

## **The Next Five Years - Music Industry and Music Education Trends: Predictions or a guessing game?**

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*I have always believed that music education, at least within a contemporary genre, should have as a core objective, a focus to provide students with real industry graduate skills and knowledge to provide them with the best opportunity to build a successful career and a fruitful income in what is realistically a highly competitive and challenging industry. Maybe my approach is similar to that attributed to Abraham Lincoln "The best way to predict your future is to create it."*

Historical sources of future predictions are no more famous than Nostradamus. George (2023) records that he supposedly predicted everything from the Great Fire of London, the rise of Napoleon (and also Hitler), the dawn of the atomic age, the fall of the Twin Towers on September 11, the Third World War, and a great deal more both over the past few centuries and for centuries to come.

Among the many events forecasted for the current years, Nostradamus, or to be more precise Nostradamus interpreters, predicted a great war, an economy so bad that humankind might resort to cannibalism, and something that could happen with or on Mars, some other alleged predictions include a great naval battle, possibly war with China, the dethroning of King Charles III, the rise of a new pope, and more famine and weather disasters. But Nostradamus never composed his prophecies in straightforward prose, preferring to write in verse and use lots of symbolism - but in an era of Donald Trump and Elon Musk, who knows whether these predications may still come true...

In attempting to arrive at some realistic assumptions as to where the progression of the music industry and music education may be heading, I have chosen instead to take a step back and analyse where things have come from in the previous five years.

Five years ago, the world was being swamped by a viral epidemic that was turning most conventions on their head. The effect on music education was of course seismic. Music had mostly been taught by face-to-face programs with students and teachers working together in real time to deliver immediate interaction and feedback.

To maintain course progression for students at an acceptable level, institutions quickly needed to develop online delivery systems to keep students engaged and motivated. The online classroom, while not entirely a new concept, became a mass reality born out of necessity.

So, five years on, we find that many of these forms of course delivery are still very much in place, and many have become the "norm" for intuitions and furthermore have been refined over time and are now a permanent and vital part of the blended learning environment.

I'd also like to review the last five years from the perspective of music industry trends and delivery systems.

## The World's Favourite Contemporary Music Genres

Music trends have always been fluid, as new generations seek to establish and forge new boundaries and broaden their influences.

This table below was presented in Fleck (2025) and is based on a survey of 19,000 consumers aged 16-64 from 18 countries conducted in May-April 2018 and again in August 2024 -

2018	2024
Pop	Pop
Rock	Hip Hop/Rap
Dance/EDM	Dance/EDM
Soundtracks	Latin Music
Hip Hop/Rap	Rock
Songer/Songwriter	R & B Soul
Classical/Opera	Country
R & B Soul	K Pop
Soul	Afro Beats
Metal	Alternative/Indie

(<https://www.statista.com/chart/15763/most-popular-music-genres-worldwide/>)

It should be noted that there are many and varied sub-genres that would broaden this sample considerably, nevertheless, certain trends are notable i.e. The rise of Country, Latin and K pop.

### What Does This Tell Us?

As historically expected, popular music rides a wave of trends and fashions based mostly on popular culture. The introduction of broader cultural influences enters the market through more open and advanced interaction within the industry and consumers. Add to this the huge growth in music streaming globally, with the number of subscribers, as cited by Kemp (2025), more than doubling in the last 5 years from approximately 300 million in 2019 to over 700 million in 2025.

So, what does all this mean in the context of planning and providing an industry focused music education for the next five years and beyond that prepares students for a career in a volatile and constantly changing industry?

Courses must be malleable enough to ride the wave of these changes without compromising the integrity of the core values that underpin a comprehensive music education. An education that respects the fundamentals of what it is to be a well-informed, proficient and employable music professional. From a course planning and delivery perspective, institutions must be nimble and willing to respond as trends coalesce and become a more permanent part of the industry landscape.

Best described as a well-informed guessing game!

## Advances in Music Technology

GenAI is the “elephant in the room” when discussing the progression of music industry education and corresponding skillsets is the monumental shift occurring in the field of music recording and production (Stanford 2025). The exponential rise in AI tools is rapidly changing the recorded music landscape. This trend can only be expected to accelerate further into the future as musicians, composers and producers scramble to keep up with this new yet already “state of the art” technology.

Where in the past artists could generate an income from the sale of their recorded work, this concept has been confined to history. However, recorded music is and will continue to be a vital component of any artist’s arsenal with which to reach, connect with and garner audiences. The obvious conclusion to be drawn here is the music graduate will need to have well developed music production skills and the performance refinement and confidence to connect with their audience.

So, on we go.....

Musicians and performers have always been driven by a need to fulfill a creative calling and of course that is fundamental to the human psyche.

This will not change in the next five years.

Most things associated with the industry and educational practices will have to stay focused and resilient as change in these areas is inevitable.

As always, I look forward with great anticipation to the next five years!

## Addendum:

This article, “*The Tale Wagging the Dog*,” published at the time of writing by John Harris for The Guardian, paints a rather disturbing vision of the future where songwriters are encouraged to write songs that are “Spotify Friendly” making them quote:

“Inoffensive enough to get on to one of its vapid playlists”

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