

# Censorship, Opportunity, Fame, and Improving: Chinese Independent Musicians' Perspectives on the Future of the Music Industry in the Internet Age

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## Abstract

With the rise of the internet and digital technologies, an increasing number of independent musicians are emerging in China's music industry. However, the effects of these developments on Chinese independent musicians remain insufficiently explored. This qualitative study investigates their perspectives on the current state and future of China's music sector, addressing four key questions: the state of the industry, the impact of digitisation, future prospects, and key elements needed to support independent music. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 experienced independent musicians, and thematic analysis revealed eight key themes: censorship, copyright, the rise of independent music, opportunities and challenges, the fame-income relationship, optimism about the future, legal improvements, and public relations. Findings show that China's censorship system and the Great Firewall constrain artistic freedom and audience access. Weak music education and limited audience diversity contribute to the homogenisation of creativity. Copyright protection remains inadequate, and the absence of a grading system leaves musicians vulnerable. Promotion also poses significant challenges. Nonetheless, the digital era has created new income opportunities for independent artists through streaming platforms, social media, advertising, and online ventures, moving beyond traditional album sales. Fame is increasingly vital for financial success. To foster a sustainable independent music scene, China must enhance legal protections, strengthen promotional channels, and improve music education and quality. These measures are crucial in supporting artistic diversity and the long-term growth of the music industry.

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