

# From the rise of independent artists to the age of TikTok

 By [Tecla Ciolfi](#)

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While it's not exactly easy to predict the future, there are a few musical movements that have seemed to gain momentum over the last year-or-so, movements that will hopefully be more relevant than ever, in the first year of our new decade.



Tecla Ciolfi

## Show me the money

Thankfully, the days of musicians making money solely off music itself are gone – this is the era of the alternative revenue stream. And as we see the rise of the independent artists and label gain greater momentum, we see alternative revenue streams pushed to the forefront of exploration. Touring, sales of merchandise, licensing and sync, and endorsement deals and collaborations are just some of the ways that independent artists can make a decent living while building a fan base and a career through their music.

## A focus on independent artists

While record labels in SA still house the lion share of top-performing artists, streaming has changed the game when it comes to how musicians a) are discovered and b) reach new audiences. And while radio is still the most predominant medium when it comes to how South Africans consume media, tech-savvy Gen Z individuals get their musical kicks online. It's never been easier for musicians to reach a new or global audience – all they need is an internet connection.



## TikTok is still on top

As breakout musicians keep getting younger (I see you Billie Eilish and I love you) so too do their audiences. And while new platforms like TikTok are king amongst younger users it's a good day for musicians of all ages because it's never been easier to distribute their music to all services. In February 2019, TikTok became the fastest social media platform to reach one billion users. To date, it's sitting on 1.5 billion users and counting as the app is forecasted to grow insurmountably in popularity. I predict older, more established musicians to jump on this train as well, re-issuing full catalogues in the hopes of appealing to younger audiences.



## Let's get physical

Okay, so maybe that heading's a bit misleading because globally, it's not good news for CDs at all. According to [Nielsen's 2019 Mid-Year Report](#), streaming now accounts for 78% of music consumption. But while CD sales are on the decline, vinyl continues to see a resurgence in popularity, with a 9.6% increase. And while physical still has its roots entrenched here in SA thanks to a few key genres; expect that to start changing even more rapidly this year.



## Your friendly neighbourhood brand

Black Motion and Ballantines. Fokofpolisiekar and Devils Peak. The tale of brands collaborating with musicians is as old as time. But certain brands are now beginning to think outside of the box when it comes to conceptual campaigns and it's super exciting. Independent electronic DJ and producer Muzi is a prime example of this. Teaming up with Jägermeister and DEAD., Muzi created a clothing range that fed into the general worker narrative of his *Stimela SeGolide* EP, in the lead-up to its drop. The four-day pop-up shop in Braamfontein was a great way to support the EP's release by creating original apparel. This trend of artists thinking outside the box, and having the backing of established brands to do so is my favourite and I hope it continues long after 2020.





Muzi X DEAD

ABOUT TECLA CIOLFI

Tecla Ciolfi is founder and manager of music news website Texx and the City has been a part of the music industry in South Africa for the last 10 years in various capacities, namely journalism, radio presenting, event curation and artist management.

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