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Music as mass consume in the web radio: towards a change in model

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Abstract:

The software for streaming and spread of sound are an attempt to force the limits on the web to the spread the heavy audio files; it seems that the social desire to make the Internet a total mean, a met medium that, using audible and audiovisual languages gives itself the capacity to communicate and exchange information thanks to the anarchic characteristics of the web and the absence of a centralizing service. The feeling is that the Internet is a territory of freedom, alien to any rule. Two consequences of this process are particularly important for the radio:

1. Each individual can become a radio broadcaster, it being recorded music or live music.

The huge economic and social distance between broadcaster and listener, potentially at least, can become a way of interaction as P2P.

2. Existing radio broadcasters can transmit in a web cast (that is, through the web) therefore widening the limit between time and space and removing a lot of forms of control and censorship.

This project makes a comparative investigation about the way to obtain better performances in the search for songs, through the detailed study of the case of 14 melodies comparing their broadcasting through the web or in radio broadcasters attached to the web. The results allow approaching to the radio model change that is taking place these days.

Keywords: web radio, music, radio models

Introduction

The practice of streaming destroys the contemporary monopoly, patrimony of the radio industry that was the major medium of live broadcasting until now. Radio was the only medium of simultaneous sound and shared with television its contemporary ways which were very envied by other mediums, set and consecutive to the events, such as newspapers, cinema, books... A wide social and political barrier separated recorded sound from live sound, the socially encoded sound object to a record company label and the spontaneous radio sound. Now this barrier tends to lessen or become blurred.

The immediate consequence of this possibility was the birth of web radio. From a few years into the mid 90's online radio broadcasters started to appear, first in the USA and then everywhere.

The radio phenomenon hasn't been so important a change as it was for example the transistor or the walkman. The reason is in a paradox: surely web radio has gone beyond the temporal and special limits of the traditional wave's radio; you can still enjoy this type of radio only if you have a fast connection and a strong computer. The occidental well-off user's profile speaks about new limits, which the digital breach inserts and which are the same limits as the wave's radio. A small and obsolete receiver or transistor can work effectively in

the center of Africa, in a village that lacks electric energy, but not a web radio. So the Internet simultaneously enlarges or restricts, following the margins of digital breach, the ways of radio distribution.

This paradox makes radio on the Internet less attractive than it could be, and inserts another paradox: the audience (as we could provisionally call it) from the Internet is much wider than that of the radio but radio on the Internet has a more strict limit than that of conventional radio.

This consideration brings light to an important difference regarding the digitalization of radio and television. Television can enjoy more the power of the new technology, compressing the signal and using the same frequencies to spread more channels. On the contrary, for radio to be digitalized (as it happens to DAB and other standards) is forced to endow it with expensive and heavy machines, or with the Internet, which is now a static technology. Digital transmission of web radio contracts with the priority tendency of the radio which is the miniaturization and the spirit of mobility, adding radio as autonomous hardware, inserted in the interior of a machine, in the cell phone, walkman or its derivative (portable CD players, MP3 and iPod).

The context of sharing files

It is hard to consider revolutionary anything that neutralizes the most technical characteristic and the most beloved of the social uses of a medium. (Menduni, 2001). The limits which are each time clearer, if not the true and proper decline of web radio go hand in hand with the birth of file sharing, that is the possibility of sharing music files through the Internet.

Radio on the web stays immobilized in a fixed position; it is not in conditions of going on and boosting the social use that was made of it in the television era, in which the radio listening has been always a choice, not a necessity, and it doesn't allow its users to become producers and distributors. At this point we should insert file sharing: the exchange of musical files among privates that gain access to the Internet, through sites that are independent from the musical offer, published by the users themselves. Traditional file sharing is a free exchange of the P2P type; later it got transformed in commercial transaction. It uses mainly the MP3 standard and a new portable and personal hardware, the MP3 player.

With the spread of streaming and file sharing, music loses contact finally with a material support that accompanied it since the XIX century. In the technical reproduction era music had stopped to be a live show and became to be considered like a recorded, registered art, accessible in each moment and not only during its execution. Live music (in a concert, a performance...) represented a strange and difficult occasion for social rituals, destined to a limited socio-cultural target, while ordinary consumption could be obtained either in specific public places, like 18th century theatre, like the home privacy, and finally thanks to radio and walkman in open spaces and public places.

