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"The Person Behind the Music We Adore": Artists, Profiles, and the Circulation of Music

Jeremy Morris

Abstract:
In light of the shift from music on compact discs to music as a digital file, this paper looks at how artists have used the fluidity and mobility of the digital music commodity to rework their practices of making music. Relatedly, it also explores how the movement of artists and their profiles through social media and other technologies has reconfigured the relationships between artists and their fans. Focusing on the case of the British musician Imogen Heap and the release of her 2009 album, *Ellipse*, this article tracks how Heap employed social media to involve fans in the production of the album's songs, artwork, and marketing materials. This co-creative relationship increased opportunities for the commodification of Heap's music, but it also shifted her role from music-maker to manager of a complex set of socio-musical interactions.

The last two decades have witnessed a steady move from music on compact discs toward music as a digital file, stored and played on networked computers and mobile devices. Aside from the economic, legal, and industrial consequences of this shift, regularly debated in the popular press and in music trade publications, it has had direct effects on how musicians produce and circulate their art, and how they relate and interact with their listeners in the process. From high-profile efforts to re-envision the distribution of music from the likes of Radiohead, Trent Reznor, and Amanda Palmer, to countless other initiatives by emerging artists on social media and crowdfunding sites, the traditional cycle from creation to distribution to consumption now has several alternate nodal points. Musicians now circulate themselves and their work through new

technologies and social media, creating novel moments of exposure and interaction with their fans and followers.

Accordingly, this paper looks at how artists have used the fluidity and mobility of the digital music commodity to rework their practices of making music, examining how the movement of artists through social media spaces and other technologies has reconfigured the relationships between artists and their fans. Specifically, I focus on the case of British ambient pop musician Imogen Heap and the release of her 2009 album, *Ellipse*. Making extensive use of social media, Heap involved fans in the production of the album's songs, artwork, and marketing materials (Bascaramurty, 2009; Fusilli, 2009; West, 2010). Through video diaries, blog updates, live streaming webcam sessions, contests, and more, she inserted herself into fans' daily lives and worked them into her production process. This fostered a co-creative relationship between Heap and her fans, but it also shifted her role from music-maker to manager of a complex set of socio-musical interactions. Using Heap as a case study, this paper focuses on the mobility of both the music commodity and the artists in light of digitization, theorizing the subsequent implications for the circulation of cultural goods like music.

Circulating the Digital Music Commodity

The music commodity has undergone significant changes in its form and formats in the last two decades. During this period, music has moved gradually from more traditional formats of recorded music, like compact discs, toward digital files on computers, the Internet, and various portable devices. This has propelled the emergence of what I call

the *digital music commodity*: a particular combination of data and sound that exists as an entity in and of itself for sale or acquisition in online outlets via computers or other digital devices. Although music on CDs is technically digital, the CD commodity is still grounded in the physicality of its form; it depends on its packaging, its jewel case, and an infrastructural network for its distribution, presentation, and storage in retail stores and individual collections. The digital music commodity, on the other hand, is essentially data without its tactile packaging. It is ones and zeroes, bits and bytes, that, together with the right software, play music. This is not to suggest that digital music is without packaging or materiality, but rather to recognize that the digital music commodity is a specific assemblage of technologies and cultural practices. In other words, my use of the term is meant to suggest that the digital music commodity is both a thing and a moment. It is, on the surface, an audio file that is made visible, audible, and tangible through various software interfaces, metadata, and hardware devices. It is also a moment in the music commodity's history where most of the materials that give it its commercial, aesthetic, technical, and functional form manifest themselves largely thanks to computers, the Internet, or other digital technologies.

The digital music commodity emerged in large part as a result of the confluence of music and computing technologies. The development of personal computing in the 1980s and the subsequent drive toward "multimedia" devices were integral for making music playable in the new environment that the computer provided. While there has long been cross-pollination between the music industry and developers of new technologies (e.g., Edison cylinders, Berliner records, Philips and the audiotape, Sony/ Philips and the CD), the migration to digital music is unique in how tightly it has woven

multiple industries. This convergence has presented legal and economic challenges for the industries that manage its production and circulation (Burkart & McCourt, 2006; Chanan, 1995; Garofalo, 1999; Gillespie, 2007). It has also altered how artists approach musical creation (Katz, 2004; Théberge, 1997), and what listeners expect from their encounters with music (Bull, 2000, 2007; DeNora, 2000; Sterne, 2012; Théberge, 2005).

