

EKHO

THE MUSIC MANIFESTO

— LITE EDITION —

A short read on why music deserves a better system.

May 2026

ekho.music

About this document. This is the **Lite** version of the Ekho Music Manifesto. For the full whitepaper — with detailed economics, infrastructure, competitive analysis, and complete references — visit ekho.music/manifesto.

Music Is Connection, Not Content

Music is the oldest coordination technology humans have.

Before written language, before borders, before money, there was rhythm. There was a song around a fire. A chant before a battle. A lullaby in the dark. Every culture in human history has turned to music for what matters most: to celebrate birth, to mourn death, to bind a community, to mark devotion, to remember who we are.

We did not invent music. We are music.

And yet the systems we have built around music treat it as something else entirely. They treat it as inventory. As content. As background. As a stream to be counted, a ticket to be resold, a piece of attention to be sold to advertisers.

This is the central mistake.

Music is not content. Music is connection. And the reason the music industry is broken — for artists, for fans, for almost everyone outside the small group of intermediaries who profit from it — is that nearly every system in it was built to measure the wrong thing.

This is the case for a different system. One built on the truth of what music actually is.

For the full version of this vision, see ekho.music/manifesto.

The Distortion

The numbers tell the story.

The global recorded music industry generated **\$36.2 billion in 2024**.¹ The average independent artist that year earned about **\$11,500** — and the median annual income from streaming was just **\$1,450**.²

Spotify pays artists between **\$0.003 and \$0.005 per stream**.³ An artist needs roughly 250,000 streams to earn \$1,000, and over a million streams per month to make a living wage.⁴

Live music looks better — until you look closer. By 2022, live performance accounted for **95% of many artists' total income**.⁵ But on a \$100 concert ticket, after fees, promoter splits, staging, and travel, the artist's net profit can be as little as **\$8**.⁶ And only 57% of independent artist tours in 2023 were profitable — meaning roughly **4 in 10 paid for the privilege of touring**.⁵

The scalper economy — the secondary ticket market — is worth **\$3.4 billion globally**.⁷ A single Taylor Swift ticket was documented changing hands five times on StubHub: face value \$600, final price \$1,700. StubHub collected \$780 in fees on that one ticket. **The artist saw none of the markup**.⁸

In April 2026, a federal jury in Manhattan found Live Nation Entertainment — which controls an estimated **86% of major-venue ticketing** — guilty of operating an illegal monopoly. It is the largest live-music antitrust verdict in U.S. history.⁹

This is the system: fans pay more than ever, artists earn less than ever, and the value generated by human devotion is captured almost entirely by the platforms in the middle.

Independent music now accounts for nearly **half the global recorded music market — over \$14 billion in revenue**.¹⁰ The independent sector is thriving. Independent musicians are struggling. That gap is not an accident. It is the design.

Full breakdown of industry economics: ekho.music/manifesto.

Why We Pay

Here is the part the industry has never reckoned with.

No one spends \$300 on a concert ticket to hear audio. You can hear audio for free. People spend that money — they save up for it, they fly across the country for it, they line up for hours in the cold — for something else entirely.

They are paying to be in the room.

They are paying for the moment a stadium of strangers sings every word together. For the goosebumps when the drop hits and ten thousand people lose themselves at the same instant. For the feeling, however brief, of belonging to something larger than themselves.

This is what music does at its highest level. **It synchronizes people.** It takes individual feeling and turns it into shared feeling. When a room moves as one, when the emotion in the air is real, when everyone is free to sing, shout, cry, and let it out — something happens that exceeds the sum of the parts. The concert stops being a transaction. **It becomes something sacred.**

Every artist knows this. Every real fan knows this. Anyone who has ever been in a room when it happens knows this.

This is also what people are willing to spend extraordinary amounts of money to access. **The willingness to pay for musical connection is one of the largest, most reliable patterns of voluntary human spending on earth.**

And here is the failure of the current system, stated plainly:

The industry has built itself around capturing the money that human devotion generates — and routing almost none of it back to the artists who generate the devotion.

Closing that gap is the reason Ekho exists.

Devotion, Made Visible

The current system cannot answer a simple question: **who are an artist's real fans?**

Not the wealthiest. Not the fastest scalpers. Not the loudest accounts on social media. **The most aligned** — the ones who listen consistently, return repeatedly, share intentionally, attend faithfully, and stand with the artist over time.

Right now, all of that disappears. A fan can love an artist for ten years and the system remembers nothing. There is no record of devotion. No history of support. No infrastructure for the relationship.

Ekho is that infrastructure.

Persistent fan identity. Every meaningful action — listening, sharing, attending, purchasing, supporting — accumulates into a visible, permanent record. This is not a loyalty program. Loyalty programs are owned by companies. **A fan's Ekho identity is owned by the fan**, portable and theirs forever. If they leave, their history goes with them.

The participation flywheel. As fans demonstrate alignment, they unlock recognition, access, and deeper connection — which deepens participation, which strengthens the community, which grows the artist's career. Every part of the system compounds the others.

Sacred live allocation. The highest-energy live experiences — the intimate sets, the front rows, the once-in-a-lifetime moments — are allocated based on demonstrated devotion, not purchasing power.

