gaining enough popularity to get its own label (*Big Room House* 2014). The confusion started in large EDM festivals since Big Room House still had no label. As a result of most of the artists playing that type of music, people started labelling it with the generic term of Electronic Dance Music. In order to avoid mixing up the whole EDM label with a new subgenre the term “Big Room House” or “big-room” was used to maintain the initial significance of the EDM title.

By now the EDM title is used for myriads of genres for those who lack the knowledge and the experience to identify the differences between the sounds of electronic music. That is why such a generic term was established in 1985 and lives up to its name until the present days of 2021.

The trick behind the EDM term is that by merging all these subgenres of electronic music under one label, it is easy for the industry to serve a wide range of possibilities to increase the profits of the companies involved and the satisfaction of a greater audience.



# Chapter 3

## Literature Review

### 3.1 Introduction

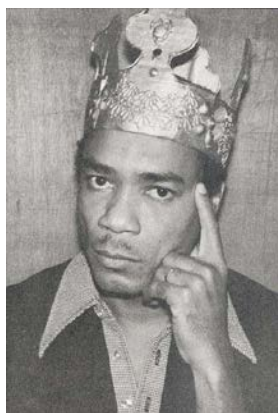
The following chapter outlines the theoretical background in terms of historical value of the genre and highlights the incidents that led to the gradual increase of profiteering in the industry throughout its existence. First it presents the evolution of the market and its target audience by eras (decades) and afterwards it examines the income of the companies involved in the subject market. Lastly, it reviews the effect of technology on the audience, the artists and the companies.

### 3.2 The History of EDM

<b>The Beginning</b>	<b>The Birth of Disco Music</b>
<b>The 1980s Era</b>	<b>From House to Techno</b>
<b>The 1990s Era</b>	<b>The Rave Culture Begins</b>
<b>The 2000s Era</b>	<b>EDM Becomes Mainstream</b>
<b>The 2010s Era</b>	<b>The Current State of EDM</b>

### 3.2.1 The Beginning

As stated from various sources related to the origins of Dub, it all started way back in the past during the 1960s with the Jamaican Dub music, which is considered a sub-genre of Reggae music even though it extended beyond the scope of Reggae and managed to influence several other genres, including Rock, Punk, Pop, Hip Hop and Disco (*Origins of Dub* 2008). It is considered a fusion of the Reggae roots and the sound system culture that flourished between 1968 and 1985 (Neely 2008) and managed to start as a base for the future creation of the EDM genre (Meschino 2015). From back then the Dub productions were remixed Reggae tracks with less lyrics, more rhythm, melodies and reverberant textures. The first pioneers were studio engineers experimenting with deconstruction of Reggae tracks and addition of effects such as reverb and delay. According to Meschino (2017), the most notable producers and pioneers at the time to evolve those sounds were King Tubby (as seen in Figure 1) and Lee “Scratch” Perry. The movement started with King Tubby having a vision of a sound engineer being in front of the crowd instead of standing behind the scenes and adjust the consoles. As described by Katz (2015) he was interested in electronics and after attending the College of Arts, Science and Technology in uptown Kingston, he started building radios and amplifiers until he built his first sound system called Hometown Hi-Fi. Then he joined the Waterhouse sound clash and the rest is history.



**Figure 1:** King Tubby ([https://www.westburymusic.net/ArtistDetails?Aid=WBM\\_AR\\_89](https://www.westburymusic.net/ArtistDetails?Aid=WBM_AR_89))

During the 1970s the next genre that would prove to be pivotal in the evolution of electronic music would appear to be Hip Hop. It is said by many that the movement started by using the previously named Jamaican sound system culture with large bass-heavy speakers in the Bronx. As Smith (2013) claims, it turned out to be an era of breakthrough and innovation that brought to light the culture of break beat and turntablism. The first and the most popular pioneer and DJ to start this movement at the time was known to the people as DJ Kool Herc (as seen in Figure 2) and is considered by many the father of Hip Hop music and culture in general.



**Figure 2:** DJ Kool Herc (<http://www.electrospectivemusic.com/dj-kool-herc-born-1955/>)

The final key genre that would provide a step towards the birth of EDM would be one of the largest trends to be established in the nightlife of the early 1980s and is none other than the beloved Disco music. As Glazer (2014) describes, the Disco sounds were initially invented in 1974 from experimenting with several instruments. Although, the simple use of a drum machine made one of the first Disco hits to be played to a reasonably huge crowd and earn a positive feedback.

Being one of the most notable music genres to have ever existed in the spectrum of electronic sounds, Disco was not just a preferable dancing beat by many, but one of the greatest movements of that time. It brought together black, Hispanic and gay people on the dance floor and its influence lives on.

It is believed by many that Disco never ceased to exist, the era is gone and the fans changed their styles, their friends and their nightlife, but their taste for the genre is still there (Mattera 2012). Starting after the ban that the Nazis ordered during their time occupying France, the places were mainly underground spaces and venues blasting jazz and swing through the speakers, where people were gathering to dance off to those forbidden sounds. Then the news travelled around the world and the genre began to draw attention. In the words of John Lyons in the documentary 'What We Started' that aired in 2017, one of the first club promoters at the time, "Live music was the go-to to fill the room and people asked for live bands. Instead, a concept of a DJ playing live records was introduced and that was the birth of Disco".

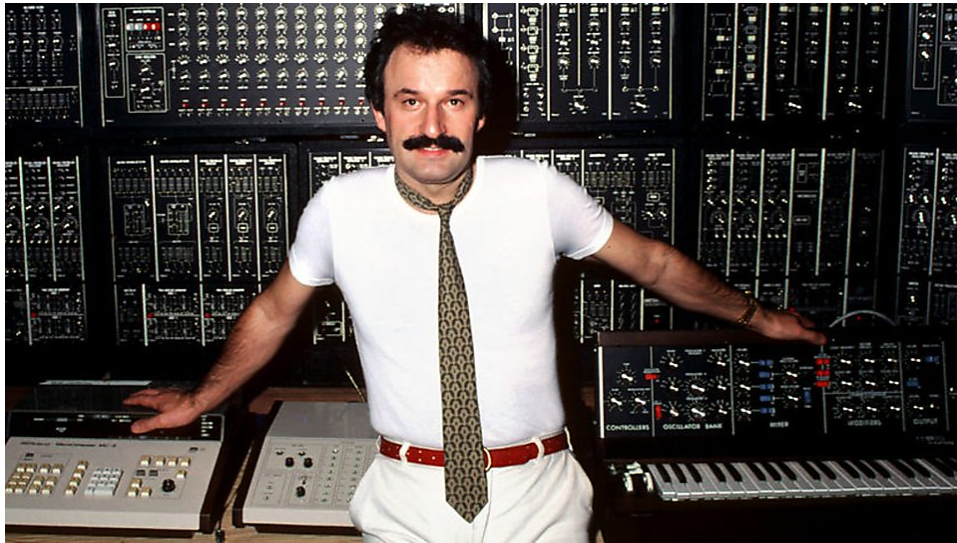
Managing to spread as a term in the early 1970s the underground venues of New York started showing particular interest in what they described as a blend of the sounds of funk and soul along with some Latin vibes. The crowd would dance to those sounds all night long, which would mean the appearance of numerous new artists that would be introduced to the world through new hits and disco would start its major success.

Notable disco pioneers and hitmakers include Timmy Thomas and George McCrae. Although as said by Kimutai (2017) it is believed by many that the person who gave life to the definition of Disco is a man called DJ David Mancuso (as seen in Figure 3) who started hosting private dance parties in his home that later on became The Loft, one of the most famous New York underground dance clubs in the early 1970s. A notable and influential artist that defines the genre is Giorgio Moroder, often dubbed as Godfather of Disco (as seen in Figure 4). Although after the growing success of Disco, by the end of the 1970s there was a series of unfortunate events that would lead into certain disturbances in the music scene and would present a new alternative to the evolution of music in the following years. That would be a turning point while moving into the 1980s. It would present the idea of making profit through constant entertainment.



**Figure 3:** David Mancuso (<https://www.documentjournal.com/2016/11/remembering-david-mancuso-and-the-loft/>)

The audiences that grew to love those genres back then have transferred through generations and in today's culture, hip hop is still considered one of the largest music markets of all time, along pop music which as of 2021 consists of electronic beats and several more EDM influences.



**Figure 4:** Giorgio Moroder (<https://www.theguardian.com/music/2019/mar/28/giorgio-moroder-his-20-greatest-songs-ranked>)

### 3.2.2 The 1980s Era

The first event to kick off the new era actually started some months before 1980. The date was July 12 1979 and the incident that took place that day was remembered by many attendees as the so-called “Disco Demolition Night”. It started as a Major League Baseball promotion at Comiskey Park in Chicago, Illinois, that ended into a fiery riot. The event started with Steve Dahl, a local DJ and rock n’ roll fanatic dressed up as a general of an army who hates disco music and used a microphone to encourage people into joining him while he was blowing up disco records in the middle of the park (Greene 2019). The response of the crowd was a swift rush to the field, that ended up in a bonfire and the police forces rushing in to separate the crowd (as seen in Figure 5). The “Disco Sucks” propaganda with the assistance of the White Sox owner Bill Veeck in desperation to increase attendance during a lackluster season, is considered by many as the death of Disco as a genre.



Figure 5: ‘Disco Demolition Night’ (<https://happymag.tv/disco-demolition-night-and-why-your-taste-doesnt-matter-and-never-will/>)



While Disco became an undesired term by the early 1980s, several other genres surfaced to take its place. There are three major genres created at that era that still attract large audiences in the present era. The first to gain a reasonably large following is what we call “House” today.

According to PQ (2019) the origin of House music comes from a nightclub in Chicago that goes by the name Warehouse. That club existed from 1977 to 1983 and the audience was primarily black, who came to dance to a mix of traditional disco music and more primitive sounding dance records played by the so-called godfather of House, Frankie Knuckles (as seen in Figure 6). Frankie mixed records from local musicians that were created using some new generation electronic instruments such as synthesizers, drum machines and the early versions of samplers. The genre would become a cultural phenomenon in Chicago nightlife by the mid-80s, it was broadcasted on local stations daily and even record stores would attract the fans by labelling their dance records ‘as played at the Warehouse’, that later turned into the term “House Music”.



**Figure 6:** Frankie Knuckles (<https://www.billboard.com/articles/columns/code/6029514/frankie-knuckles-remembering-a-chicago-house-icon>)

The irony that Chicago was the place where Disco died and less than a decade later it became the birthplace of House, was clear proof that in order for a genre to survive all that is needed is some slight sound updates and a rebranding. The first House record as reported from Whitehurst (2014) is called ‘On & On’ and was produced in 1983 by Chicago DJ Jesse Saunders.

The second genre that was created back then and is still used today in many occasions is “Electro” music. It was a fusion of Electro-pop, Funk and Boogie. Early Hip Hop and Rap combined with German and Japanese Electro-pop inspired the birth of Electro. The first pioneers by the sayings of Rindskopf (2016), are believed to be Marvin Gaye and a 4-man German group called Kraftwerk. The group created in the 70s described their style as ‘robot-pop’ combining electro sounds with pop melodies, thus becoming the first successful act to popularize the electro genre in the early 1980s (as seen in Figure 7).



**Figure 7:** Kraftwerk (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/w3csz4y7>)

Other derivatives of the genre as Maddox (2017) describes, include ‘synth-pop’, which initially appeared in the 1970s but with the invention of MIDI keyboards in the early 1980s the production was simplified enough to secure a collaboration with pop music to evolve in what we know today. Another derivative is ‘trance’, traced in the 1980s Germany by European producers merging electronic and psychedelic samples into mind-altering sounds (*The History of Trance* 2006).