The process of digitization has stripped the music commodity of some of its materiality (McCourt, 2005). Album art, jewel cases, and other packaging remnants have morphed into metadata, tags, software interfaces, and other less tactile forms. Music has long been mobile, whether through portable transistor radios, portable cassette players, the trading of mix tapes and the like, but music as a digital file has a fluidity that surpasses previous formats of recorded music. The music commodity itself has never been as easy to circulate as it is as a digital file. Given the processing speeds and hard drive space of most computers and digital devices these days, sending, sharing, and storing a 3 to 9 Mb sound file is a relatively trivial task. Considering the gradual reduction in the visual and tactile aspects of music recordings that occurs in the move from records to tapes to CDs to the minimalist and mobile digital file, some media and music scholars argue that "fluidity, rather than integrity, is the defining characteristic of digital technology" (McCourt, 2005, pp. 249-251). The mobility of the digital commodity takes precedence over its form, and this "heightens [...] our desire to sample, collect, and trade music in new ways (McCourt, 2005, p. 250). This allows for different kinds of interactions with the music itself, as "we engage in 'dialogues' with a work by altering

the artifact itself or re-contextualizing it through mix CDs or playlists" (McCourt, 2005, p. 251).

The digital music commodity, then, turns our attention to the importance of the moments of circulation and distribution in the life cycle of a commodity (Jones, 2002). Hardly inert economic objects, commodities are artifacts in a particular situation, and their commodity-ness is defined by their circulation and exchange (Appadurai, 1986, p. 13). Commodities gain their value not just from the materials that make them up, but also from their exchange, from their movement in relation to a whole world of commodities and labour. A commodity's economic and cultural worth is prone to change as it moves through various owners and spaces (Straw, 2000). This interplay between people, objects, and spaces fosters the formation of what Benjamin Lee and Edward LiPuma (2002) call "cultures of circulation" (p. 192). Lee and LiPuma see circulation as a cultural process that is sparked by the "interactions between specific types of circulating forms and the interpretive communities built around them" (*ibid*.). The objects, ideas, and commodities that people exchange, as well as the technologies and paths underpinning that movement, animate different kinds of communities. In short, practices of circulation enact something: they are performances by users who are bound together by exchange.

Cultures of circulation provide a fitting framework for exploring the current mobility of the digital music commodity. As Steve Jones (2002) notes, the Internet and other distribution technologies remind us that the movement of music and the technologies that move it are central components of how we experience and understand music (pp. 215-216). Distribution and circulation technologies have consequences for

how people find music and how music finds them (Jones, 2002, p. 214). Regardless of what these technologies "mean" in an interpretive sense, they are, at their core, an interaction between humans and machines that allows for "new forms of connection between consumers (and purveyors) of music" (Jones, 2002, p. 222). While the digitization of music provides an interesting technological story about the marriage of digital music and digital distribution, it also offers a broader narrative about the changing occupational and creative roles of artists and listeners during the production of cultural commodities like music. As the infrastructure that supports the distribution of the music commodity changes, so does the character of the cultures of circulation that form around music.

Artists and Profiles

The digital music commodity has also brought about greater fluidity for creators and producers. The proliferation of digital recording technologies (hardware and software) that offer near professional production, mixing, and mastering capacities has made the act of creation more available and accessible than ever before (Breen & Forde, 2004; Jones, 2000; Kot, 2009; Théberge, 1997). With the computer as the central device in this chain, the production process is no longer explicitly limited to a static studio (Théberge, 1997, p. 231). Musicians can create while on tour, in their home studios, or wherever else they can set up their recording and production equipment. Internet retailers and file-sharing networks have drastically altered distribution options for musicians (Anderson, 2006). Instead of (or in addition to) manufacturing thousands of copies of a CD or album for distribution in stores, many artists now make their music

directly and freely available through online sites like Bandcamp and Soundcloud or sell it through online retailers like iTunes and Amazon. While many musicians still rely heavily on touring, it is not the only way to maintain direct exposure to fans. Social media have become primary tools for artists to gain exposure and connect with listeners. Social networks, along with other technologies associated with Web 2.0,[1] marry and mix so many previous forms of publicity – concert posters, videos, interviews, demos, radio, and so on – that they are hard for artists to ignore.

