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The Artist-Entrepreneur – Identities in Conflict

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The Artist-Entrepreneur – Identities in Conflict

John Aaron Castellanes

Society has traditionally posed the concepts of art and commerce as oppositional entities. However, cultural labourers have increasingly been recognized for their ability to adapt to precarious work conditions by taking on the more 'commercial' aspects of their careers (i.e., marketing and financing). This has led policy makers and scholars alike to position the modern artist as an entrepreneur, particularly within the context of popular music.

While embracing an entrepreneurial edge allows musicians to build their careers and expand their reach, shifting between the historically clashing identities may lead artists to emotional burnout or free labour exploitation. This study will explore the history of artistic and entrepreneurial identities in Western society, and perceptions of musicians as entrepreneurs. I aim to understand the implications of the artist-entrepreneur moniker in the Canadian independent music scene. This investigation is pertinent across disciplines as more workers embrace gig work and other precarious labour situations.

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