The fan with the longest history of love comes before the fan with the fastest credit card. Artists set the rules. The system shows them who their real community is.

Built for the deepest fans, not all listeners. Ekho is not a Spotify replacement. It is built for the small share of any artist's audience — the superfans — who already buy the merch, fly to the shows, and share every song. For everyone else, existing platforms probably serve your needs — for now. But music is better when the connection runs deeper: when a friend pulls you into an artist they love, when you finally find the songs that feel like your own story. **The superfans pave the way. The rest of the industry follows.** We are not replacing mainstream streaming today — but we are building proof that something better is possible.

This is the shift in one line: **stop measuring streams, start recognizing devotion.**

For the mechanics behind these ideas — credits, ownership, revenue, and infrastructure — see the full manifesto at ekho.music/manifesto.

The Experience

A fan's journey.

She discovers an artist through a friend. One song lingers. She comes back the next day. Another song becomes her morning ritual. She buys a piece of merch. She drives two hours to a local show. She tells everyone she knows.

In today's system, none of that is remembered. **She is a stream count, a ticket scan, a fraction of a penny flowing through middlemen who do not know her name.**

In Ekho, none of it disappears. Every listen, every share, every show, every act of support adds to her persistent identity with this artist. Six months in, when the artist announces a 200-person acoustic set in a small room, **she is on the list — not because she had the fastest internet, but because the system can see what is true: she is one of this artist's most devoted fans.** She walks into a room full of people who are also there for the right reasons. Everyone knows the words. The energy in the room is unlike anything she has felt before. **That is what concerts are supposed to feel like.**

An artist's journey.

She has 50,000 monthly listeners and a day job. She knows some of her fans are real — she sees the same faces at shows — but she has no way to find them, talk to them, or thank them. Spotify tells her how many streams she got. It does not tell her who her real fans are.

She joins Ekho. She uploads exclusive content. Her mainstream catalog stays everywhere it already lives. But the unreleased songs, the behind-the-scenes footage, the early demos — those live only on Ekho, and her most devoted fans follow her there to access them.

For the first time, she can see who they are. She can talk to them directly. She can offer them tickets first. **She can build a career on the strength of the people who actually love her music** — at rates that reflect what that love is worth. **A thousand true fans is enough.**¹¹ She reduces her hours at the day job. Then she quits.

She did not need a label. She did not need a manager with industry connections. **She needed a system that recognized her fans as the foundation of her career — and built the economics to honor that.**

The Invitation

Music has always done more than entertain. It has helped human beings understand each other, synchronize with one another, and build something worth belonging to. **Ekho is the system music has needed — built to match what music actually is.**

If you are an artist who believes your fans deserve to be recognized — we want to hear from you. **If you are a fan** who has ever lost tickets to a scalper or watched your favorite artist struggle to make a living — we are building this for you. **If you believe** music is too important to leave in the hands of systems that do not honor it — there is a role for you in what comes next.

The movement starts with the people who show up first. **This is your invitation.**

ekho.music | hello@ekho.music | [read the full manifesto](#)

References & Sources

Citations are abbreviated for the Lite edition. Complete references are available in the [full manifesto](#).

1. Global recorded music revenue of \$36.2 billion. [MIDiA Research](#), "Recorded Music Market Shares 2024," March 2025; [IFPI Global Music Report 2025](#).
2. Average independent artist annual income of \$11,523; median annual streaming income of approximately \$1,450. [Two Story Media](#) Musician Income Report, February 2025.
3. Spotify per-stream payout of \$0.003–\$0.005. Confirmed across [Ditto Music](#), [TuneCore](#), and additional distributor sources, 2024–2025.
4. Streams required to reach income thresholds. [Artist.tools Spotify Royalties Calculator](#), 2026.
5. Live performance reached 95% of many artists' income by 2022; only 57% of independent artist tours in 2023 were profitable. [GovFacts](#) analysis, December 2025, citing 2023 survey data.
6. National Independent Talent Organization (NITO) breakdown of a \$100 concert ticket; artist net profit of approximately \$8. Via [Hypebot](#), December 2024.
7. Global secondary ticket market valued at \$3.4 billion. [Michigan Journal of Economics](#), January 2025.
8. Taylor Swift ticket resold five times on StubHub from \$600 face value to \$1,700. [Digital Music News](#), September 2025.
9. April 15, 2026 federal jury verdict in United States, et al. v. Live Nation Entertainment (Southern District of New York) finding Live Nation/Ticketmaster operated an illegal monopoly. 86% share of major-venue ticketing established through trial evidence and complaint filings. Coverage: [NPR](#), [Reuters](#), [CNN](#); original DOJ complaint, [U.S. Department of Justice](#), May 2024.
10. Independent music represents approximately 46.7% of the global recorded music market, generating \$14.3 billion in revenue. [Octiive Music Distribution](#), December 2024; [IJFMR](#), November 2025.
11. Kevin Kelly, "[1,000 True Fans](#)," The Technium, 2008. The foundational essay arguing a creator needs only ~1,000 deeply engaged fans paying ~\$100/year to sustain a livelihood — roughly aligned with the top 2% of an artist's audience.