Through social media and other forms of web presence, artists circulate in the everyday lives of their fans, taking part in the cultures of circulation that form around their music. While this had been possible with radio, magazines, television, and other media, the types of connection through social and new media are often perceived to be more intimate and direct, based on fan-to-artist dialogue (Beer, 2008, p. 232; Théberge, 2005; Marwick & boyd, 2011). In an article about Jarvis Cocker, the lead singer of the British band Pulp, David Beer (2008) looks at how fans interact with Cocker via his web presence. Beer argues that Cocker's participation on various websites, social networks, and other such technologies creates a "profile" that gives fans another platform on which to understand, experience and carry on their relationship with an artist they enjoy. This profile is hardly static. It changes with each new update or post, and it circulates in ways that enable connections between the artist and her or his fans, as well as between fans themselves. Beer acknowledges, as do I, that it may not be the actual artist maintaining his or her own profile (i.e., many artists have record labels, PR firms,

[1] Web 2.0 is a term signifying a collection of ideas, design trends, and business models that position users as engaged and active media consumers who create and collaborate on the very products of their consumption. This trend has been both celebrated and critiqued since it was coined in 2005 (Allen, 2008; O'Reilly, 2005; Zimmer, 2008).

or consultants who manage their social media profiles for them). However, the circulation of the profile creates a perception of accessibility and proximity that goes a long way to fostering added engagement between fans and the artist in question, as well as with other fans (Beer, 2008, p. 232).

The mobility of the artist's profile and the cultures of circulation that form around it spill over into an artist's ability to tour physically. In an interview with the lead singer of Scottish band Mogwai, popular music and new media scholar Nancy Baym (2011a; 2011b) points out how the band's strong web and social media presence has led to popularity in locations where its members never imagined they would have fans. This has opened up new touring markets in regions that the band had not previously deemed accessible, feasible, or worthwhile (Baym, 2011a). Recently, a number of websites have emerged to formalize this process; sites like Eventful or Dukits, allow fans to submit requests for bands to tour in their city. Once a critical mass of fans have signed up, or contributed funds (depending on the site), artists know the tour will be a financial possibility.

While it is tempting to get swept up in the rhetoric celebrating fully fluid musicians who are able to create, market, distribute, and tour entirely on their own, wherever they like, the reality is that the structure of the music industries, the exigencies of touring, and the production of the recorded music commodity still require significant financial resources (Beer, 2008, p. 223; Burkart & McCourt, 2006). As promising as new technologies and cultural practices may be, they are limited to and governed by an industrial infrastructure that has been in place for decades, and one that is slow to change. Artists certainly have more tools than ever before to fulfill these functions

themselves, and some do so successfully. But taking on the roles and additional responsibilities of producer, promoter, distributor, publicity agent, and more adds a new layer of pressure on musicians as entrepreneurs. Baym's several interviews with other artists, for example, reveal the difficulties musicians face in trying to maintain an active, ever-circulating digital profile and then subsequently managing the relationships with fans and followers that result (Baym, 2011a; 2011b).

Ellipse

The launch of Imogen Heap's 2009 album, *Ellipse*, provides an exemplary case of the changing occupational and creative demands made on both artists and fans in light of digitization. Heap is a British ambient-pop artist who regularly uses her website and social media profiles to engage fans during album creation, production, and distribution processes. Heap's solo career, after a few years as part of the electronic duo Frou Frou, began under contract with an independent record label that was eventually acquired by Universal Records toward the end of the 1990s. Despite establishing a sizeable fan base, the middling commercial success of Heap's albums led to the termination of her label contract. For the last dozen years, Heap has produced and released her albums independently and has used the Internet as a key mode of publicity and communication with her listeners (though she has also engaged the services of major labels for some promotion and distribution). The analysis below collects and scrutinizes the representations, communications, and artifacts from Heap's personal website and various social network sites to discern how the fluidity of Heap's profile affects the creation and circulation of her music. Specifically, I draw on dozens of press articles profiling the singer, and I conduct a qualitative analysis of imogenheap.com and the updates and content from her social media accounts.[2]

From 2007 to 2009, Heap undertook a massive social media campaign to produce and promote *Ellipse,* her third solo studio album. Using video diaries, blog posts, and

[2] Heap has had a website since 1999, and it has been frequently updated and maintained since 2005. She also manages profiles/accounts on MySpace (since early 2005), Twitter (since April 2008), Ustream (2009) and more recently, Facebook and SoundCloud. Using text collection software and the interfaces of the different networks, I compiled the historical contents of the various sites and analyzed them in conjunction with the period leading up to and directly after the launch of *Ellipse*.

status updates across sites like MySpace, Facebook, Ustream and YouTube, Heap kept fans apprised of the album's progress, solicited their input on demos, and included them in other aspects of the production process, from the design of her album artwork to the writing of her press biography. She did not tour extensively for the project, though she did tour selectively and strategically, holding special meet-ups for fans and followers.

