The Art of AI in Music

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Today, artificial intelligence (AI) is dominating parts of the workforce and changing a rapidly growing job market that was once controlled entirely by humans. Computers are now being used to save time and reduce labor costs. In this paper, I will examine the music industry and how artificial intelligence has changed the field. I will discuss what this means for music production, how it has changed songwriting, and how it has complicated copyright law.

When people hear the term "music production," they may think about recording songs or hearing a favorite song on the radio and wondering how it was mixed. The Oxford Dictionary of Music defines music production as the art of organizing, capturing, and shaping musical sound in recorded form through both artistic decision-making and technical processes such as recording, editing, mixing, and mastering. In simple terms, producers help transform rough ideas into polished songs. Without production, songs would remain unfinished drafts that may never reach a larger audience. Artists must understand the sound they want to create because production shapes how listeners experience their music.

The history of music production dates back to the late nineteenth century with the invention of the phonograph by Thomas Edison. During this time, producers mostly worked as technical supervisors rather than creative collaborators. Music was recorded live onto cylinders and discs, meaning artists had to perform songs correctly in a single take because editing was not possible. Artists such as Louis Armstrong helped shape the early music industry and influenced the first era of music production.

The music industry changed significantly after World War II with the invention of magnetic tape. Studios could now hire audio engineers who were able to edit recordings, layer sounds, and combine multiple takes together. Les Paul revolutionized recording studios with the invention of multitrack recording, which allowed instruments to be recorded separately and mixed later. Producer Phil Spector helped popularize this approach through his "Wall of Sound" production style, which layered multiple recordings together to create a fuller sound. Albums such as Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band by The Beatles expanded music production beyond simple live recordings by introducing overdubbing, tape effects,

and orchestration. Vinyl records and cassette tapes also helped spread music to larger audiences through radio DJs and broadcasters.

By the 1970s, producers controlled not only an artist's sound but also their branding and commercial success. If a song did not meet industry standards or stand out from competitors, it often failed to receive radio play. One example of innovative production from this period is Pink Floyd's song "Money." Roger Waters recorded cash registers, coins dropping, and paper tearing, while producer Alan Parsons edited and looped the sounds together to create the song's iconic rhythm.

Electronic drums and synthesizers transformed music production even further. These technologies allowed producers to create sounds that were impossible to achieve with traditional instruments alone. Quincy Jones, for example, worked with Michael Jackson to blend jazz, pop, and funk into large-scale studio productions.

From the 1980s through the 2000s, digital production changed the music industry permanently. Musical Instrument Digital Interface (MIDI) technology made production more affordable and accessible for beginner musicians and low-budget artists. Compact discs (CDs) allowed artists to distribute physical copies of their music without damaging audio quality over time. Digital Audio Workstations (DAWs) such as Pro Tools and Ableton Live allowed musicians to produce music entirely from home studios. Artists such as Foster the People demonstrated this approach when Mark Foster layered loops together in his home studio rather than using a traditional band setup. Producer Pharrell Williams later used similar techniques in songs such as "Happy."

Producer Dr. Dre also helped popularize sampling, which involves taking portions of existing recordings and altering their pitch, rhythm, or structure to create new music. During the 2010s and 2020s, streaming platforms such as Spotify and Apple Music made it easier for producers and artists to distribute music worldwide. However, streaming also reduced physical music sales, which created new challenges for composers and songwriters.

Artificial intelligence has the potential to dramatically change music production. AI allows musicians to experiment with different versions and styles of songs more quickly and efficiently than before. According to Tracklib.com, algorithmic music composition dates back to 1957 when Lejaren Hiller and Leonard Isaacson created the Illiac Suite, one of the first works composed through artificial intelligence. This demonstrates that AI in music has existed for decades and continues to evolve. As AI tools improve, it may become more difficult to distinguish between human-created and AI-generated music.

Another major development in music production is AI voice modeling. Adrian Borza (2025) explains that AI technologies became mainstream after decades of research in computer science and psychology. AI systems are now capable of generating lyrics, instrumentals, and even realistic vocal performances. Platforms such as Suno allow users to generate complete songs using prompts and trained voice models. While AI can be a powerful creative tool, many people worry that overreliance on AI could reduce the role of human creativity in music.

Songwriting has also been influenced by artificial intelligence. Songwriting allows artists to express emotion and tell stories through music. Two songwriters I admire are Phil Wickham and Brad Arnold. Phil Wickham often begins with a guitar or piano idea before building a song around it. His songwriting emphasizes shared experiences and emotional connection with listeners. In “House of the Lord,” Wickham writes, “We worship the God who was. We worship the God who is. We worship the God who evermore will be” (Wickham, 2021). His lyrics invite listeners into the experience of the song rather than focusing only on the individual writer.

Brad Arnold of 3 Doors Down uses a more direct songwriting style. His lyrics are emotional but less abstract. In “Here Without You,” Arnold writes, “I’m here without you, baby. But you’re still on my lonely mind” (3 Doors Down, 2002). Instead of relying heavily on imagery, Arnold communicates emotion directly to the audience in a relatable way.

The challenge with AI-generated music is that AI systems are beginning to imitate vocal emotion and songwriting styles. According to Billboard, AI voice recreation technology could make songwriting more accessible to unknown artists by allowing them to create professional-quality songs without major industry connections. However, this also raises concerns among songwriters who fear their work may become less valued as AI-generated music becomes more common.

One of the most complicated issues surrounding AI in music is copyright law. Copyright is a form of intellectual property protection that gives creators the right to control how their original works are copied and distributed. Modern copyright law can be traced back to the Statute of Anne in 1710, which shifted control from printers to creators and publishers. In music, copyright protects lyrics, compositions, and recordings. However, AI-generated covers and voice recreations have created new legal challenges because current laws were not designed to protect vocal likenesses in the age of artificial intelligence.

Recently, lawmakers and music companies have begun addressing these concerns. One example is the proposed No Fakes Act, which aims to protect artists from unauthorized use of their voices and likenesses. Spotify and Universal Music Group

have also explored licensing agreements for AI-generated covers and remixes. According to PR Newswire (2026), these agreements could create new revenue opportunities for artists while ensuring creators are compensated for AI-generated works based on their music. If successful, these systems could encourage other music platforms to adopt similar copyright protections.

After examining music production, songwriting, and copyright law, it is clear that AI is transforming the music industry in ways that were once impossible. If artists use AI ethically, it can become a valuable creative tool that enhances production, songwriting, and distribution. However, artists and producers must maintain human creativity at the center of the process rather than allowing AI to take complete control.

In conclusion, AI is meant to be a tool rather than a replacement for human creativity. The future of music will depend on how musicians choose to use artificial intelligence. AI has the power to make music production more accessible, but it also raises important ethical and legal questions. As technology continues to evolve, the music industry must find ways to balance innovation with the protection of artistic expression.

References

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