The third and possibly most familiar genre, which is still popular today among fans of many ages is “Techno”. According to Swann (2019), this genre started in Detroit during the 1980s by local artists and is sometimes referred as ‘Detroit-Techno’, which served as a medium between the sounds of New York and Chicago at the time. The name that was taken after the Belleville Three – consisting of Juan Atkins, Derrick May and Kevin Saunderson (as seen in Figure 8) and branded as the fathers of Techno – followed their influence from the post-industrial cityscape of Detroit and Kraftwerk, were inducted in the Chicago house scene (*How Your Favorite Genre Got Its Name* 2016). Although it was an honor to be considered one with the house collective of artists whose music felt partially different. While their tracks were initially released in the UK as part of a compilation that bears the name of ‘The House Sound of Detroit’, in a following interview Atkins stated that “we call it Techno”, which refers to Toffler’s term ‘techno-rebels’ in the book ‘The Third Wave’ being the first inspiration for the creation of a name that would turn into one of the most discussed genres of the electronic music spectrum in the following three decades (Sicko 1994). Later on, their compilation considered the first ever Techno music release in 1988 changed its name into ‘Techno! The New Dance Sound of Detroit!’ and the title was finally branded and remained as a term with the fans in the following years. As Bondi de Antoni (2017) mentions, other notable artists at the time include names such as Eddie Fowlkes (part of Juan Atkins DJ collective), Jeff Mills and Mike Banks who co-founded the record label ‘Underground Resistance’ bringing significant value to the second generation of Detroit Techno during the last years of the 1980s. All these sub-genres of electronic music managed to amass a large following; thus, club nights and illegal raves sometimes presented the opportunity for ticket pricing, drug sales and merchandizing. Promoters, artists and other people involved started profiteering through these events since back then.



**Figure 8:** The Belleville Three (<https://djmag.com/news/belleville-three-plan-tour-2017>)

The last part of this era's evolution to this sound came in the mid-1980s with the term "Acid House" or "Acid" simplified. In the words of Nelson (2018), it started in Chicago by local DJs and was characterized as deep basslines coming from the Roland TB-303 bass synthesizer and weird 'squelching' sounds. The first person to utilize those sounds was DJ Pierre (as seen in Figure 9), from a music group called Phuture, whose first release in 1987 called 'Acid Tracks' is considered the first Acid House record.

Acid was the genre that managed to spread to the U.K. and the rest of Europe by the end of this era. That brought those sounds to a worldwide audience, influencing later on some of the most notable styles of music, such as trance, jungle and modern techno. Although the point was not just the appearance of a new subgenre, but the beginning of a movement.



**Figure 9:** DJ Pierre (<https://www.traxsource.com/artist/219/dj-pierre>)

The movement started when DJ Pierre and Spanky (members of Phuture) approached Ron Hardy wondering if he would play their cassette tape 'Acid Tracks'. DJ Pierre (2012) described his experience in detail saying that after listening to a 15-minute-long track Hardy asked for a physical copy of it. Given the fact that Hardy would go for 12-hour long sets, people would stay there dancing for hours which gave Phuture a chance to have their tracks heard four times, with the last bringing them to their knees from jumping too high and dancing ecstatically (Glazer 2017). Then the tracks were being played in a greater audience by more local DJs and finally a record deal arrived to offer the Phuture trio a career in music by the beginning of the 1990s.

As for the other side of the map, the U.K. was introduced to the sounds of Acid House, but there was a twist. The twist involved a cultural growth in relating this subgenre with a new drug called ecstasy. According to Bainbridge (2014) this new scene appeared as the biggest youth revolution since the 1960s by changing the social and cultural habits of a generation. The media sensationalized the dangers of that culture; thus, the whole movement became a challenge to the governmental authorities. That forced the introduction of new laws by the parliament, establishing a unit whose duty was to put an end to unlicensed illegal parties and raves. The whole movements that started in terms of entertainment, turned political by default.

### 3.2.3 The 1990s Era

The 1990s introduced the 'rave culture' to the U.K. and later to the world. Having parties considered illegal turned the fans into more creative procedures in order to sustain their nightlife. Those procedures kickstarted the first acid house illegal outdoor parties. As Guest (2009) describes, they took place in fields, warehouses or even airplane hangars and were held somewhere in the middle of nowhere. The attendance was based on a unique secretive invite system, that included dialing a specific phone number for an invitation and directions. The venue could be tens of kilometers away from major cities or town of the U.K. yet upon arrival there were tens of thousands of people gathered in a queue just before the entrance of the space that the party was held to either catch locals playing electronic sounds or witness bands like The Prodigy throwing parties. Those type of events would go on to continue even after 3am in the morning, which gave fans the feeling that dance music was not just a movement but it turned into a secret society for the lovers of the genre.

People who were visiting Ibiza since the 1980s as a seasonal place to party and listen to electronic music sounds, returned to their homes looking for similar experiences as Oakenfold remembers in the documentary *What We Started* (2017). The need for those parties created ideas and those ideas ended up in establishing the first U.K. club nights dedicated to electronic music. Those nights were usually running on Mondays and Thursdays or weekdays in general and started as an underground party movement. The events would last until the early morning hours, so many people would stay at the venue until late and attend their jobs afterwards. Some of the most notable clubs at the time to host such nights were Lakota, Cream and The Eclipse, which were followed by more commercial house sound venues such as the widely popular Ministry of Sound that still operates today.

After the creation of all those genres mentioned above along with their cultural movements, it was only logical that people would develop their own taste between the sum of subgenres that kept appearing and that would lead to *The Big Divide* (De Mondige 2019). The Divide is what made EDM a source of conflict between the American and the European fans of the same music.

In Europe, electronic and dance music became the dominant genres for the younger ages based on several viral chart entrances throughout the year, while in America the Chicago house and the Detroit techno met their death. That brought the American youth to introduce a new favorite genre, which would be the gangsta rap and the boyband rock.

The best description for the EDM scene of the 90s was a wide variety of styles from Jungle to Dancehall and from Breakbeats to Drum and Bass. It started when Jungle became a mainstream culture in 1994 and affected the hip hop scene in the U.K. despite the drug-infused youth attending those raves that would result in complications with authorities. Although, that was the influence that led to cause numerous violent and criminal activities.

The consequence of such activities was the decision of the jungle producers in the mid-1990s to switch their style into heavier sounds that kickstarted the era of Drum and Bass (DNB). The subculture that came out of this style of dark and heavy basslines had the youth partying in small spaces with a maximum capacity of 100 to 200 people in basements or old warehouses. As Jenkins (2019) remembers, growing from the cities of London and Bristol while attracting a wide audience with desire to party listening to electronic music, DNB overtook the U.K. in the mid-1990s and built a new generation that led to enormous festivals in the following 30 years. Some historic individuals that assisted in the birth and evolution of DNB are Roni Size, LTJ Bukem and Goldie.

Although, the initial idea behind the transformation of jungle into DNB was thought to be a reaction of top DJs and producers against the so-called violent 'ragga' culture, with the key point being a record release by General Levy (as seen in Figure 10) in 1994 called "Incredible".



**Figure 10:** General Levy (<https://www.reggaeville.com/artist-details/general-levy/about/>)

Not far away from the U.K., somewhere in the French region a new subgenre surfaced in the late 1990s that took the name of ‘French House’ (*The Future of French House Music* 2020). The difference with the already familiar House genre was the combination of deep house, with space disco and Eurodisco sounds to achieve the beats of the ‘French House’. That music style was characterized by heavy use of old disco track samples, mixing house sounds with hip-hop and funk. That brought a breath of fresh air to the electronic music scene.

The first producers of this genre did not see any success in the charts, aside from their live performances, until 1997 when the debut album of Daft Punk was released by the name ‘Homework’ and entered the top 10 U.K. album charts ranking. As Cooper (2020) states, the most notable pioneers of the French touch are known to be the masked duo of Daft Punk (as seen in Figure 11), Cassius and Stardust. While other artists did not attempt to experiment through other genres, Daft Punk jumped into the mainstream when they started releasing a variety of their songs mixed with pop sounds. That led to significant nominations and awards, such as their first nomination for a Grammy Award (considered one of the most prestigious music production commendations) in 1998 with the single “Da Funk”, while by the end of the year 2014 they had achieved earning 12 nominations and win 6 awards for their releases (*Grammys* 2020).



**Figure 11:** Daft Punk (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Daft-Punk>)

While the subgenres of House made a name for themselves around the globe in the party scene of the 1990s, the initial house music turned into a dominant mainstream sound in the underground audience of the U.K. and U.S. regions respectively. Cities such as Boston, New Jersey and New York had several club openings dedicated to house music for its audience. Producers were multiplied and the genre was trying to enter the top lists of Billboard at the time. In 1994 Atlantic Records asked Todd Terry to remix the track “Missing” by the U.K.-based duo Everything but the Girl. The result was a heavy, funky, soulful bassline that turned into an instant classic. That put house music in the Billboard’s mainstream top 40 chart and labelled house as a mainstream genre, attracting a wider fanbase by the end of the 1990s (*A Brief History of House Music* 2016). Being considered as a part of the mainstream, EDM acts would finally come to a point where they could slowly make a living out of their music, while managers and music labels would eventually see these acts as successful business ventures.

### 3.2.4 The 2000s Era

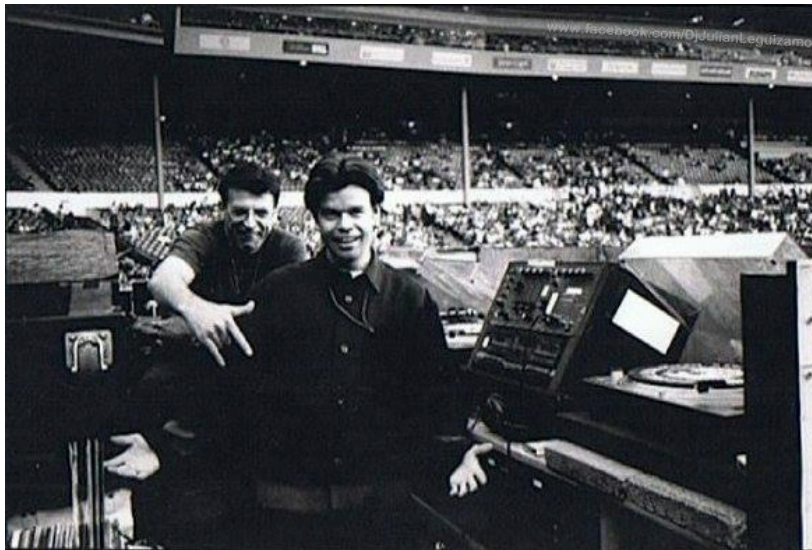
Possibly the most dominant and recognizable era for the evolution of EDM, with events being considered as huge milestones that made the genre more marketable and likeable by a wider population of listeners. With house music entering the mainstream market, the Mayor of Chicago Richard M. Daley proclaimed August 10, 2005 to be “House Unity Day” in celebration of the 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary of house music. The acknowledgement of the world for the genre inspired the establishment of various new labels that could support existing artists as well as newcomers. Electronic music was considered by many the successor to rock & roll back then based on the evolution of the sounds used as Temperley (2018) explained.

The wide spectrum of the music industry noticed the rapid growth of EDM and therefore influenced the structure of mainstream pop music by adding electronic sounds and effects. Famous artists started releasing their new material with electronic samples and effects, labeled electropop with a significant example being Madonna’s release of the album ‘Music’ in 2000, which in the words of He (2020) its reinvented pop music. Those albums earned relatively fast a spot in the Billboard top 100 list, which initiated a sort of push for new and old artists with a chance to jump into the charts. The recipe was the same for everyone, merge electronic sounds with the main idea of pop music. Daft Punk followed this success model with the release of ‘One More Time’ and several house artists made a name for themselves with instant classics such as ‘Call on Me’ by Eric Prydz and ‘Put Your Hands Up for Detroit’ by Fedde Le Grand.