The center of the *Ellipse* campaign was a series of 40 short video blogs she created to document the album's recording and production process. The videos generally lasted between 5 and 12 minutes, and attracted anywhere from 15,000 to 100,000 views and hundreds of ensuing comments. The clips begin with Heap moving back into the family home where she lived as a child. She gradually transforms the basement into a useable sound recording studio, where the later video blogs show Heap at a mixing board reflecting on the process of recording. The videos maintain a warm and personable feel to them, as if Heap is inviting fans into her home and place of work. Her early updates are relatively mundane; they are about the renovations to the house and the studio and describe other non-musical details about her life, such as her cat Cindy, the new furniture/equipment she's bringing in to the home, and the trials and tribulations of studying for and taking her driver's test (Heap, 2007-2009, vBlog #3). Still, these seemingly trivial updates work to build and maintain a particular kind of profile, as well as a particular kind of relationship that Heap envisions having with her audience.

There is a dual kind of circulation at play here: through the videos, Heap moves into the rooms and screens of her viewers, and they move into her recording studio. Although the videos only show a partial picture of the making of the album, they still open up a moment and a process that is traditionally closed off to fans. This gives not only a sense of awareness about the current state of the album and its sounds, but it also inserts fans and participants into the production process. Importantly, it is not just about the music or the album. In fact, it is not until video blog #12 – three months after Heap began uploading updates – that the studio is actually ready for music making. In other words, fans of her music have watched over an hour's worth of video updates before even getting a glimpse of the new album and its sounds. Before the recording of the album even gets underway, viewers have been privy to the creation of the studio itself. Heap is not the first artist to open up the production process to fans; there have long been behind-the-scenes documentaries and making-of stories available. Fans invested in a given musician, artist, director, or author could usually find more details about how their favourite albums, books, films, or artworks were made. But it is rare for fans to have access to these sounds and stories as the album is being recorded.

As the recording process continued, Heap's updates became more focused on the album's progress, on her creative successes and stalls, and on sharing particular portions of the album in order to solicit feedback. During later updates, Heap frequently played a short preview of a song she was working on, asking viewers for their opinions. Through YouTube's commenting function, fans suggested changes or offered their advice. Although there was rarely direct response from Heap on specific comments

through YouTube, her conversations on Twitter and in subsequent video blogs show distinct moments where she acknowledged the contribution of listeners and responded to them, as in video blogs #25 and #26 that show Heap altering the melody of the album's lead "single" based on feedback she has received. Even though there was a slight lag between the time the YouTube videos were recorded and the time they were posted, the videos formed a central hub for Heap's network of followers as well as for her other social media activities.

Heap also interacted more directly and promptly with fans through her Ustream and Twitter accounts. Using the "real-time" nature of those sites, she was able to solicit advice even more immediately than through YouTube. Take the example of the song "Tidal." Heap had finished multiple versions of the song, and was struggling to decide which one to put on the album. She turned to her Twitter followers for advice:

> "i'm not even going to tell you what i've done. Seriously concerned over my mental health. What is WITH this song! for ****'s sake! argh
> That felt immediately better. There is clearly no "right" way. Tidal has proved that for sure. which one do i actually like??? i can't tell (Imogen Heap, Twitter, 20 March 2009)

Following this setup, Heap shared links to five different versions of the song. Shortly thereafter, she had gotten enough feedback to choose:

> see my problem?! It can be so many things. Seems most of you like tonights version most. Which is good, I think. This was really helpful xx
> Time for bed me thinks. THank you all for the replies. I'm so lucky to y'all routin' for me! much love. (Imogen Heap, Twitter, 20 March 2009)

In a sense, fans here were taking part in production decisions. Although Heap had other musicians, friends, and professionals offering her feedback, she also regularly sought and valued suggestions by the people who would eventually be the end listeners of the project. By challenging fans with difficult production decisions that she herself was facing, Heap embedded their feedback into the album in a very material way. Though the level of their contribution may seem superficial in some respects (i.e., she offered a limited range of choice and then sought feedback on only those options), the co-productive relationship she fostered provided fans another layer through which to interact with her music.