That way a new economic policy of recorded music was constituted, based on a high cost of execution but a low cost of marketing through cd's or other brackets and through its eventual spread on the radio, which favored a wider traffic than that of recorded music. To play the music a material support was needed, which had to be acquired in the public place and bring it home. Live music had always the tendency to increase costs, including the aid of public institutions. (If a product made in mass-production sells successfully it tends to cheapen its price; however it doesn't happen the same with interpreters and music executors who if reaching success tend to increase the costs; it is the cost of the performance which increases with the artist's reputation).

With the radio's arrival it also appeared a distinction between instant and permanent music, inside the music reproduction. Instant music, liquid, guaranteed by the radio, was of an immaterial nature and had the splendor of novelty and the unpredictable event, but it was ephemeral and non-registrable: it maintained the magical characteristics of live execution.

Permanent music was a collection of cd's, effective but always the same. It was music inside the house.

With streaming and file sharing the difference between instant and permanent music has been redefined. Music resigns material support, it reveals again immaterial, like live art, but it also can be played, exchanged, carried, and finally breaking the limits of the restricted prison that is the house from which the radio was the first to leave thanks to the transistor.

Twenty years had to elapse to be able to properly and clearly speak of a second revolution in the radio medium. Radio (...) has acquired a multimedia dimension. (Ortiz, 2011: 42).

Music has become part of a social debate of a surprising reach, around the matters of copyright raised by the fixation of a digital canon. Only a few times has the discussion of a law generated such intense and so far to reach to a consensus media and social debates nowadays. In every age group there is a high level of reflection, of a political and ethic tone, about which should be the reach of the rights of the author, the financial return to musicians and the model of music industry.

Music appears therefore in the epicenter of diverse problems that splash our contemporary culture and our media communication: the daily practices, the construction of identities, cultural industries, technologies, legal environment, political resistances and ethic positions. It surprises, therefore, that music, now paradigm of the changes made in the digital environment, has had so little presence in the communication studies. A few cultural environments are nowadays so media and influenced. The work of the investigators is, without a doubt, to keep analyzing and observing the remake of these interventions that show the ways of organizing of our contemporary culture (Fouc , 2010:65-72).

Methodology

This project makes a comparative search the best way possible to obtain ideal outputs in the localization of songs, through the detailed study of the case of 14 melodies. In all of them it has been compared their localization through the net or in conventional broadcasters built-in the web. The results allow approaching to the change of the radio model that is taking place in this concrete moment of the historic evolution of this centennial medium.

The selected melodies were the following:

1. No Woman, No Cry
2. Me and Mrs. Jones
3. Looking for Paradise
4. Let it Be
5. Viva la Vida
6. Santa Luc a
7.   Chloris
8. Bohemia Rhapsody
9. Across the Universe
10. Ay, amor
11. Por el boulevard de los sue os rotos
12. Born to run
13. What else is there
14. A os 80

Obtained results after the said research:

1. No woman no cry

In the most part of the analyzed websites there aren't videos that accompany the music.

This song was in almost every website because it's a classic and in fact, for much time that has gone by it still is present in the sites.

2. Mr. and Mrs. Jones

In the researches done in ten channels that could offer the Billy Paul's song "Mr. and Mrs.

Jones" it can be affirmed that except in one (Finetune) all the rest include the track. They wanted to check if it could be listened to for free and that it was the whole song and not only 30 seconds of it. From this it can be concluded that 5 of the 10 sources used in the research filled the requirements that were pretended. It has to be noted that among the five of them, two are music channels, other two video channels and one is an illegal downloading "p2p" source.

Concretely for this song there's a difficulty if there's another melody with the same title. It is a version done by Michael Bubl , an artist that at the moment of the research had more popularity than Billy Paul. For this reason it didn't appear as a first result in the search.

For this track, video channels like Youtube or Google videos which offered a perfect response to the question. Internet is then a good place to hear Billy Paul's track "Mr. and

Mrs. Jones" as it was found in 50% of the selected sources and under the asked criteria.

3. Looking for paradise.

The search of the song from the new album of Alejandro Sanz, Looking for paradise, released a month before the research, was negative. The first steps consisted in combining words in Google's search bar to localize the sources that were used to listen to free music online. The song didn't appear in barely any digital radio and in those it appeared it was 40% videos from YouTube, so it was easier to go to that website to listen to it.