In order to understand the success of the 2000s era there are three major incidents that took place and shaped the current position of the industry. First, back in 1992 the popular band that goes by the name of U2 released a song called ‘Even Better Than the Real Thing’ and to their surprise an English producer and DJ remixed that song, resulting in a higher charted position than the original. The name of that DJ is Paul Oakenfold and his achievement led to U2 inviting him to performing an opening show before their set. Paul managed to join that tour and perform in more than 50 cities, remixing classic rock songs with his own electronic samples (as seen in Figure 12).



Oakenfold shared his story with the audience in the documentary *What We Started* (2017) and explained how he planned his future career.



**Figure 12:** Paul Oakenfold on Tour with U2

(<https://twitter.com/pauloakenfold/status/502581000808173569>)

Based on his temporary success and despite the 9/11 tragedy in the U.S., Paul had the idea of touring America in early 2000s since the club culture had stopped outside of Europe. He was in luck, since that was the era of the internet. Many software programs were introduced for sharing and downloading music at the time, such as Napster and LimeWire. That started a sort of monetization method for the artists to get paid for having their material downloaded from fans, which ended up in promoters booking DJs to play around the world, thus the first tours started. To his surprise, Paul's tour announcement generated a chemical reaction of attraction that resulted in massive ticket sales. That was the first part of EDM joining the mainstream.

The second incident and one of the most notable events in the history of EDM is the Olympics of 2004 in Athens, Greece. A young man named Tijs Michiel Verwest (2017) using the infamous stage name that is now known as Tiësto, remembers intensively playing a 6-hour show in the Netherlands (2003) and sold out a stadium of 25,000 people.

That was his golden ticket to an invitation by the Olympic Games committee to perform in the Olympics of 2004 (as seen in Figure 13).

The Olympics of 2004 in Athens, Greece had an attendance of more than 10,000 athletes, approximately 72,000 spectators and was broadcasted live on TV for a little less than 4 billion people (*Global TV Viewing 2004*). That was the moment that Tiësto performed a set full of electronic music tracks to a large sum of the world. That was a bigger step into the mainstream.



**Figure 13:** Tiësto performing in the Olympics 2004 ([https://aminoapps.com/c/musica-es/page/blog/tiesto-sigue-siendo-un-buen-artista/qk3L\\_LBXTRuZQojbr1Y4zYEw6QPaXxJv01](https://aminoapps.com/c/musica-es/page/blog/tiesto-sigue-siendo-un-buen-artista/qk3L_LBXTRuZQojbr1Y4zYEw6QPaXxJv01))

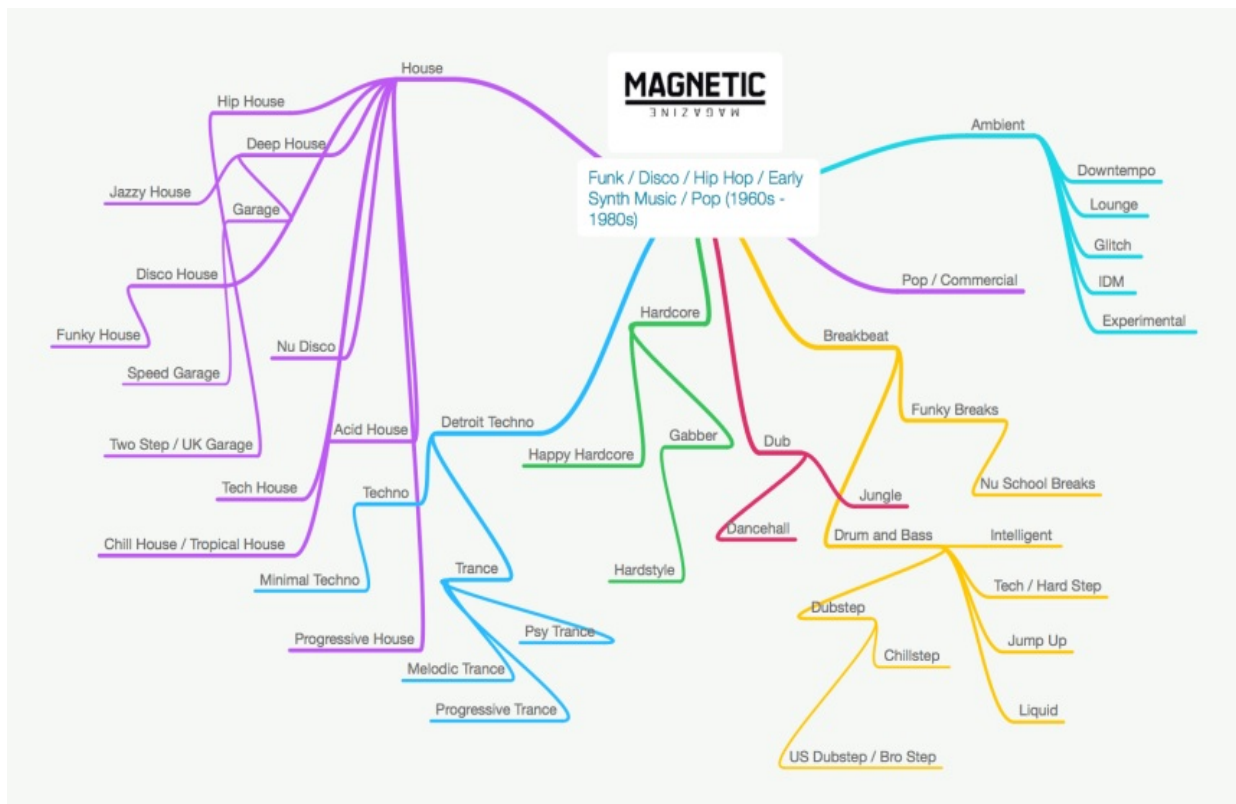
The last milestone that established the position of EDM further in the mainstream came from the French producer David Guetta in 2009. Guetta produced a record called “I Gotta Feeling” with the Black-Eyed Peas for their fifth album “The E.N.D.” that managed to debut at number two on the Billboard Hot 100 list. The song was nominated for Record of the Year by the Grammys and won the Best Pop Performance award. It ranked fifth on the Billboard Hot 100 Songs of the Decade and became best-selling digital song of all time, according to Nielsen (Caulfield 2010).

The immediate success of the industry made possible the creation of several events such as club night residencies and festival gatherings. They were marketed towards younger audience, but with the help of the internet and the previously mentioned milestones it didn't take long enough for thousands of people to attend these gatherings. Several notable festivals such as Tomorrowland, Ultra, EDC and Creamfields had gradually increasing attendances through the years and the value of the industry skyrocketed in a matter of months. Also, lots of new jobs were created and opportunities were presented for the near future.

Finally, Zucker (2018) states that the EDM genre was identified by the media as a worthy successor to other dying genres through advertising campaigns and rewarding ceremonies to end up in the most recent decade that would shape the saturation of the industry, the glorious 2010s and the epitome of entertainment for the Millennials and the Gen Z.

### 3.2.5 The 2010s Era

It is called the 2010s era but it would be more suitable to call it recent years, since we are no further away than a year from that period. Going through the 2010s audiences have witnessed numerous breakthroughs in the industry. As expected, with the help of technology and the internet several new subgenres were created. Over 40 new electronic sounds emerged and needed labelling (as seen in Figure 14).



**Figure 14:** EDM Subgenres (<https://www.magneticmag.com/2015/10/stop-calling-edm-edm-here-is-a-proper-definition/>)

The creative spirit of the producers to seek new sounds and therefore genres, kickstarted a new initiative for the industry. As Godard (2018) breaks down the insights of the industry he explains that all those artists needed some form of income from their material and in addition a more efficient way to live through their art. That was when new labels were established and more new promoters started throwing parties. EDM was currently in the mainstream media so it was extremely easy to attract an audience since there was a wide variety of subgenres that could be labeled as more generic EDM sounds.

The rapid growth in the trend of EDM culture generated a rush of fans to live the experience through a live show. Therefore, festivals kept getting upgraded to larger venues due to continuously selling out the ones booked originally – Tomorrowland achieved an all-time high attendance with a stunning 400,000 tickets sale peak during the last three years according to the official site, constantly selling out even the larger formed venue (as seen in Figure 15). A further analysis on the events of the past decade around the profitability of the EDM industry follows in the continuity of the study through qualitative research and valuable sources.



**Figure 15:** Tomorrowland 2019 Closing Ceremony

(<https://www.youredm.com/2019/07/29/tomorrowland-2019-live-sets-watch/>)

### **3.3 The Market Value**

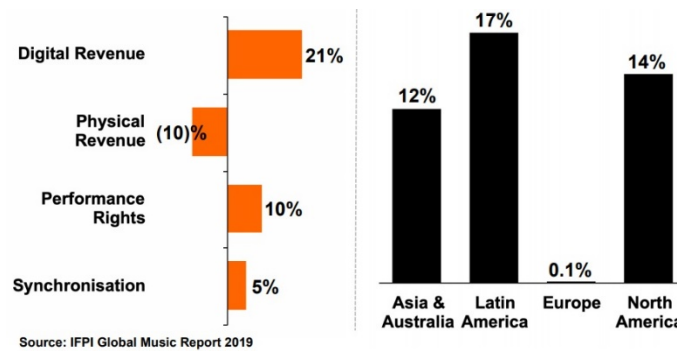
As this research is focused on the era of 2010s, the subject to be examined is the market value of the industry as well as the companies involved in profiteering from it. In order to understand how the value is specified, the International Music Summit Business Report of 2019 will be used to break down the parts of the industry, since activities during 2020 were cancelled due to the pandemic. According to Watson (2020) the main sources of income to define the market value are analyzed in four categories. Those are the Recorded Music, the DJs & Live Acts, the Clubs & Festivals and the Companies & Brands. According to Nielsen, as of the end of 2019 the market value of the EDM industry stands at \$7.2 billion in a stabilization period since 2015 where the value slightly adjusted by 0.1% per year, although the final price of its worth remains at a solid number somewhere over \$7 billion.

#### **3.3.1 Recorded Music**

As stated in a research by Friedlander (2020) in the RIAA Music Revenues Report of 2019, the three categories of recorded music distribution are streaming, digital downloads and physical products. Streaming is considered the best choice by both the listeners and the companies that own the platforms to reach a wider audience with less effort. In the words of Trandafir (2016) distributors used to move the records around the stores and labels attracted people to buy them through promotional campaigns. That was expensive and exhausting, although this system still exists today to some extent. The point of digital distribution is to create an easy way for the listeners to get in touch with new music, by cutting out the middleman. There are other issues in this play including royalty fees and label contracts, but the goal was achieved once streaming was established as a valuable form of distribution.

Based on the 2019 report of the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI), in the words of Moore (2020), fans access music differently in each country, where the availability of music sources might be limited. That makes streaming one of the most popular choices among all generations of music listeners. That is proven with a stunning 89% engagement of users that listen to music through on-demand streaming.

Compared to the IFPI 2010 report by Kennedy (2010), music streaming was a brilliant idea that was introduced back then, providing free unlimited music at a small monthly subscription cost. Once again back to the IMS 2019 report the global recorded music revenues grew by 9.7% by the end of 2018 (as seen in Figure 16), driven by streaming which brought EDM in the third place in a music popularity study that was conducted to 19,000 people of ages 16-64 in 18 countries by IFPI in 2018, losing the second place to rock and the first to pop.