All this interaction resulted in making fans feel closer to the production process and to the artist. Judging by the comments on her video blogs, fans appreciated having access to previously opaque details of the production process:

> I'm so glad I found your Vlogs. I appreciate when artists explain a part of their inner selves to their fans, so that we can see the person behind the music we adore. Thank you! (Heap, 2007 - 2009: comments on vBlog #1).

> I think its so cool how you previewed a song for us. That just shows what kind of artist you are. It's not just some product that you're making, packaging, and distributing to the masses. But you show us it's very personal to you and you have control over it. You are an artist. Keep it up. (Heap, 2007 - 2009: vBlog #14).

Questions of authenticity and about Heap's "inner self" aside, clearly fans see the videos as another platform on which to experience and understand their relationship with Heap. If there has traditionally been a distance, both physical and metaphorical, between celebrities and their fans, constant dialogue via social media and other technologies allows for encounters that ignore or re-shape that space, at least

momentarily. If traditional celebrity has entailed creating fantastical images about what we imagine the lives of celebrities to be like (Senft, 2008), Heap is happier to cultivate micro-celebrity through profile interaction, and through content that aims to elide any differences between her and her followers (i.e., by recounting the mundane and trivial aspects of work and everyday life). Her celebrity is a "practice" (Marwick & boyd, 2011), enacted through her profile; it is a practice that depends on revealing and circulating different kinds of personal and professional information.

Through the profile, fans and artists negotiate their roles as creators, producers, and listeners. The circulation of Heap's music and her profile brought together an engaged group of fans willing to see the project through to completion. As the album came closer to its finish, Heap's fans moved from providing input on the album's production to assisting in marketing and promotion. For example, Heap held a contest to find a graphic designer to live in her house for a week to design the album's cover art, and she crowdsourced her biography on Twitter, getting fans to submit 140-character sentences about her life and music. When a promotional copy of the album was leaked and posted on the online auction site eBay, Heap's network of followers mobilized to warn Heap and to have the auction shut down (Bascaramurty, 2009). Fans also contributed to specific decisions about the album's packaging. In one case, Heap was dismayed over the prices retailers were setting for different versions of the album. She had planned to release a regular CD for $9 to $11. She also had a special version of the album made, with a hardback booklet for the first 100,000 copies purchased, to reward to early buyers. Retailers wanted to set the price of the enhanced version at $21,

however, given the difficulty of stocking non-traditionally shaped packaging. Again, Heap turned to Twitter and, eventually, to a live webcam discussion on Ustream:

> I need your help. So upset about this situation ... i've been backed into a corner. I'm going to talk on Ustream about it in a bit. it's about packaging NONSENSE! my grand plan has been trampled on and I didn't have a back up. Now salvaging... but want to explain [...] have a listen and tell me what do you think (Broadcasting live at http://ustre.am/2Nie) (Imogen Heap, Twitter, 16 July 2009)

During the Ustream session (Heap, 2009), Heap worked through a series of scenarios. Is $20 too costly for a "deluxe" CD that does not really have any extra music? Would it be better if the deluxe version included a purely instrumental version of the album? Should fans that wanted to buy the disc early be able to access both versions of the album? For each of Heap's questions, a series of answers streamed into her computer. The discussion continued for twenty minutes, concluding with a live acoustic performance of one of her songs. She signed off by saying that the chat had been so beneficial that she would commit to doing similar live streaming session on a weekly basis (Imogen Heap, Twitter, 16 July 2009).

As with the earlier decision about the final version of "Tidal," Ustream users were "with" Heap, in studio, as she contemplated the production and marketing challenges that she faced. By extending the space of her studio outward, she incorporated fans into her studio practices. If this were simply a call out on Twitter for help making a decision regarding different edits of a song, it would have been unremarkable. However, many of these fans had been involved in the process from its inception. They had seen the studio,

in which the Ustream session took place, transformed from a basement family room into the useable and workable studio it now appears to be. They were familiar with the space and invested in Heap and her music. Her solicitation for opinions and advice was thus part of an ongoing process. During the making of *Ellipse*, whether through their comments to her videos and social media accounts, or through their direct contributions to the album and its packaging, fans took part in a co-creative relationship that revolved around the circulation of Heap's music and her profile. Heap acknowledged the importance of this contribution by continually seeking additional ways involve listeners, users, and viewers in the production process. Perhaps the most fitting and final show of gratitude came when Heap attended the Grammy awards in 2010, at which she won "Best Engineered Album (Non Classical)" for the production of *Ellipse*. For the occasion, she created a "twitdress" with an electronic collar hooked up to her mobile phone that tweeted messages and pictures from fans as she walked around the gala and as she came up on stage to accept her award. Although fans, who had some part in the production of the album, could not physically be present at the Grammys, Heap saw the dress as a way for them to "accompany me on the red carpet" (Heap, quoted in Dybwad, 2010).