In this case it was easier to listen to it on the conventional radio since it appeared four times a day in any of them. A faster possibility was to download the song from any of the programs that allowed making this action.

The song, recently arrived to the market, was easy to localize, but it wasn't like that. It could be concluded that, in these supports, the search for older songs is more positive than of new songs that are released into the market.

4. Let it Be

The actual situation of music playing copyright of the Beatle's songs determines partly of the results of this case. The industry in property of these copyright, Apple Corps. Ltd. didn't get to an agreement with other enterprise for the Beatle's songs to be downloaded through online services. In view of this situation when searching for Let it be in Google the majority of the websites where it can be listened to in its original version have it also included in videos, many of them coming from YouTube.

Three sources with the original version only in audio were found, but it couldn't be downloaded. One of the sites www.goear.com offered the option of adding the song to the playlist or list of favorites if you proceed to subscribe to the site, which has a similar movement to Spotify. Other of the sites, www.jango.com allowed listening to the song and to buy it, it led to iTunes or Amazon that have no online playing rights of this song and can't allow getting Beatle's songs.

On the other hand the source

<http://eztracks.aavalue.com/?referrerid=2154568&songname=Let%20It%20Be&affid=0> offered the possibility of downloading the mp3 format of this song via sms from the cell phone, previous payment.

The effort that this search requires allows affirming that the web isn't a completely useful tool to listen to "Let it be" because the play copyright's legal situation is constitutes a problem so far and it is not permitted. Anyway, the video sources that were found, which in some cases as they were a few so they were repeated, have

the original version and with a lasting more than 30 seconds. And the audio sources, although they are much less, are totally legal.

If the enterprise in property of the copyrighted playing of the Beatle's music reached the agreement to online downloading of this song, surely Internet would become a very interesting tool for this and other songs. Meanwhile it can't be downloaded from sites like Spotify, iTunes, Amazon or Napster. The song appears in these sites, but not the original version, but versions made by other bands or the one Paul McCartney did back in 2002. On the other hand, it is also difficult to hear this song on the radio, despite it being one of the best known songs. It is only played on the radio whenever a moment related to the Beatles is commemorated or whenever there's a program related to the time the song was released or it is used as background music for any content. Since it is an old song, it is hard that it gets played on the radio, that's why the Internet would make it easier for the next generations to get to know it. There's also the option to buy their records; remade Beatle's songs are on sale with a high price.

5. Viva la vida.

It is common to listen to Viva la vida from Coldplay. The song was released on May 7, 2008 on iTunes for its digital download and on May 20 it was broadcasted for the first time on the American television. The album went on sale on June 12, 2008.

It also possible to hear only the audio- Spotify or Purevolume- or watch the video- YouTube or Dailymotion-; you just have to locate the most convenient site or program to enjoy the music we like.

6. Santa Lucía.

This song is available in audio and video, without any cost and with the possibilities of unlimited playing. Its download requires the payment for it in any of its options, from 0,99 euros.

7. A Chloris.

A Chloris is a song not much known among the audience not interested in the Belle Époque composers and not even much known among the lovers of the same. It can be listened to in many different versions online, it can be bought physically and be downloaded digitally, either legally, respecting the phonographic and playing copyrights, or illegally on the free downloading sites.

In regards to the documents available on the Internet, its origin and where the song comes from can be known, also the translated lyrics, as well as some biographic notes about the author and the work, and it isn't so difficult to find sites and references to the recordings, although in a minority. In regards to its spread and broadcast on radios and music programs we could suspect that it is not one of the most programmed melodies although it is on some artists' repertoire, those devoted and specialized in lied and French song and who use to include it in their recitals. Given that it is a not very commercial track, its publicity limits to the album's presentation and the blogger's and lovers' references who write them on the sites the song is written in.

8. Bohemian Rhapsody.

It hasn't been an easy task, although it can be listened to and, sometimes, also watched the video of the song "Bohemian Rhapsody" from british band Queen. The fact the song has been hit throughout the years has been a key factor to be able to have it at disposal on different websites. It has to be taken into account that Queen is a well-known band worldwide, with a big impact, both media and musical, a fact that made things easier when listening to it and visualizing it.

9. Across the Universe.

This song can only be found in a few sites. There are versions sang by other people.

Internet isn't an adequate medium to find The Beatle's song, being it by previous payment or through illegal downloads. Despite it all, to hear it once, it is possible to go to YouTube.