**Figure 16:** Global Recorded Music Revenues in 2018 driven by streaming

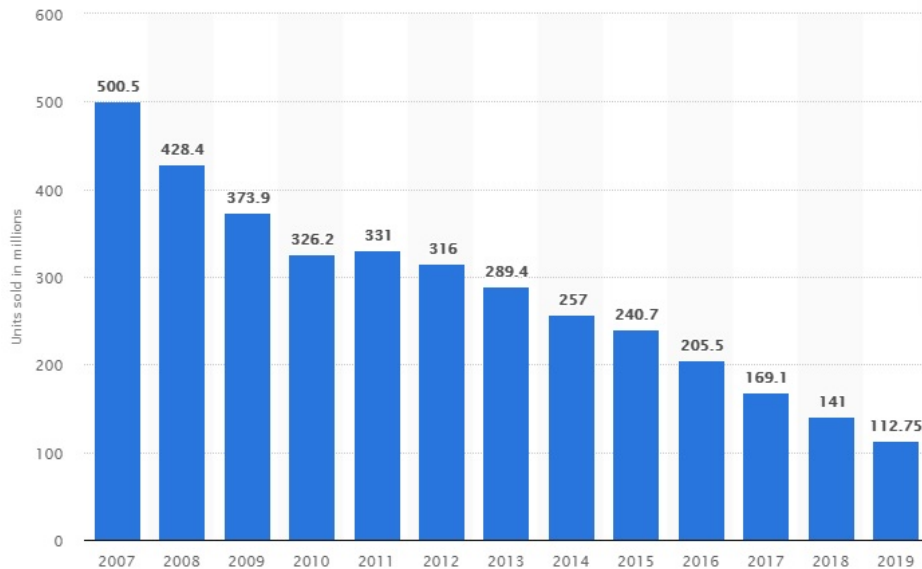
(<https://www.internationalmusicsummit.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/IMS-Business-Report-2019-vFinal.pdf>)

While in 2010 digital downloading amassed an amount of US \$4.6 billion and turned a 29% of the industry revenue into digital form, both physical and digital purchases are currently considered things of the past. As Brenner (2018) explains, there has been a streaming surge during the past decade that keeps increasing, while digital downloads fell by 24% during 2017. Of course, streaming can coexist with the physical and the digital form of music out there.



The dominant provider as of 2021 and for several years has been Spotify (Wallach 2021) with 158M subscribers (Solsman 2021), more than double from its competitor Apple Music. When it comes to discoverability, YouTube will always surpass any other site, but Spotify has created a monopoly on music streaming, by leaving its competitors far behind. YouTube Music followed the Spotify business model by paying the same royalty rates on its subscription streams (Resnikoff 2019). Besides Spotify’s success, there have been issues with artists payment rates with the site paying about half of a penny per stream (*Songtrust* 2020), while the Musician Union launched a campaign to demand a cent-per-stream payout (Heffler 2020).

Last but not least, physical products have been seeing a subtle fall through the years according to Watson (2020) based on a published survey carried out by Nielsen and Billboard in 2019 (as seen in Figure 17).



**Figure 17:** Physical product sales in the U.S. from 2007 to 2019

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/273308/music-album-sales-in-the-us/>



### 3.3.2 DJs & Live Acts

Following a MixMag article by Walker (2015), that categorizes artists from local residents to stadium-filling superstars the income obviously varies. While the industry revenue is mostly coming from those superstars that earn awards and spike their booking prices accordingly, smaller, insignificant artists are not to be left aside.

DJs are simply people who stand in front of a crowd and use their consoles to mix music to the liking of the crowd to make them dance, smile and have a good time are the words of DJ Angelique Bianca in an interview by Adaso (2018). There is a common misconception that DJs only turn up to press play on a previously recorded set only to jump on the decks and act like clowns. According to an article by Cochrane (2012) there are several superstar DJs getting paid to ‘press play’ and hang around for the impression of acting like a performer. Although after serious scandals such as the one with David Guetta fleeing off the stage for being booed after playing a prerecorded set (Shah 2013), more DJs started putting effort in their art once again to avoid suffering negative publicity.

Live performance prices vary between well-known artists and there is a whole bunch of factors behind the calculation of their rate. In a resourceful guide made by Jones (2018), listing some of the top 10 DJs during the past couple of years the fees are explained in detail. First off in a ranking system based on the net-worth of the artists, the number one DJ known as Calvin Harris has an estimated value of US \$75 million in combined earnings, of which \$66 million was the sum of earnings from his annual performances combined (over 125 shows in a year). He also produced songs and collaborated with famous pop-stars, as well as getting nominated for awards and signing a club residency deal to play for five days per month for £200 million (Pringle 2018). He also has celebrity endorsement deals from brands such as Calvin Klein and Pepsi, as well as launching his own vodka line and a series of restaurants. His social media reach surpasses 20 million and the estimated cost for a single performance up to an hour would cost more than US \$150,000.

Other artists close to the likes of Harris on the updated list of Forbes 2019 are the Chainsmokers with an estimated value of \$46m and Marshmello with a stunning \$40m, while the favorite Asian DJ of EDM Steve Aoki sits at \$30m to be followed by the marketing mogul and Grammy awarded producer, known as Diplo with a full \$25m to close the top 5 of 2019 (Mercuri 2019).



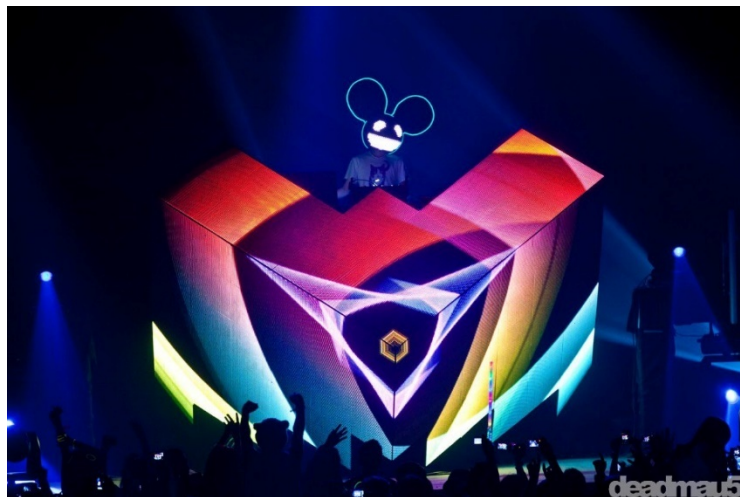
**Figure 18:** Marshmello performing (<http://www.rukes.com/>)

The companies of the industry are constantly searching for new ways to attract their audiences through live shows. As a result of that idea, many marketing companies associated with music labels provide new ideas to the artists which sometimes might sound odd, but usually tend to work. These ideas start with the artists appearing with masks on stage, a success model since the era of Daft Punk (as seen in Figure 11) and continued with the likes of Deadmau5 using a giant mouse head with LED lights while performing as well as Marshmello (as seen in Figure 18), one of the most popular EDM acts of recent years appearing with a giant marshmallow head, hence the name he is using as a producer. Also, the mystery behind the mask could provide further curiosity to the audience, keeping them attached to observing the artist's activities.

In the case of Marshmello, the marketing team behind him did a tremendous job into sustaining an unknown cartoonish superstar with viral electronic pop songs. According to a Forbes article in 2017, the big reveal after many years behind the mask suggests that Marshmello is an old producer and DJ who made a name for himself in the Dubstep scene years ago, until he realized that Dubstep would never become mainstream enough for him to evolve. That was when his manager Moe Shalizi suggested a new alias and a new plan, which eventually worked (Robehmed 2017).

Another activity adopted by artists was throwing champagne to the audience or even cakes when it comes to Steve Aoki, carrying around a whole team of culinary artists throughout his scheduled tours (Powell 2017).

Although possibly the best way to surprise the audience and keep in awe while performing has to be a visual stage show during the performance of a DJ set. One of the artists who managed to combine most of the above with success is Joel Thomas Zimmerman or commonly known as Deadmau5 (Attias, Gavanoas, Rietveld 2013). Zimmerman managed to setup a spectacular visual show along with his glowing helmet. The name of it was the Cube and it was updated in every other tour using names such as Cube v2 and Cube v3 (as seen in Figure 19).



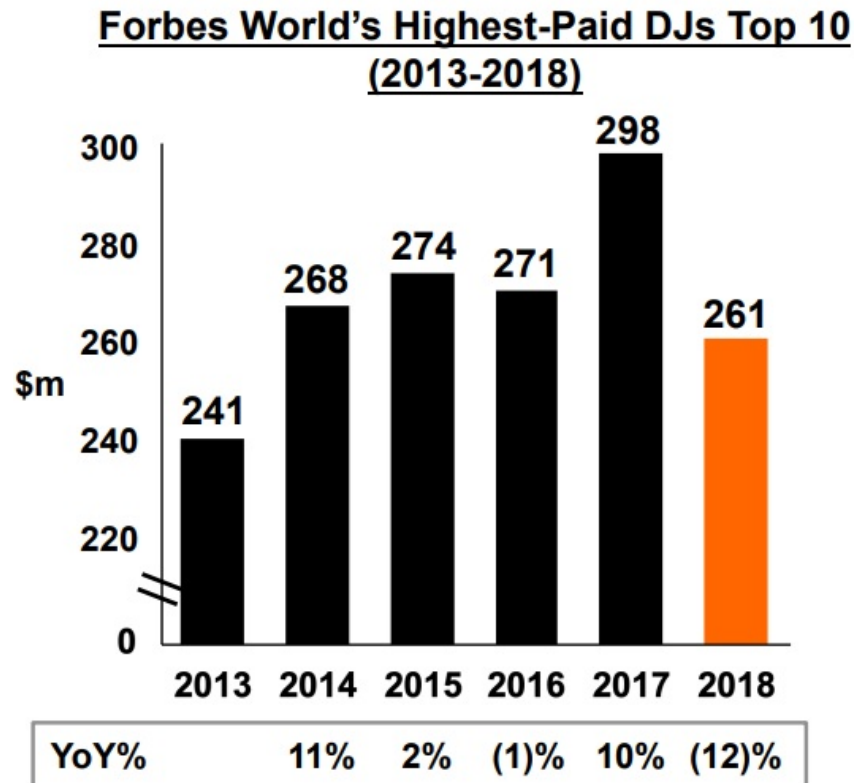
**Figure 19:** Deadmau5 performing in the Cube v3 (<https://edm.com/news/deadmau5-rendering-cube-3-0>)

The artists are gradually evolving their stage performance by investing in visual shows lately. According to an interview of Vello Virkhaus, the visuals director of Ultra Music Festival and an experienced Video Jockey (VJ), promoters attempt to sustain market interest, which means that the artists have to provide more than music to their show and that is when the VJs come in (Robehmed 2013). It has been reported that at the time the Miami Ultra festival attracted 330,000. A notable mention in the visual show race is Excision, a Dubstep producer who managed to create a whole show in 3D (as seen in Figure 20) after managing to establish his own dubstep-related open-air festival called Lost Lands, that was founded in 2017.



**Figure 20:** Excision performing along with his visual show (<http://www.rukes.com/>)

Finally, according to Forbes (as seen Figure 21) the earnings for DJ sets and live act shows dropped significantly by 12%, while most DJs managed to perform in over 100 shows during the year of 2018 with Steve Aoki surpassing the 200 shows mark (Watson 2019). That research plummeted with the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.



