

Twitch and Universal Music find middle ground on music rebroadcasting

Article

The news: Universal Music Group (UMG) and Amazon have expanded their agreements that will allow Amazon Music users to stream more songs from the label and will lighten punishments for Twitch streamers who use UMG's music without authorization, per Variety.

How we got here: Twitch and the music industry have long-standing conflicts. Companies like UMG have historically cracked down on creators who play its music in the background of

streams, issuing Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) takedown notices that can result in punitive measures like audio being removed from videos.

- The music industry has only recently begun easing up on its tough enforcement of music rebroadcasting. In September, Twitch struck an **agreement** with the **National Music Publishers' Association** (NMPA) under which streamers would be given a warning for rebroadcasting music instead of facing unannounced takedowns of their videos.
- Strict music streaming rules have also created unforeseen problems for creators on the video game livestreaming platform. More new games, like **Marvel's Guardians of the Galaxy**, are featuring **licensed music**, which can cause unsuspecting streamers to be hit with takedown notices.
- But it's not just the music industry that has a beef with Twitch. Major streamers on the platform have been in open rebellion against rebroadcasting rules, streaming full episodes of shows like "MasterChef" to audiences in the tens of thousands in what's been dubbed the "react meta," **per** The Washington Post.

The music industry's opportunity: Twitch's roots are in video game livestreams, but its nongaming categories like "Just Chatting" are among the most popular on the platform. For instance, many artists broadcast live music on these Twitch channels throughout the pandemic when they were unable to perform in-person shows.

- We expect that **Twitch's monthly user base in the US** will jump from **31.4 million** in 2021 to **36.7 million** in 2025, as the platform grows further beyond video games to include politics, live podcasting, and more.
- The expanded agreements with UMG tap into music's natural emergence on Twitch: Amazon agreed to help UMG organize events on Twitch through which artists can promote new projects and interact directly with fans.
- Some companies and artists have tried to plug the gap, creating "DMCA-free" albums that streamers can rebroadcast or play in the background without fear. **Riot Games**, the creator of **League of Legends**, has released two full albums and **several other projects** specifically for streamers to use freely during broadcasts.

Looking forward: Twitch and the music industry are slowly chipping away at barriers preventing creators from broadcasting licensed music, but takedown controversies will continue to occur until less restrictive deals are reached.

- It's in the best interest of both parties to loosen restrictions. The music industry can tap into the growing popularity of nongaming streams to reach new listeners, and Twitch can assuage creators' anxiety about takedowns.