

UNCHAINED MELODIES



AI MUSIC: AN EMERGING ISSUE

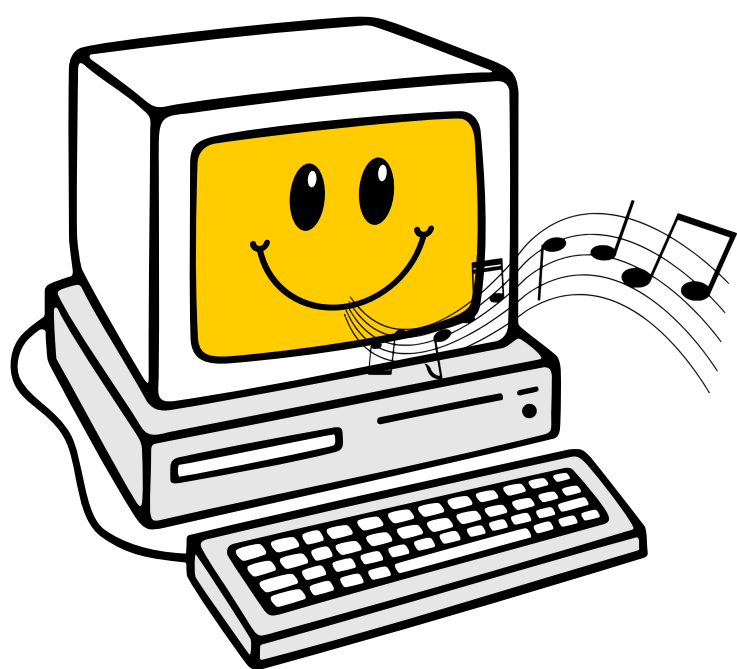
- This guide reviews the history of music created by machines and artificial intelligence (AI), including “generative AI.” The long history of machine-generated music might surprise you!
- We review some of the debates around AI music, including arguments that are in favor of it, against it, or ambivalent.
- We identify some of the potential emerging opportunities for incarcerated people provided by AI music generators, alongside the potential risks for musicians and the environment.
- We invite you to reflect on AI music and describe your own position.
- Where we got this information: a lot of this information is available through Wikipedia, as well as other online sources. Those are listed at the end of this document along with links to relevant sites.

TIMELINE (1952-2025)

1952

THE “PIANO ROLL”

In 1952, German engineers J.F. Unger and J. Hohlfield made Pere Engramelles’ invention a reality, creating a “piano roll” that would transcribe piano music accurately as the musician was playing.



1957-1960

COMPUTER COMPOSERS

The ILLIAC I (Illinois Automatic Computer) produced a wholly computer-generated musical composition (the "Illiac Suite for String Quartet") and Rudolf Zaripov published his research on producing computer-generated music with the the Ural-1 computer.

1965

RAY KURZWEIL

Ray Kurzweil, the author behind the concept of “the singularity,” invented a program that could write original music based off patterns in existing compositions.



1997

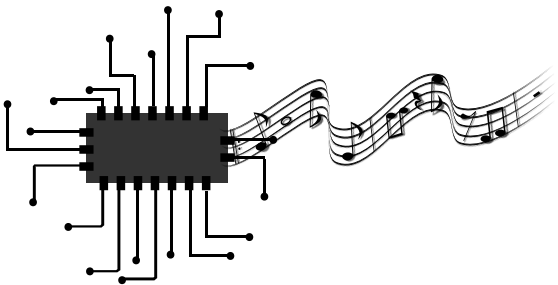
EMI EMERGES

Experiments in Musical Intelligence (EMI) wrote a piece of music imitating classical music composer Johann Sebastian Bach.

1997-2009

EMILY HOWELL

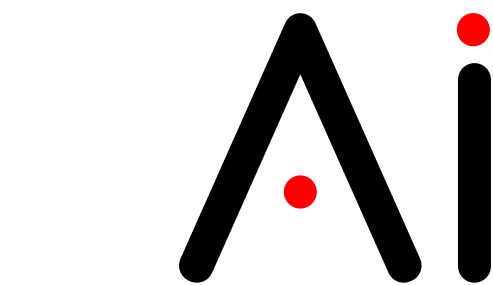
EMI created an AI they called “Emily Howell” that produced and released albums, including *From Darkness, Light* in 2009.



2010

IAMUS

An AI called “Iamus” wrote a short contemporary classical music piece titled “Iamus’ Opus 1”.



2023-2024

AI GENERATORS

AI music generators Suno AI and Udio are released and made available to the public. The companies have not disclosed details of whose data was used to train their AIs.



2025

AI STARS

“Walk My Walk” by Breaking Rust and AI band The Velvet Sundown top the charts.

**By November 2025,
50,000 AI generated songs
were uploaded daily.**

PROS

With AI generators, anyone can produce AI music, not just scientists and researchers.

New science and technology always seem scary, but like other advances, AI is a tool.

AI music is just like camera phones which made photography available to all.

A tool is only as good as its user; human artists won’t disappear even if they use AI.

Generative AI is the future. It’s inevitable so musicians should embrace it.

CONS

With so much AI music being produced, it will be hard for good work to get attention.

Generative AI is a unique form of technology and we should be cautious adopting it.

AI music is based on stealing music from human musicians without compensating them.

We don’t know how generative AI will develop, especially without clear regulations.

Training and running generative AI is destructive to the environment.

Because **the technology is constantly evolving**, we can't offer a tutorial on how to work with loved ones on the outside to turn your ideas and lyrics into AI music. But if this is something you're interested in trying, we suggest looking for YouTube tutorials from the current year to get the most up-to-date advice. **Watch out for scams!** Many AI music generators have free basic plans (though they may not **protect copyright**). Don't pay for anything without checking it out thoroughly, and make sure that you aren't signing away the rights to your creative output. If an offer seems too good to be true, it probably isn't real.

WHAT IS YOUR STANCE?

- How do you feel about AI music? Are those emotions based on your dreams, fears of technology, or concern for artists' rights?
- What do you think might be the difference between music created by AI and music created by a human - if there is a difference?
- Since humans have always used tools, what is really new about generative AI?
- What kinds of steps would you want to see AI companies take to protect copyright and the environment?
- What else would you want to know before creating music with an AI?

WHERE WE FOUND THIS INFORMATION

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By 2026, it is estimated that data centers will consume more electricity than the entire nation of Russia.

