

THE ALGO-TORIAL POWER OF MUSIC STREAMING PLATFORMS

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I will argue that music streaming platforms exert a new kind of power on music listeners, an "algo-torial power" built upon the work of proprietary algorithms and human labour. Music streaming platforms constitute the "new gatekeepers" in an industry previously dominated by human intermediaries such as radio programmers, journalists, and other experts. I will suggest understanding this gatekeeping activity as a form of "algo-torial power" that has the ability to set the "listening agendas" of global music consumers. While the power of traditional gatekeepers was mainly of an editorial nature, albeit data had some relevance in orienting their choices, the power of platform gatekeepers is an editorial power "augmented" and enhanced by algorithms and big data. Platform gatekeepers have more data, more tools to manage and to make sense of these data, and thus more power than their predecessors. Platformization of music curation then consists of a data-intense gatekeeping activity, based on different mixes of algo-torial logics, that produces new regimes of visibility. This makes the platform capitalistic model potentially more efficient than industrial capitalism in transforming audience attention into data and data into commodities.