

Making Noise in the Music Industry

Posted on [December 1, 2014](#) by [Tesni Freed](#)

Current Buzz in the Music Biz

The only thing that's constant in the music industry is its continued evolution. In fact, a [ReverbNation blog post](#) notes that *more changes have occurred in the past decade than the last 50 years combined*. Narrowing niches in the market are apparent, with a gravitation toward digital purchases, streaming services, independent labels, and music festivals. Some of the alterations are positive because they allow for greater accessibility and incorporate a local focus. However, other changes seem to raise even more questions. For instance, how will artists gain income from album and ticket sales in this digital age?

Musicians Go Against the Grain

With the release of her recent album *1989*, **Taylor Swift** caused quite a stir when she pulled the plug on her music with the streaming service Spotify and publically criticized how they handle payment. In a recent [interview with Time magazine](#), Swift explained, "Everybody's complaining about how music sales are shrinking, but nobody's changing the way they're doing things. They keep running towards streaming, which is, for the most part, what has been shrinking the numbers of paid album sales." Whether or not people agree with her actions, she should be commended for using her influence to bring awareness to an issue the music-loving public can't ignore.



Jack White holds a prototype of his revolutionary LP technology.
Image from [Pitchfork.com](#)

This desire to make a difference extends to musician and producer **Jack White** as well. His album *Lazaretto* not only set the record for vinyl sales during the week following its debut in June but also includes elements never before seen in LP production. White is a pioneer within what a [USAToday article](#) says is a growing movement: "While overall music sales remained flat in 2013, vinyl sales climbed by 32 percent, marking the seventh consecutive year of growth." Clearly, White is determined to preserve music as an art form.

Striking a Chord with Listeners

In some ways, the progressivism of Swift and White embodies a bygone era. For many, their actions are speaking volumes in the digital age, where musicians must be memorable to stand out. Thankfully, even though they may not see immediate results from their efforts, the climate of today's music industry gives artists a powerful voice, particularly due to increased opportunities for an online presence.

Industry leaders and general listeners are taking notice of what is at stake, and they're joining artists in the conversation about what's best going forward. Like most everything, perhaps it's necessary to find balance. *Digital music isn't going away, but it doesn't have to completely take over* — at least not yet.

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Tagged [digital](#), [Jack White](#), [music industry](#), [Spotify](#), [Taylor Swift](#), [vinyl](#)

Mental Notes: The Impact of Music on the Brain

Posted on [December 15, 2014](#) by [Tesni Freed](#)

MUSIC is not tangible... And yet humans have always prized music... So why does this thingless "thing" – at its core, a mere sequence of sounds – hold such potentially enormous intrinsic value?

— [The New York Times](#)

Inherent Value of Music in Life

We all interact with music in one way or another. We have favorite songs or types of music that we listen to on a regular basis. We associate memories and emotions with them. Whether we realize it or not, music shapes us. This is true on a fundamental level too, since music actually influences the brain.

Neuroscience and Music Collide

Books, like *This Is Your Brain on Music* by Daniel Levitin, explore the mind-boggling topic, and many studies have been done on this timeless connection. In the most basic terms, the neurochemical **dopamine** is released when multiple parts of the brain are engaged by listening to enjoyable music. Yet, the science behind this relationship with music gets more complicated when instruments are involved.

[NPR reported](#) that taking up a musical instrument aids the **speech development** of children:

“Researchers found that kids who took music lessons for two years didn't just get better at playing the trombone or violin; they found that playing music also helped kids' brains process language.” Such

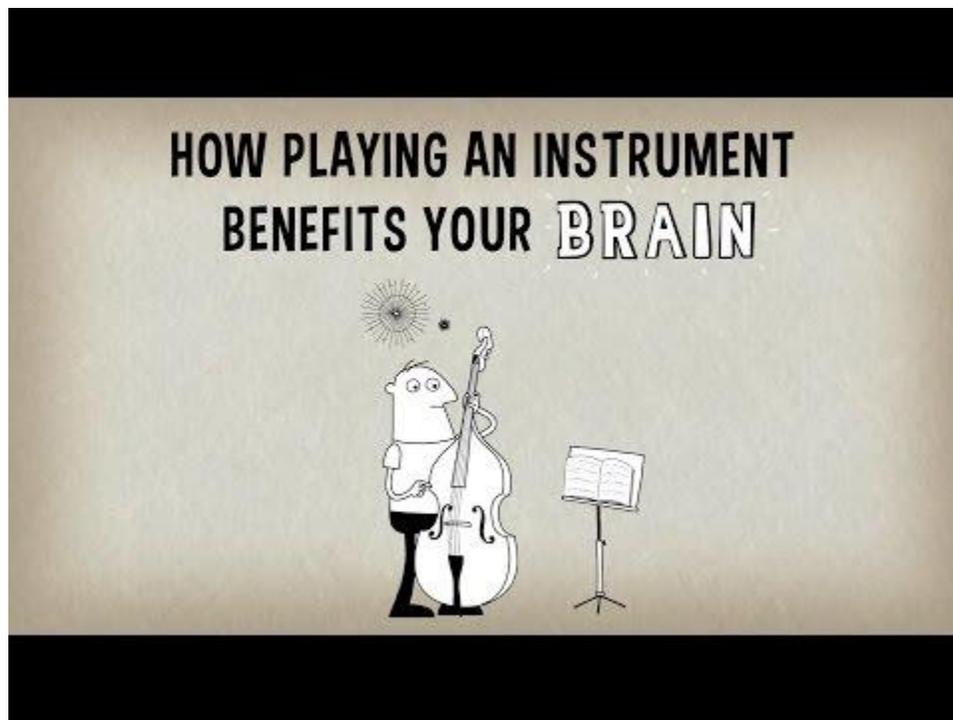
findings are most likely due to the fact that cognitive activity increases when musical engagement extends beyond appreciation. Indeed, playing an instrument works every area of the musician's brain.

Practice Really Does Make Perfect

Music learning combines mathematics and creativity, as well as discipline and euphoria. It's no wonder that neuroscientists have observed bursts of activity when the brain processes vast amounts of musical information. Playing an instrument uniquely involves fine motor skills that utilize multiple cortexes in **both hemispheres of the brain**.

As a result, musicians are expert problem solvers, who thrive in a variety of settings and expertly balance the cognitive and emotional aspects of their tasks. Music learning also enhances the ability to store and retrieve memories. Amazingly enough, studies show that ***such benefits cannot be duplicated by any other activity***, even in the fine arts.

Watch this [TED-Ed video](#) to learn more about the beneficial connection between music and the brain:



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