10. Ay amor.

Nena Daconte's song "Ay amor" was found in different sites for free (complete version) and without need to subscribe or download. In the majority of the sites the video could also be watched. Most of the analyzed websites allow users to make their playlists with all the songs they want to listen to.

Also the great majority obliges their users to register to have access to it but the subscription is free and not complicated.

Nena Daconte has a big presence on music radio broadcasters and it is frequent that Spanish broadcasters like 40 Principales, Europe FM, Cadena 100, etc. offer this duet's most popular tracks. Somehow it is easier to listen to songs on the web.

11. Por el boulevard de los sueños rotos.

It is much easier to listen to Joaquín Sabina's song together with the video than audio only.

If so, thanks to YouTube and its big spread of videos. A problem that music composers have faced with is the illegal download of music through P2P tools. These type of downloads harm the authors who stop earning millionaire figures due to the illegal download of music.

This song specifically was found a lot of times. To be able to listen to it, it is possible to go to Spotify or do it through similar services, although it can also be found on P2P webs, of illegal download. It is possible to have access to it through free services and on first line searchers.

Due to this song having a few years, and although it is one of Sabina's most known songs, it is difficult to be able to listen to it, except in programs done to commemorate old time songs. It is easier to find it on the Internet, and listen to it, than on the radio.

12. Born to run.

It is very easy to listen to this song on the Internet, and also thanks to YouTube. Through

YouTube it is easy to watch a song's video and also listen to its audio only. Although Spotify is making this last thing easier, the need to be registered or invited by another user to be able to enjoy its offers makes YouTube user's first choice.

Numerous sites demand previous registration in order to enjoy the music, which makes the utilization more complicated and favors the audience's migration to places such as the aforementioned YouTube. On the majority of webs the interfaces are quite simple, but there are some cases in which they complicate the search and favor the audience's abandonment of the site. It is much easier to listen to this song on the Internet than on the radio. And through the web, it is much easier to go to pages like YouTube. The downloading options of the sites we looked up don't satisfy the users' needs, taking into account the existence of sources such as Kazaa, Ares, Emule or Lime Wire. The audience who wishes to download music could do it, generally through these programs and not through purchasing songs from the aforementioned websites.

13. What else is there

It seems good the raising of the site "Maestro.fm", oriented to the idea of "total screen" of the future. This enterprise forms a community of users who exchange playlists. The site tracks music collections and offers it where it is located or in the device it is used. It allows creating playlists and sharing them.

14. Los Piratas.

In this case, even a music broadcaster like 40 Principales offers the video before the audio version. In this search illegal downloading sites didn't appear which has made easier listening to it than illegally downloading the song. The experiences with online radios haven't been positive. None of the broadcasters visited allowed listening fully to the song that was being looked for and even to listen to the 30 seconds version it was forced to register previously. On the other hand the websites that I consider that work well in radio mode don't allow the freedom of choosing and listening to a song (Rockola fm). Among the ones that were analyzed, that allows doing that, Gear works badly as online radio and los40.com isn't specifically radio on the Internet.

Conclusions

The work of searching and locating of sources on the Internet, made due to this investigation has permitted establishing these conclusions:

- Internet is resulting an adequate support to listen to music that is looked for, even before it can be listened to on the radio, television, and of course, on LP or CD. The immediacy, the rapidity and the good quality are introduction cards of a system that little by little is ousting traditional supports.
- The web has sites that offer music in a legal way. The YouTube channel, for example, supports videos and audios held to legal conditions that the web requires; in the contrary case, the videos are reported and deleted immediately. However, not all these options are legal. There are the P2P webs, which offer free music only downloading a program, but out of any legal demand. The only way to obtain these tracks legally through the Internet is paying for them, as it's done with a CD.
- In the majority of the websites the interfaces are very easy, but there are cases which are too complicated in searching and which bring about the audience to leave the site
- It is resulting much easier to listen to the music that is wished for on the Internet than doing it through the conventional radio.
- To sum up, thanks to YouTube and Spotify especially, the web has become not only an alternative to listen to music, but in the first option of many users, who have more facilities to find any type of music every time.
- Nevertheless, radio's audience hasn't got accustomed to the rhythm of the establishment of new distribution platforms; only in the music consumption is where a certain doubt about radio's survival as a source to listen to music can be approached. The changes that are discerned suggest a new stage with expectations for the audience.

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