

Music and Influence

- Liam Reilly

A famous Disney song once said, "It's a small world after all". True, and yet it is getting smaller all the time. This is because in the twentyfirst century, we as a globe have truly become digital. The Internet proves to be a magnificent pool of information. Information can be conceived from anywhere on the planet, and still end up on one's own computer monitor. As a globe, the spread of ideas has become rapid. Thus allowing for data, particularly music to be shared and appreciated quicker than ever before. Music making has become a digital as well as a global discipline.

"Con las terroristas...Do the Harlem Shake". If you have a computer, than you have heard these words. Most likely these words have sprung out towards you only seconds before viewing a barrage of the strangest and most quirky dance moves that you have ever seen. These are the only lyrics, excluding a growling lion, of the YouTube sensation, "Harlem Shake" performed by electronic/hip-hop artist Baauer. This song has been danced to by millions of Americans. Yet, this song's dance can be considered a cross between an flash-mob and a riot. Creating these videos has become very "in". Dance videos to this hit song have been made by numerous celebrities, from Jimmy Fallon to the Miami Heat basketball team, to Justin Timberlake and the Saturday Night Live cast. Due to the YouTube popularity the song, "Harlem Shake" has shot to number one on the iTunes charts, and has become a catalyst for the debated change in Billboard's policy. Now when ranking songs in the Hot 100, Billboard takes into consideration the YouTube popularity of a song, as well as its sales.

"Harlem Shake," is a testament to the value of the Internet in the promotion and success of musicians. Although becoming the song in February of this year, "Harlem Shake" was originally released as a free digital download in May of 2012. It was not until the song became a YouTube hit, that Baauer and "Harlem Shake" were able to enjoy commercial success. Had it not been for its promotion via the web, "Harlem Shake" would still exist anonymously. "Harlem Shake" is only the most recent in a long line of internetdriven successes. "Gangnam Style" by PSY, "Friday" by Rebecca Black, "Bed Intruder Song" by Antoine Dodson, and many others, all can attribute their success to viral videos that were later spread by social media. Viral online videos not only provide up-and-coming acts with their initial fame, but also are able to revive old songs and give them a new found audience. However, viral videos are not the only avenue for an artist looking to utilize the power of the Internet. Simply releasing music via social networking websites can garner musical acts success. Of the five nominees for best new artist at the Grammy Awards last month, three of these acts originally caught the attention of their respective record labels through releasing music online. Using the Internet has done more for prospective musical talent than handing out flyers and playing at the old café could ever do. Digital distribution of music gives artists exposure to the entire Internet-using globe, all at once.

If you heard about my trip to Los Angeles in my last article, than you may remember the unsigned and unknown rappers pushing their demos all along Hollywood Boulevard. In my

opinion, this method of self-promotion, along with other methods of a similar nature, will become outdated in the music industry over the next few decades. As more and more musicians realize the potential of the Internet in the promotion and distribution of their music, the more musicians you will find on Tumblr, Facebook, and other social media sites. So next time you are online, take a look at some of these sites. Who knows, you may stumble upon the next “Harlem Shake”.

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