SINCE THE START OF THE 21st century, we’ve witnessed an onslaught of new technologies, companies and business models that although may provide different services, have been working congruently to produce a massive disruption in two industries which have always relied heavily on one another: music and advertising. During this time, nearly everything about how people communicate with one another, access information and arrive at purchasing decisions has evolved. This has tremendous implications for the current and future methods by which brands seek to reach their target demographics.

As the old saying goes, ‘You can’t know where you’re going unless you know where you’ve been.’ So, in an effort to help you more fully understand the future partnership model for brands and music, let us first rewind to the golden age of record labels, explore why this partnership first began, highlight the powers that allowed for the partnership to flourish and then discuss the occurrences that have since led to the virtual demise of the traditional model.
Originally, the only way to discover new music was through record labels. In their golden age, they controlled the music market in its entirety. Today they play a much smaller role and have lost a significant degree of relevance in the new music landscape. It is this transformation of the role of the record label that has opened up creative opportunities for artist and music inclusion and created a considerable paradigm shift in how brands and the music and advertising industries interact with one another.

**RECORD LABEL KINGS**

Since their inception in the late 1800s until roughly the start of the 21st century, record labels had the power to make and deliver on myriad promises to new artists, all hungry for a slice of the fame and fortune pie enjoyed by their idols. Labels enjoyed decades of supremacy by consolidating the power of various facets of the music industry within themselves. In so doing, they were able to keep the barriers of entry into the industry high. So high, in fact, that for years it was nearly impossible for an artist to have his or her music heard on any type of large scale without being signed to, and effectively owned by, a record label.

Record labels created for themselves, and for the music industry as a whole, a business model in which they – not the artists – were at the epicenter. For as long as traditional radio and manufactured products such as vinyls, eight-tracks, cassettes and especially CDs were the preferred and only methods for public consumption and purchase of music, record labels dominated. Artists were knocking down their doors, clamoring for meetings with label executives in hopes of cashing in on the promises on which labels were delivering for many of their peers. A record label provided artists with unprecedented access to resources such as studio time and the ability to work with professional recording engineers. Record labels were also