**Figure 21:** Estimated earnings of the Top10 highest-paid DJs

(<https://www.internationalmusicsummit.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/IMS-Business-Report-2019-vFinal.pdf>)

### 3.3.3 Clubs & Festivals

One of the highest grossing sources of our time for the EDM industry are the clubs and festivals. The whole concept started with promoters hosting EDM events in their early 20s because they wanted a place where they could hang out with their friends and listen to their favorite music, before realizing how big those events were getting says Pasquale Rottella, the founder of the largest dance music and experience company 'Insomniac' in the documentary What We Started.

Rotella continues describing, it was really hard in the beginning to get a venue to host these parties. Once you got that venue, you had to pay the rent, sign a contract, hire police, fire rescue and security. The worst part although was that it was supposed to be an underground music party to attract people of this profile. Instead, there were loads of people coming of all ages and alcohol was served. That meant that in every event they were in constant fear of getting arrested.

Most EDM based festivals surfaced around the early 2000s with the top three, according to their official website, in terms of popularity being Electric Daisy Carnival (EDC) which was founded in 1997 by Insomniac, followed by Ultra Music Festival (UMF) founded in 1999 by Russell Faibisch and Alex Omes and Tomorrowland, founded in 2005 by the Beers brothers.

The reasoning behind those festivals being on top of the rankings is not just the insanely huge amounts of attendees and sold-out events they have, but also their whole marketing initiative. Based on their official websites, all three festivals have expanded during the last decade, due to popular demand and sold-out shows. Tomorrowland, a festival held in Belgium (EU) started by establishing TomorrowWorld in Georgia (US), while EDC that initially started in Las Vegas turned into a 3-day event and expanded to Orlando, China and Mexico. On the other hand, UMF had the greatest expansion of them all, producing events in 29 countries annually following the recipe that made the Miami event successful over the last 20 years (Vilotijevic, Medic 2019).

Regarding the attendance of the festivals, the initial UMF Miami sells out annually during the past decade, hosting 165,000 attendees while in 2013 this amount was doubled



due to the introduction of a 2-weekend festival (Lock 2019). Furthermore, Tomorrowland original festival in the city of Boom in Belgium peaked in 2018 at 400,00 attendees and kept that number alive during 2019 based on information from Forbes (Nikjou 2019). The largest crowd was recorded in EDC Las Vegas 2019 (as seen in Figure 22), where there was an astonishing number of attendees peaking at 450,000. That, along the fact that there were 0 deaths reported at the event was enough to crown the event with the title ‘the biggest EDM festival in the world’ (Wali 2019).



**Figure 22:** Electric Daisy Carnival (EDC) Las Vegas 2019  
(<https://edmidentity.com/2019/05/27/five-edc-las-vegas-2019/>)

Imagining that festivals such as Ultra made their debut with 10,000 people in attendance to end up with over 15 times the initial amount is still unbelievable. Although the teams behind those festivals put serious effort into delivering a fulfilling experience every year and that would be the reasoning behind the pricing adjustments. Normal prices for such events start at US \$400 and can go up to over \$1000 for a three-day pass at Ultra, while EDC tickets can be found at \$300, but once they sell out the average price from resellers goes up to \$600 for the three-day experience (pretty close to the VIP price). On the other side of the globe, the European festival of Tomorrowland offers one day tickets with a starting price of 88 Euros and three-day packages for 225 Euros.

The reason behind those prices, are the huge funds spent on the rent of the venue and the facilities, the construction and the management team, as well as the staff and security payroll. Also, the production and marketing expenses have to be dealt with along with the artists fees. Last but not least is the taxation which always depends on the area the event takes place in. According to a detailed explanation of the funding on the matter by Girgis (2019), it looks like the ticket sales along with merchandise, foods & drinks and sponsorship bring a sum of up to US \$3 million, while the initial expenses wrap up to \$2.6 million. A large sum of the profit is usually stored for the assistance of future events.

According to an EDM statistics study (2019) approximately 160,000,000 EDM festival tickets were sold annually since 2018, whereas EDM club nights generated \$965 million in 2018. Club culture is still alive, but it is differentiated between countries and especially U.S. and Europe, while festivals keep the same profile - Europe has over 200 festivals (*Electronic Festivals 2020*).

In an article comparing club life between U.S. and EU, Gray (2010) presents the reasons that make the U.S. nightlife far worse since it was compared to the Berlin techno era that many EDM lovers lived and admired. Even if that could be true, the study was written 10 years ago, which bring us back to the end of the 2010s. Most of the U.S. club nights take place in venues that are parts of hotels or resorts, while in Europe most clubs follow the original layout of a smaller, yet cozier venue. It is only logical for the U.S. EDM scene to generate larger crowd since most U.S. DJs are always touring and managing to get residencies in these clubs, while in the EU these events are rare in comparison.



Most EDM enthusiasts in EU prefer underground clubs that offer the darker vibes of the genre. Famous U.S. nightclubs include Omnia and XS in Las Vegas which are parts of larger resorts, as well as LIV in Miami which is a hotel club (Rothman 2017).

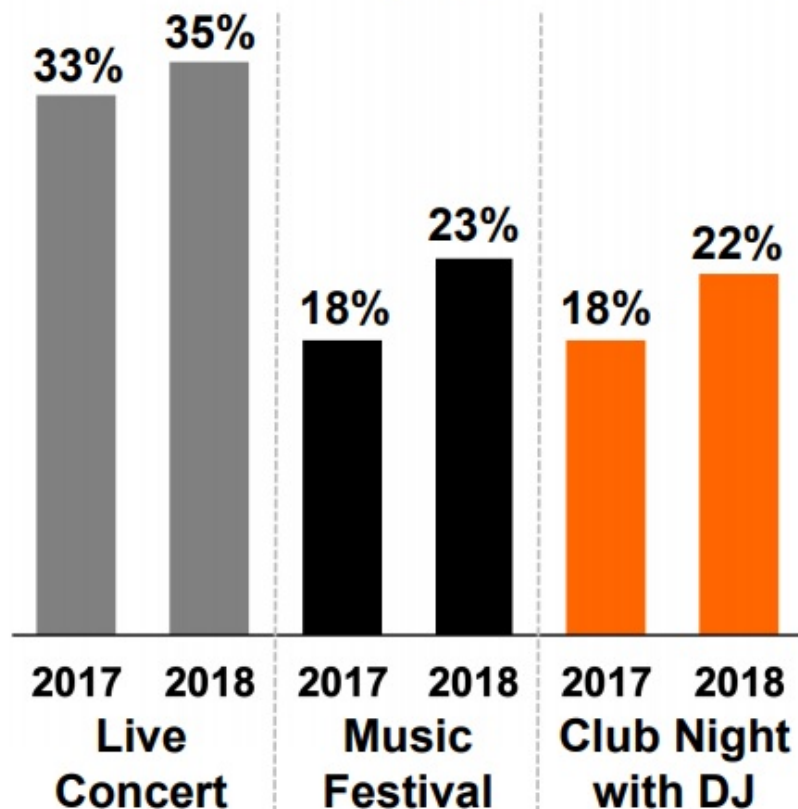
On the other hand, the European nightlife consists of the EDM party seasonal venues that may vary on the style of the music. Some of the most famous clubs in Europe (Maheshwari 2020) are the seasonal Amnesia party club in Ibiza, the underground rooms of Fabric in London and the famous dark corners of Berghain (as seen in Figure 23). Although security might be stricter than the U.S. as attendees use to say, the ticket prices remain fairly the same in both continents.



**Figure 23:** Berghain – The Techno Temple of Berlin (<https://offramp.sciarc.edu/articles/the-myth-of-berghain-the-berlin-underground>)

While EDM nightlife culture has not yet lost its fandom, according to a US survey by Nielsen in 2019, a chart shows the population attendance of live events by type. As expected, the live concerts and music festivals generate the largest number of attendees, while club nights are still on the rise but with a significant difference when compared with the rest (as seen in Figure 24).

### **U.S. General Population Attendance of Live Events by Type (2017-2018)**



**Figure 24:** Population Attendance by Nielsen U.S.

(<https://www.internationalmusicsummit.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/IMS-Business-Report-2019-vFinal.pdf>)

### 3.3.4 Companies & Brands

To finalize the sources of income in the EDM industry, those providing marketing and brand awareness are the companies who work behind the scenes. According to Hall (2015) since the EDM scene became viral in the mid-2010s, companies started approaching several successful artists to offer them deals and reward them with their products. As mentioned before Calvin Harris had a deal with Calvin Klein, whose offer obliged him to advertise by wearing their products and star in their commercials. In addition, he was paid for his services and gifted the products of his choice.

Another famous artist that goes by the name of Steve Aoki, managed to get the fourth place for highest paid DJ by Forbes in 2015, after collaborating with Bud Light, Sol Republic headphones and Trident Gum. Although, the superstar with the mask whose career was addressed not long ago and goes by the name of Marshmello, managed to brand his own persona successfully too. That led him into spectacular deals up to the level of playing a virtual online show in a video game.

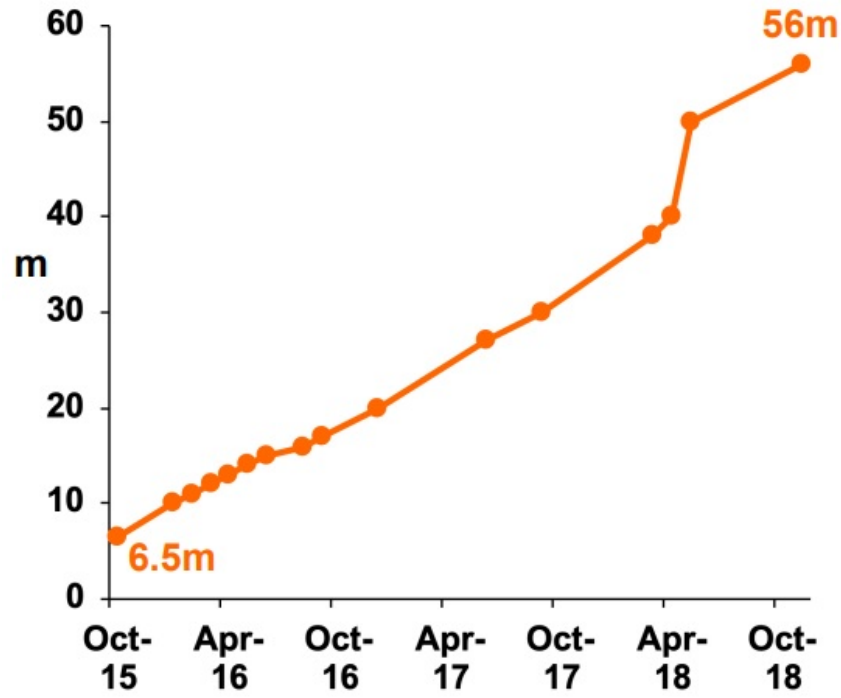
Marshmello was approached by Epic Games to play a virtual concert in their game called Fortnite. All he had to do was pre-record a set and the company would do the rest. The artist handled the social media for a brief time while performing and the people logged in the game to enjoy a virtual live show that amassed over 10 million viewers at the time (Gerken 2019).

The results? In the words of Cirisano (2019) the concert (as seen in Figure 25) drove major streaming and sales gains in the following days with a stunning 24,000% increase in on-demand video streams on that day as stated by Nielsen Music U.S.



**Figure 25:** Marshmello Virtual Fortnite Concert 2019  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XAnQzPjvkdg>)

Other companies include the distribution platforms that labels use to share the artists' new music. The most popular, besides Spotify, that are being used by the vast majority of listeners are SoundCloud, Beatport and Apple Music. According to Watson (2019) in the IMS Business Report of 2019 the idea of adding a subscription service to SoundCloud helped its revenue reach \$100 million in 2017 and provided an easy way for its users to distribute their tracks directly to Spotify and Apple. Furthermore, Beatport had a new record of 17% increase in track sales by the end of 2018, while Apple Music according to the Wall St. Journal, amassed a wholesome amount of 56 million users in 3 years since its launch date (as seen in Figure 26).