[Danny Moloshok/Reuters]

Conclusion

It might be easy to dismiss Imogen Heap's project as savvy marketing. Although tremendous effort and time went into the production of her videos and the maintenance of her social media profile, she has merely provided the "perception" of opening up the production process and being more accessible to fans. Cynically, it could be argued that Heap offered the illusion of inclusion. Fans' only real input into the process was heavily guided and framed by Heap. Moreover, the level of investment she stirred in fans was likely as much of a strategy to ensure more pre-orders and sales of the finished CD as it was from any desire to co-create with her audience. As Paul Théberge (2005) notes about online fan clubs more generally, they act as a conduit that channels fans' interest

in an artist in the service of greater sales and profits (p. 486). There were certainly enough spin-off commodities to support this theory for *Ellipse*. Heap sold advertising off of her video blogs, she sold a user-generated remix album inspired by one of *Ellipse*'s throwaway songs, and she turned the video blogs into a "making of" DVD documentary. Co-production serves a dual purpose, one that feeds fans' sense of identity and belonging, as well as sales potential (Théberge, 2005, p. 486).

But to simply pass such co-production off as a publicity stunt is to miss the changing nature of the roles of the musician and her fans in cultural production. Heap's role is now as much about managing a complex set of socio-musical interactions between her profile and her fans as it is about creating her next album. Her profile, circulating and diffusing through various social networks and websites, has put her in dialogue with fans and co-producers. While music is still clearly a somewhat solitary pursuit for Heap, she recognizes the need for sourcing ideas, testing sounds, and making collaborative decisions with her listeners. This may fuel creativity and music making for Heap, but it also instills, as Théberge describes in research about the electronic musician Moby, a sense of obligation (2005, p. 486). The demands of "communicative capitalism" (Dean, 2010) mean that Heap's profile needs constant grooming and tending. Her role as a musician now involves maintaining her profile as a co-creative public figure. This is important not just for musical reasons but for financial ones as well, and it speaks to the increased pressures on both art and commerce in an era of digitized production and distribution.

Granted, Imogen Heap is certainly not an average user of social media and related technologies. Her case is exceptional in terms of the amount of effort and work she puts

into building, fostering, and maintaining her community of fans. However, this kind of active social media presence/profile is increasingly expected of many popular music (and other) artists. Social media management consultants abound for musicians, and the roles of marketing and PR firms now include a heavy focus on social media. Many established and emerging artists either maintain their own profiles in various social networks or employ individuals or companies to do so for/as them. Artists have always had an image to maintain (through videos, press appearances, interviews, etc.). Yet, given the accessibility and pervasiveness of the tools with which artists create and manage their profiles, the burden is increasingly falling on the shoulders of artists to administer these functions.

For her part, Heap clearly feels that the rewards of co-production outweigh the burden. Her next album shows even greater integration of fans' work and ideas, as she has asked fans to submit snippets of sounds, or "seeds," for the recording process. Instead of simply making the album herself, she must now be just as focused on inspiring others to create and submit their work to her, on choosing the right sounds from the various contributors, and on designing proper technologies to facilitate the process. The final product will be a more literal co-production than *Ellipse*, with fans and their sounds embedded into the album.

The fluidity of the digital music commodity, in terms of how it is produced, marketed, and circulated, incites a similar fluidity for the artists creating it. This fosters a re-evaluation of the relationships that artists and users have with each other and with the music commodity. Digitization has revealed what has long been a central truth of cultural commodities: people aren't paying for the objects; they're paying for the

meanings they associate with the object. Users now have multiple answers to questions about how they want to experience art, in what forms and formats, and through which media and contexts. Fans now have multiple registers in which they can be involved or participate with cultural content. The result is a critical re-evaluation of artistic experiences and products and the roles they play in our lives.

Imogen Tweets Video

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