

18 00 2008 - What Happened To Music?

I can still remember the day when I would race to the store to buy an album from my favorite band on the day it was released. Oddly enough, that day wasn't so long ago, but alas it is no more. Today, I don't even have a favorite band. Instead, I've got a massive music collection available to me that varies from day to day - as does the rest of the world thanks to the magic of a little site called MySpace (and many others like it).

The music scene has always had its fair share of lesser-known artists but, until several years ago, the vast majority of them were unable to get their music past the local hole-in-the-wall venue without at least an indy-label contract. Once MySpace popped up on the web, however, things changed for the millions of artists playing show after show in confined basement settings worldwide. Suddenly, they were able to put themselves in front of an audience that would easily fill every music venue in New York, Los Angeles, Nashville, and more with millions still standing to watch from the streets.

At first, things were great for both the bands and their listeners. Bands were happy because they were quickly picking up new fans and their fans were happy because they had something new to listen to that came from a place other than "mainstream" radio. A year or two later, MySpace was absolutely brimming with talent; in fact, they had too much talent. Band A started to sound a lot like Band B. Band B became popular, thus spawning Bands C, D, E, F, and X - none of which would really succeed, but all of which would somehow attract an astronomical friend count in the multi-thousands.

Where one day MySpace was a godsend for artists, the next it was their nightmare. Sure, there were lots of people listening, but it became nearly impossible to set themselves apart from their similar sounding counterparts. The result, as you've guessed, is that a lot of talent remained unrecognized while a small minority made it big. The small minority actually did benefit from sites like MySpace, but only at the cost of placing the majority in a dark, unreachable corner of the web.

Ten years ago, there was a fairly static list of artists that you could listen to. If you were a music junkie, you'd probably have a small set of artists that differed from what you could hear on the radio. Still, no one really listened to a band from a tiny town in Tennessee that hadn't made it big - unless, of course, you happened to live in that tiny town. Today, someone in Japan may just be that band's biggest fan.