**Figure 26:** Apple Music Paid Subscribers (2015 – 2018)

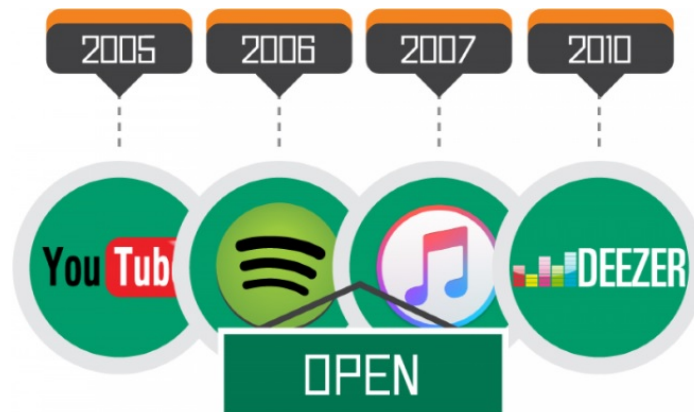
(<https://www.internationalmusicsummit.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/IMS-Business-Report-2019-vFinal.pdf>)

### 3.4 The Effect of Technology

According to a study of Deaux (2017) technology was the key needed to surpass the barrier of the old ways and introduce easier solutions to the artists. The first improvement came in the production of the sounds. New instruments were introduced and a wider variety of sounds was explored. The production changed since there were numerous new tools to experiment with. Computers made the processes easier to undertake and turned the quality to a better format.

Then the internet appeared and everything became simpler. The promotion of the music became easier as well as the research and the file sharing process with other collaborators and fans. That resulted in new musical genres through cross cultural interactions. The distribution was also improved as mentioned before by cutting the middle man and moving on to the digital platform. In general, the internet provided greater accessibility to its users and music was easier to search and listen to (Kramer 1988).

Also, the internet provided connection between people who were interested in the same genres but shared different ideas. Those ideas could come to life as business propositions and end up in finding jobs of their liking or result in the creation of their dream label (*How the Internet Has Changed Music 2020*) or some sort of app or software to connect through music (see Figure 27).



**Figure 27:** The most popular Music Apps from left to right – YouTube, Spotify, iTunes, Deezer (<https://visual.ly/community/infographic/technology/how-internet-changed-music-industry-forever-infographic>)

# Chapter 4

## Research Methods

### 4.1 Introduction

To fully understand the characteristics of this distinctive genre and the position it has established in the global music industry, this study combines a literature review with a mixed method research as it produces a richer and more comprehensive understanding of the targeted area. The goal is to identify the EDM industry from a business perspective. The area of research is the people who work in the EDM industry and provide services along with the impact of technology throughout the process.

### 4.2 Research Questions

The initial question is if the EDM industry as a whole is a profitable business that will endure in the following years. To answer that question five approaches are examined.

- Are the fans happy with the current state of EDM?
- Are the people profiteering from the industry satisfied with its evolution?
- What are the reasons behind the absurd pricing in certain aspects of the industry?
- Is technology affecting the evolution of the EDM scene?
- Are there any potential issues and what does the future look like?



### 4.3 Methodology

To achieve detailed results in the matter of analyzing the distinctive genre and its value in a global scale while considering the people involved in its functionality, the approach of the study will be a mixed method research, containing both qualitative and quantitative approaches with an empirical touch throughout the process. As the mixed method approach, according to Greene (2007), embraces multiple paradigmatic traditions and will possibly have distinctive methodological components as well as markers of practice. Some additional attention will be given in the qualitative approach as Carvalho & White (1997) would advise in the poverty mixed method study, since there are several open-ended conducted interviews from colleagues and several more on-demand from crucial members of the industry (Jewitt 2012).

From the point of view of the audience, considering a quantitative approach with questions regarding their experiences from the industry and their hopes for the future (Check & Schutt 2012). The questions were given in a form of a survey as frequently used in social and psychological research (Singleton & Straits 2009).

Interviews with experts from within the industry were considered one of the best opportunities to retrieve specific information about procedures and numerical values that are not commonly shared with the audience (Punch 2005). The people that were interviewed for this study are from different ethnical backgrounds and work in different areas within the music industry. They chose to withhold their anonymity for the sake of their social status and the freedom to explain the data in detail along with their opinions. Those individuals that assisted to conduct this interview were:

- 2 Artists (DJs/Producers) – Mr. D and Mr. F
- 2 Festival CEOs – Mr. P and Mr. B
- 2 Club Owners & Event Promoters – Mr. L and Mr. G
- 2 Label Owners – Mr. S and Mr. J
- 1 Booking Agent – Mr. K
- 1 Artist Manager – Mr. M

Also 20 EDM fans were provided with a simple question.



In detail, one of the artists is a world-level famous Electro/Dubstep DJ from the UK with releases in some of the best labels associated with this genre and several tours around the world who wishes to be addressed Mr. F for the purpose of this study. The second is a smaller producer who has several collaborations with famous DJs yet no signing and his full income comes from music platform plays and small tours & local shows, who will be addressed as Mr. D.

The first festival CEO who runs and supervises all activities goes by the name of Mr. B and presents one of the biggest underground-based EDM festivals in his home country with the last year's attendance reaching over 30,000 people in two consecutive weekends. While the other who goes by the name of Mr. P and runs some successful Dubstep-related festivals, mainly in the US, with a six-figure capacity.

The club owners who also work as event promoters are Mr. G, who runs a venue in the UK with a capacity of 2,000 people and has seen several stars on his stages, while Mr. L runs a club in southern Europe that hosts some of the best Techno club nights.

Mr. S is a U.S. local who runs a Dubstep label with several releases and a collective of 5 famous DJs among others. On the other hand, Mr. J is another man from the NL who owns a Big Room label with a roster of more than 10 famous European artists.

The booking agent under the name of Mr. K is a European citizen, who resides in the U.S and usually books U.S. tours of 10 to 30 dates as well as weekly mini-tours in 3 to 5 countries in the EU and lastly Mr. M is a famous artist manager who runs the day-to-day schedules for 3 to 5 artists. His roster includes a world-famous DJ with numerous tours in each continent in his biography, 3 mid-ranked DJs with at least 5 European tours and a couple of resident DJs with huge annual tours in their home countries.

The contents of the interviews were gathered from the literature review and an empirical approach of working in the industry during the past 10 years. The interviews were based on Frith's (2001) model in the aspect of how each person thinks about monetizing through his job. Then Negus' (1992) study is used, which describes how the popular music industry works.

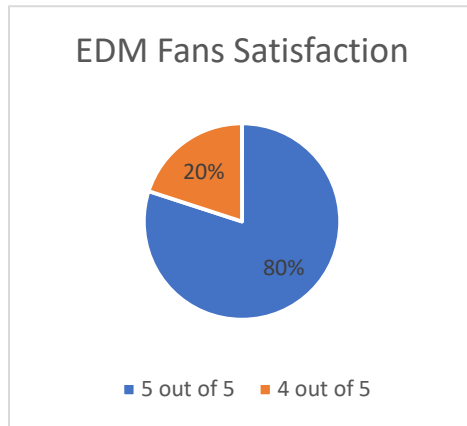
First, a group of 20 EDM fans were asked to rate their satisfaction of the current state of EDM from 1 to 5 and also address any particular controversies they are worried about.

Then 10 individuals who work in the industry were interviewed. After asking the interviewees initially to state their professions and their day-to-day tasks, the research continued with 10 questions. The questions that those colleagues had to answer were:

1. How long have you been operating in the EDM scene and when did you start making a living out of this industry?
2. When and how did EDM turned into an industry of career opportunities?
3. Which in your opinion are the most profitable aspects of this industry?
4. What are your thoughts on the audience's reception of the EDM trend?
5. Which are the issues that concern you the most in the industry?
6. From an economic viewpoint do you think the prices exceed the experiences?
7. What warrants the sometimes ridiculously high prices in fees?
8. Do you think technology influenced the industry and in what ways?
9. Which is the key to success in this industry?
10. Do you think EDM is overvalued and how will it look like in a decade?

#### 4.4 Data Analysis

The question that started this study was towards the fans, who were asked if they are happy with the current state of the EDM industry, to which 16 replied with a full 5/5 rating, while the other 4 who rated with 4/5 explained that there is some sort of repetitiveness the past couple of years and would like to see more subgenres in the spotlight. (as seen in Graph 1).



**Graph 1:** Interview Answers: EDM Fans Satisfaction

The first question towards the interviewees was how long have they been working in the industry and when did they actually started making a living out of it. The answers received were detailed, yet they are also briefly presented on a table (Table 1).

From the artists perspective, Mr. F started his career in 2007 mainly with DNB until he started experimenting with electro a year later. While his love for the DNB genre would keep him in underground raves long enough, he decided to produce more under his electro alias, which resulted in a major label signing in 2010, followed by huge tours in the following couple of years. He stated that his economic stability came at 2012. As for Mr. D, he's been a hip-hop producer until he fell in love with dubstep in 2010. He had some decent signings and various tours as a mid-tier DJ, meaning he's been making a moderate living during the past decade.

Mr. P started his festival in 1999, with 20 years of experience in organizing club nights and raves, which passed the 100,000 attendees mark in 2010. Mr. B had hosted several club nights until he started his own fest in 2011, which now sees an attendance of 30,000 fans. They both agreed to have a great profit in the first 3 – 5 years of their events, including attendance and sponsorships.

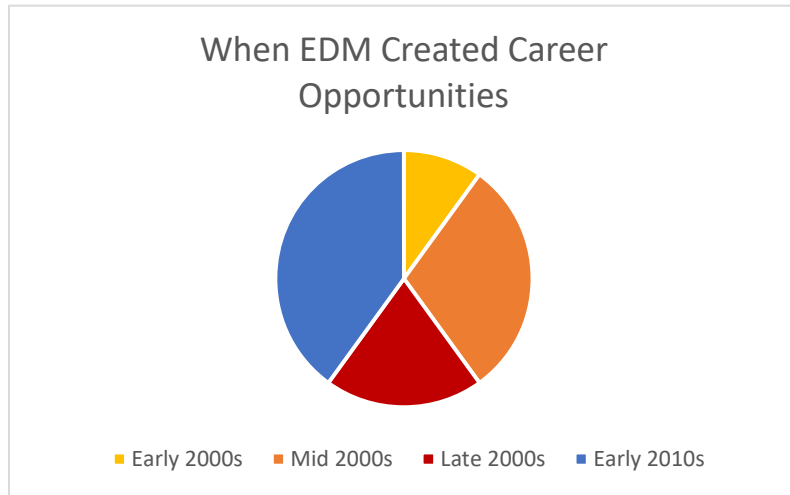
The event promoters have been on the job for over two decades and clearly stated that they never had an issue with making a living, but the huge profit arrived with the guest DJs in the 2010s. This is the same answer as the label owners, seeing the spikes in demand of EDM after 2010.

Regarding the agent and the manager, they have been on the job since the opportunities came up, which was as they recall somewhere around 2011 and by 2014, they had more connections and more commissions than they could ever imagine.

	<b>Started</b>	<b>Profited</b>
<b>Mr. F</b>	2007	2012
<b>Mr. D</b>	2010	2012
<b>Mr. P</b>	1999	2004
<b>Mr. B</b>	2011	2014
<b>Mr. L</b>	2000	2010
<b>Mr. G</b>	1995	2010
<b>Mr. S</b>	1999	2010
<b>Mr. J</b>	2000	2010
<b>Mr. K</b>	2012	2014
<b>Mr. M</b>	2010	2014

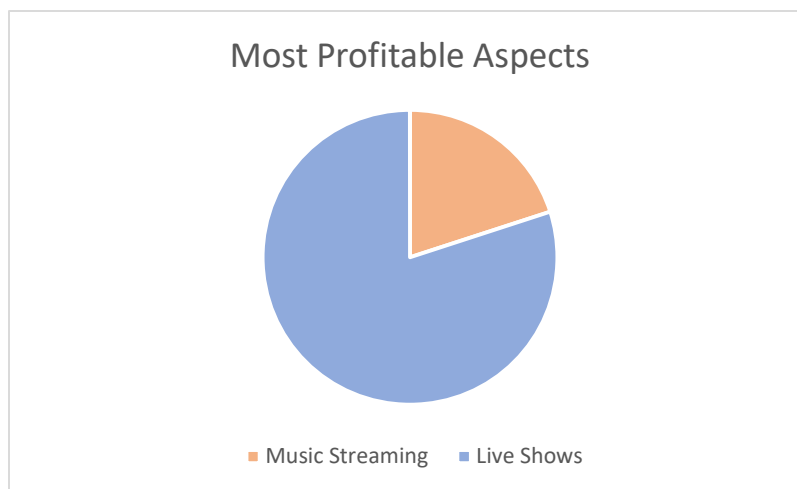
**Table 1:** Interview Answers: Career Start Date & First Big Profit Date

In the second question, they were asked when and how the industry started offering career opportunities. While most agreed that EDM careers started in the early 1990s but people struggled to make a living out of it back then, the club owners and festival CEOs answered that when EDM was the “go-to” in the clubs when you knew that the industry could offer full-time jobs, just like the industry of rock and pop worked before. That would be the early 2010s. Although according to the label owners, business started in the late 2000s when music streaming grew and the distribution became easier. The artists simply answered mid-2000s as well as Mr. M, right after they saw Tiësto spinning EDM tunes in the Olympics and Mr. K believes it was the early 2000s since people were working around the artists since then (as seen in Graph 2).



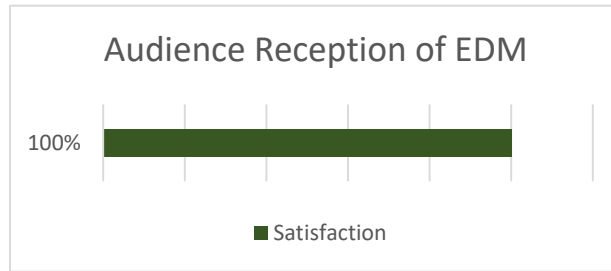
**Graph 2:** Interview Answers: When EDM Created Career Opportunities

Onto the next question of which are the most profitable aspects of the industry all 10 of them unanimously answered the largest profits come from music streaming and the live shows. In detail, the label CEOs focused on the music streaming royalties, while the other 8 of them agreed that they have witnessed insane amounts invested and gained in live shows such as music festivals and club residencies (as seen in Graph 3).



**Graph 3:** Interview Answers: Most Profitable Aspects

When asked about the audience’s reception of the EDM trend, everyone agreed that the whole area of activities, products and services around the industry is received far better than expected (as seen in Graph 4). Mr. B described the situation by saying “*audience is the fuel that keeps us going and keeps us in business for which we are eternally grateful*”. Although, there are some doubts about certain aspects of the industry, which are mentioned when the interviewees were asked the next question.

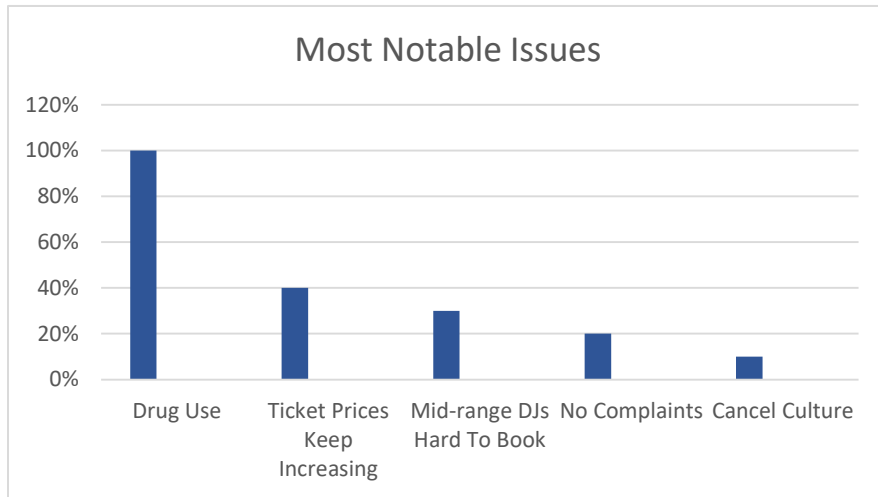


**Graph 4:** Interview Answers: Audience Reception of EDM

The tricky one, as they called it, was the answer each one gave when asked about issues and concerns around the EDM scene. Some of them were willing to speak before this question without any sort of anonymity, but their network and their status in the industry urged them to keep their privacy before answering faithfully anything that has to do with controversies and doubts.

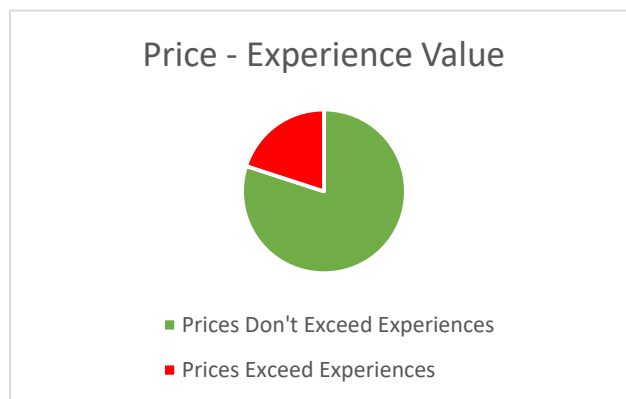
To begin with, label owners have no complaints at all, since as they say their revenue is based on virtual sales and royalties. Breaking down the financial parts of the deals between organizers and performers, the festival CEOs and the club owners expressed their complaints on the booking fees pricing of some acts, which result to negative response towards ticket prices even if the events eventually sell out relatively fast. They rarely result in failed shows based on their experience, but it still stands as a worrying factor. The last ones to express their thoughts were Mr. M and Mr. D by saying that it is not easy for a middle-class DJ to make a living since the audience focuses mostly on the marketed personas. That means that instead of creating music to make a living, they have to ‘grind’ their social media for huge amounts of time to enlarge their follower base, to which Mr. K agrees as he sometimes struggles to close deals for his less-famous artists in

his roster. Furthermore, Mr. F expressed his worries about the cancel culture trend saying “the more popular you become, the more judgement you’ll receive” and artists are constantly under the microscope until they make a small ‘mistake’. Of course, he states he does not agree or sympathize at all with familiar acts of the industry who have been cancelled due to illegal activities. Finally, they all agreed that the use of any substance (drug) should stop (as seen in Graph 5).



**Graph 5:** Interview Answers: Most Notable Issues

While they all laughed at the question asking if the prices exceed the experiences, they all agreed that they do, but there is a reason. The club and festival owners although expressed their discomfort by joking about high DJ booking fees (as seen in Graph 6).



**Graph 6:** Interview Answers: Does Price Exceed Experiences

When asked what warrants these prices, they explained. Initially they said, each in his own way that prices are indeed absurd sometimes, but keep in mind the outcome in each aspect. The explanation started from the label owners who control the distribution so that the artists won't have to. That means that they are entitled to a great percentage of the earnings for putting the DJs in the map. From the perspective of the festival CEOs, the ticket prices are set because the events provide a full experience of having several favorite artists in their lineup in a fancy stage along with some proper visuals (also the festivals offer several other activities and pay additional taxes). In the same fashion club owners need to pay for the performers, which means they need to meet their price through tickets. Mr. K explained that the booking fees are related to the status of the artist. If someone has brand endorsements and a decent status in the media it is only fair that his price will rise to the occasion, while the agent will only keep a small percentage for doing his job. Quite similarly Mr. M explains that by running the artist's schedule, from organizing his social media presence, to making label and brand deals while also dealing with all the setbacks, he asks nothing more than a percentage of his fee which sounds quite reasonable.

The last ones to have their say on this are those who have the spotlight. The artists explain that the price contains their travelling fees, their accommodation before and after each show and their basic price for an hour long set mostly (as seen in Table 2). There are some exceptions to artists playing longer sets, or bringing more sorts of entertainment such as dancers or visual effects. Considering the Forbes-level DJs prices, when Larry King (2014) interviewed Steve Aoki saying that some DJs fee could reach up to \$400,000 a night, Aoki answered: *"This economy is scaled, to the amount of money that clubs are actually making from the people going. It is not just the General Admission that makes the profit for the club. People are buying a bunch of bottles to celebrate and see the DJ they came to see."*



<b>Profession</b>	<b>Price Dependency</b>
Artists	Publicity in Scene
Managers	Percentage off Artist
Bookers	Percentage off Bookings
Labels	Percentage off Distribution
Clubs	Price Based on Artist Fee
Festivals	Price Based on Production Fees

**Table 2:** Interview Answers: Price dependency in each profession.

A cheerful “HELL YES!” was received from everyone when asked if technology influenced the industry. Another agreeable answer in the topic of how EDM was affected by technology was obviously the internet. The artists mentioned being thankful that technology brought file sharing as well as new hardware and software for them to experiment and ultimately making easier and more fun the creation of music (as seen in Table 3). Regarding the internet, the label owners praised it for inventing digital distribution since the creation of music streaming platforms and file sharing were the reasons their jobs became easier and more profitable. Everyone else mentioned from their perspective how social media was what helped them most in their jobs, from promoting events to networking with other industry related professionals and working towards common goals.

<b>Technology Influences</b>
Internet
File Sharing
Digital Distribution
Social Media
Music Software

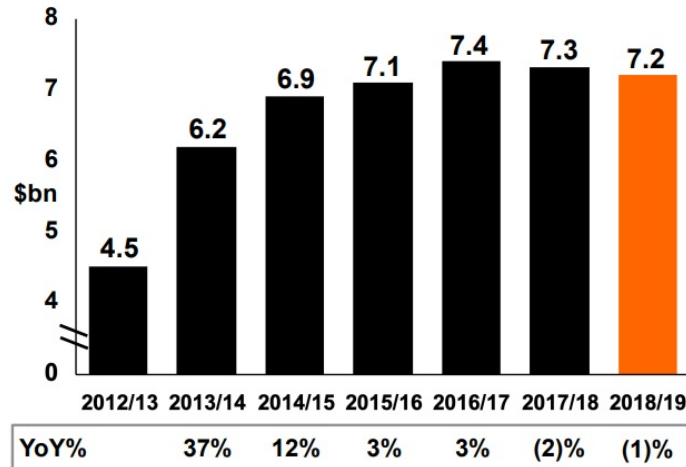
**Table 3:** Interview Answers: Top 5 influences of technology

Probably the easiest question that got the most straight-forward answer was which is the key to success. There were only 3 common answers. The label owners said research in order to find new talents. Mr. M and Mr. K answered networking, while everyone else simply gave the most dominant answer being ‘marketing’ (as seen in Graph 7). Even the artists nowadays believe their music is not what will make them famous, but instead their internet persona is what matters most which means “*good marketing is all you need*”.



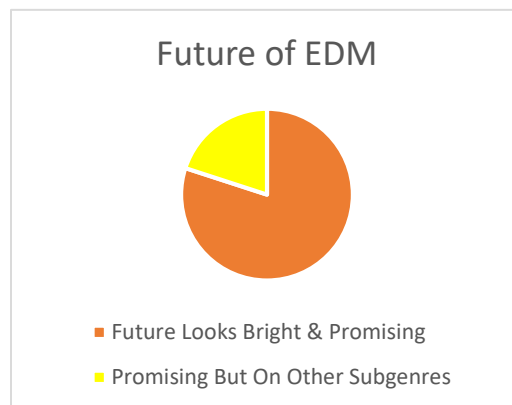
**Graph 7:** Interview Answers: Keys to Success in the EDM industry

To continue the research the interviewees were asked if they consider the EDM industry overvalued, to which they all simply explained that having the rock industry and later on the pop industry take over with massive sales and performances that outsell stadiums, the future is shaped based on fresh, new material. What started as house in the 1980s took more than 30 years to reach the point of it being overvalued. They all agree that it is only fair to suggest that there is a reasonable explanation in saying that with technology evolving, the music evolves too. Nobody could have ever expected EDM to make the top of the list next to the most famous genres, but “here we are!”.



**Figure 28:** Global EDM Industry Value (<https://www.internationalmusicsummit.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/IMS-Business-Report-2019-vFinal.pdf>)

Looking at the value of the industry over the last 7 years (Figure 28) in the IMS Business Report (2019) it is clear that the value stabilized after 2015, bearing a price of over \$7 billion. That brought the interview to the final part of the question. What does the future hold for that industry in the next decade, to which everyone responded (quite amused) that what surely started as a trend, now grew to a point of no return! Over the last decade it showed one of the most rapid growths that any industry could ever fathom to achieve. Everyone wholeheartedly replied that they are happy at the state of the industry right now and they see it growing further in the next 5 to 10 years. The artists also added (as seen in Graph 8): “*considering that genres change, I might have to be prepared to catch up if I want to stay in the game*”.



**Graph 8:** Interview Answers: The Future of EDM

## 4.5 The COVID-19 Effect

Last but not least, something that came up at the end of some interviews was to address the COVID-19 pandemic and the current post-pandemic period when it comes to profiteering in the EDM industry. It has been more than a year with every possible gathering restricted everywhere around the world and the people working in this industry have been struggling. The topic of the discussion was to present the best solutions to generate a respectable income through this industry, while overcoming the pandemic.

The easiest one came from the label owners, saying that as long as the artists make music the streaming royalties will keep paying them. Another less fortunate example is that of the festival CEOs and the club owners, saying that through this disaster the only way out is collaborative online events with the performers which result to endorsements, sponsors and advertisers as well as online support from the fanbase.

At the point of online support, Mr. M started smiling, while Mr. K simply stated that agents have a wide variety of clients in different ventures, as well as a great network. The manager although, started discussing the concept of online concerts, which came to be a real game changer during 2020 and probably the best source of income during that era.

Artists have to create more music as well as maintain a relevant persona to stay in the 'spotlight' and eventually get booked. Since bookings are off the table, online engagement is the top priority besides new material. That would mean being active on social media and releasing new music. In the words of Joel Zimmerman in a past livestream of his (Deadmau5 2015), artists tend to sell out at some point for additional fame and money. He admitted that he hates lurking on his social media to keep an online presence for his fanbase and prefers other activities. He is being honest in a rude way towards other artists, avoiding the mainstream until 2020 happened.

The result was him managing after 5 years to do something that was considered mainstream with the sole purpose being economic. Following the steps of Marshmello, Zimmerman played a virtual DJ set in Fortnite from his home (as seen in Figure 29).



**Figure 29:** Deadmau5 playing a virtual DJ set in Fortnite during COVID-19 in 2020

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HJonzLvIGSY>

Online engagement and especially streaming turned out to be the best way for everyone involved in the industry to engage with the fanbase and create sources of income. Travis Scott for example, one of the most popular performers of our time had several collaborations with brands as well as a virtual Fortnite concert throughout 2020, which resulted in large engagement and even larger profits (Brown 2020). Furthermore, artists have been frustrated during this period as Sister Bliss of Faithless said ‘Nightclubs and DJs left in the corner to rot’ (BBC 2020), so the only viable solution at the time would be to focus on online engagement.

The best streaming platform at the moment based on its follower base and viewership is Twitch. Twitch has seen an outstanding growth during the pandemic as it welcomed several personalities from the entertainment industry and generated thousands of hours of content. The front man of Linkin Park, Mike Shinoda found solace on the platform and spent his time producing music live for his fans (Daly 2021). The platform has been a great medium for engagement, which has been proved through the attendance of numerous virtual concerts hosted by Riot Games (Geracie 2021) and Roblox (Webster 2020). The music distribution platform known as Distrokid partnered with the streaming site to connect artists with their fans (Kaplan 2021).

The majority of creators on the site are engaging their audience through video games. While video games have been co-existing in the entertainment industry with music, nobody could imagine the scale of profit to be gained from gamers this past year. Spotify got a great boost from its gaming audience, streaming soundtracks from the likes of a video game called Minecraft (Liao 2020). But that never stopped Spotify from finding more ways to monetize content, which started with the idea of podcasts (Hardwick 2021) as well as a daily morning show (Perez 2020).

Content creation became the means to profiteering during the pandemic and everyone could broadcast it. Artists kept their audience hooked through video games or lengthy chats and managers were on the lookout for new online opportunities through streaming. The CEOs eventually regained their crowd back through online engagement along with additional profit.

By the end of the conversation, everyone agreed that there will always be new challenging ways to achieve one's goals, the point is to be open to new ideas and ready for new opportunities. The discussion closed when Mr. K referred to a quote by Seth Troxler in the documentary 'What We Started' (2017), where he said "*underground dance music is about art, while EDM is show business*".

# Chapter 5

## Discussion & Conclusions

In this study the viability and the value of the EDM industry was researched. The collective of individuals who work in that industry shared their knowledge and their thoughts about the future of the scene. While the industry had some incidents throughout its evolution, the last decade proved to be reasonably stable while taking into consideration the RIAA (*All Music Facts* 2020) report. With the literature review providing a broad sum of information on the history of the genre and the processes that are followed by the industry to estimate the profits, the value of the industry was identified. Following Frith's (2001) model the interviewees succumbed to their monetizing techniques and admitted that while working in that industry, their keys to success depend on marketing, networking and research, which are vital to increase their income. Although using Negus' study (1992) everyone agreed on the turn that the industry took during recent years, by investing in marketing and multiplying the value of its artists through brand endorsements, company mergers and royalty payments.

More analytically, since everyone agreed that the industry is mainly a source for profiteering while keeping its value of entertainment, career opportunities were created in the early 1990s. Since EDM was still considered an underground party scene, people who worked in the industry were in there mostly because they enjoyed it, rather than to profit out of it. After the 2000s the genre started gaining popularity that led to a new era which was followed by experimental techniques, technology outbreaks and bigger paychecks. That was discussed on their take of the future state of the industry, accepting its value and the way prices are shaped. It is only logical to reach at this point after many years of evolution and with the assistance of technology.

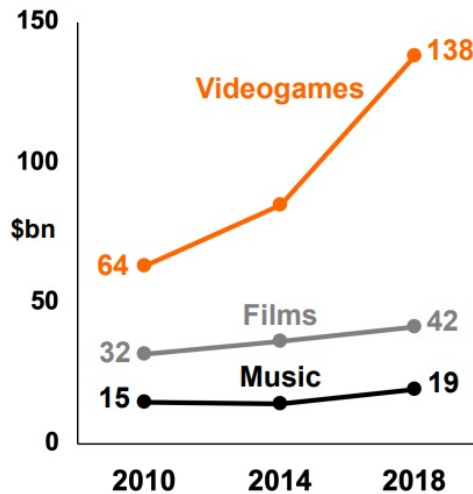
From the perspective of the audience, there were no complaints or further suggestions, aside from the fact of repetitiveness during recent years, while the industry people expressed their gratitude before engaging in some concerns. They expressed their distress about booking fees, drug use and cancel culture.

Technology was possibly one of the key factors to kickstart the careers of everyone in the EDM industry and as mentioned the reasons behind it are the internet and the social media. It is easier for everyone to have access to the music they like as well as an ease to research for new material. It is also thought that social media has been the bridge that was need to connect people with the same interests from different parts of the world and ultimately share their music experiences, which from a marketing standpoint means more engagement, thus more profit.

In the topic of marketing, all those people were asked on the factors that affects their payment and starting with the artists once again it is calculated based on their publicity status. Their social media engagement, brand endorsements, contract deals and everything else that would boost their image in the media would only mean a higher value for their persona and thus their performance. As discussed further the manager and the booking agent earn a commission payment that depends on their contacts which means better networking equals better payments.

Regarding owners of festivals and clubs it is clear that the ticketing values will be dependent on the artist fees along with the production that is set in the area at the time (including taxes). As for the people who run labels, their contract always states the percentage they own from the artists material and they justify that fact on their distribution and promotion.

Finally, the value of the industry staying as mentioned at over \$7 billion shows a financial stability and the fact that it has no immediate drop during recent years looks at a promising future. Furthermore, if the music industry in general looks at high numbers, taking a step back and observing the overall status of the entertainment industry from the last year's IMS Business Report (2019) it is clear that after the growth of the videogames industry which stands at an all-time high with the absurd worth of \$138 billion (as seen in Figure 30) music appears to have a gradual increase through the years.



**Figure 30:** Global Revenues by Media from 2010 to 2018

<https://www.internationalmusicsummit.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/IMS-Business-Report-2019-vFinal.pdf>



As mentioned, marketing is one of the best ways to engage the audience and generate a higher value over a product (that product being a DJ) which explains why so many artists agree to making a crossover of their performances with ideas based on videogames.

A matter of even greater concern was how the COVID-19 pandemic was handled in terms of profiteering. While running through a period that most countries initiated a lockdown to keep their citizens safe, the EDM industry is one of those who shutdown first and recover last. That means that since the main source of income is live shows along with advertisement and brand marketing, none of those is achievable when gatherings are forbidden and people have no access to the products advertised. Some smart ways to keep the artists in play, were the crossovers with the industry of the highest value. That included virtual live shows and live interactions with the fans through social media, streaming platforms such as Twitch as well as teasing and promoting new music.

To sum up the research the EDM industry is a profitable business while keeping its entertainment identity, with a value that has been gradually increasing during the last 10 years and looks at a bright future (Voogt 2019) surpassing at the moment the \$7 billion mark. It still comes third behind films and videogames, but it has created various career opportunities and is considered one of the best choices for investors. That can be seen in the huge attendance numbers of the festivals since the attendees come in bunches as seen in a report from Eventbrite (2016). Both audiences and industry workers stated their satisfactory status on the current state of the scene. On the matter of the artists' status, those who work to conduct EDM-related events are paying and paid fairly since the rates are shifting according to the status and the brands or sponsors that the artists endorse or advertise unless an incident like *Fyre* (2019) takes place. Technology introduced the internet and the social media that brought great value to the scene and most definitely in the value of the services provided around it. The key to success in the industry starts with marketing and ends with networking as for most jobs. The main issues mainly consist of high prices, drug use and ultimately cancel culture.

The only serious issue at the time is the COVID-19 pandemic (2020) that resulted in the shutdown of all events and happenings regarding gathering of more than a couple of people. The incident kept artists and companies in a hiatus, until they came up with innovative ideas to hit the spotlight once again such as online virtual concerts in videogames (Fortnite) resulting in additional sales as a comeback during a time of absence from the rest of the world (Zellner 2020).

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