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**From youtuber to rapper
The place of music production in the
careers of YouTube media stars**

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INTRODUCTION

YouTube was created in 2005 as a video hosting platform based on the logic of user generated content and quickly became a huge success. This success is based on the platform's ability to bring together three types of actors: advertisers, content producers and an audience (Rebillard, 2022). The second most visited site in France after Google, the platform aggregates an impressive diversity of content. Among them, music holds an essential place. It is estimated that seventy-six million music videos will have been viewed every day in France in Two thousand twenty-one. And the records for views on the platform are won by music content. On November Two thousand twenty-two, the most viewed video on Youtube, the nursery rhyme Baby Shark, had 11.6 billion views (2016), the 2nd most viewed video, Despacito Luis Fonsi feat. Daddy Yankee nearly 8 billion (2017), Ed Sheeran's 4th Shape of You 5.8 billion (2017) or Gangnam Style in 10th position 4.5 billion views (2012). These figures highlight the centrality of YouTube as a major player in music streaming, which undeniably accompanies the musicalisation of everyday life (Donnat, 2009; Lombardo and Wolff, 2020).

Alongside the stars of the music industry, some content creators, called "youtubers", are also breaking audience records, becoming national or even international celebrities, capable of generating comfortable revenues. These youtubers are characterised by three elements: 1) they regularly publish videos on YouTube, 2) they have become famous thanks to YouTube and 3) they have a large audience, measured by the size of their online community and views. Thus, platform usage is not enough to qualify as a youtuber. These are indeed individuals who have built a career from media practices that have been successful on the platform (Himma-Kadakas et al., 2018). Far from user-generated content, these youtubers are approaching professionally generated content (Rebillard, 2022), although they play on the codes of the original amateur video. If they do not reach billions of views like music celebrities, these youtubers can have very large communities on the platform that far exceed those of well-known musical artists. For example, among the top 30 (thirty) YouTube channels in France in terms of subscribers, 14 (fourteen) are youtubers' channels, led by Squeezie and Cyprien. In these top thirty channels, there are also children's channels offering cartoons, a religious channel, the media company SkyrockFM and musical stars such as Maître Gims (10M), L'Algerino (8.16M), Aya Nakamura (6.86M), Dadju (6.51M), Jul (6.34M), PNL (5.87M).

Initially, these youtubers may have gained notoriety on the platform as a comedian, video game commentator, by giving beauty tips or fitness classes. Despite the diversity of the initial themes - humour, beauty, video games - the codes of these youtubers have become largely standardised under the constraint of YouTube, which, as Vincent Bullich notes, has set up "a specific regulation resulting from the conjunction of three means the definition and application of socio-aesthetic norms, the design and technical architecture of the site, and supposedly performative accompanying discourses", all to promote "the professionalization of 'promising' amateurs, that is, to reinforce their productivity as well as the commodification of their content" (Bullich, 2015, p. 27). Tristan Mattelart's (2021) analysis of YouTube's writings (Official Blog and Creator Blog) shows the extent to which the platform works to influence the form and content of the content it broadcasts in order to make it more suitable for advertisers. In addition to technical training, the company gives very practical advice such as working with famous youtubers to ensure cross-promotions and working on interactions with Internet users. In this ecosystem and based on YouTube's desire, intermediaries will also appear, the multi-channel networks, whose

mission is to manage the channels economically and to participate in their professionalisation.

Well supervised by YouTube and the intermediaries, a standardisation of content to meet the advertising challenges is at work. Nevertheless, it is evolving because, as in the cultural industries, it seems necessary to introduce novelty to keep the audience active. In order to diversify, youtubers are multiplying projects that are intended to be original, setting challenges, using the codes of reality TV, and trying out other aesthetic universes supported by the Multi-channel network. In France, but also abroad, these players are mainly owned by audiovisual groups. When interviewing MCN managers, Christian Pradié (2022) notes their desire to build bridges between media spaces, particularly towards the fields of television, publishing or live performance. One of them states:

"The influencers, the talents, have generally done a lot of YouTube, have already switched to Instagram, etc., and want something else. [...] It's a question of accompanying them in their career development, towards something other than YouTube. We get them out of that. This can be synergies that we have with TF1. (Studio71 manager) (extract from interview by Pradié, 2022, p. 153)

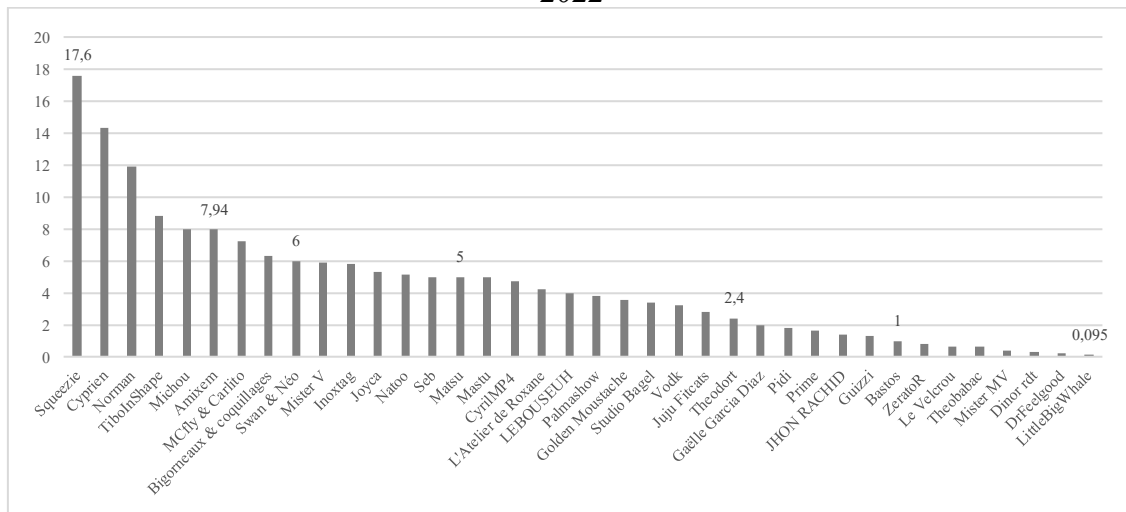
Although recent research has focused on the figure of the youtuber (Bullich, 2015; Burgess and Green, 2018; Lange, 2019; Louessard and Farchy, 2018), little of it questions the place of music in their careers. Yet, some writings invite us to identify the strategies of youtubers who transform their individualities into brands and make their lives "a quasi work of art exhibited on a socio-numerical stage" (Allard, 2019, p. 71). The transition from one artistic activity to another is not unique to youtubers; Françoise Benhamou in her book *L'économie du star-system*, has already shown that the use of notoriety outside the 'natural' or 'initial' field of competence (Benhamou, 2002, p. 27) is frequent. We can think of Diana Ross or Elvis Presley who tried a cinematographic career with more or less success, or conversely of actors who invested the musical field such as Kevin Costner or Will Smith. Far from being a new phenomenon, we would like to take the measure of the place of music in the strategies of content producers on YouTube while considering that this goes hand in hand with the economic imperatives of the platform. Thus a series of questions arise:

- What place do musical productions have among French youtubers?
- What are the economic stakes of these productions for the youtubers?
- What is the relationship between this digital scene, framed by intermediaries such as multi-channel networks, and the more traditional cultural industries, such as labels, record companies, etc.?

Theoretically, this research is based on a series of works in information and communication sciences that question the economy of platforms and the processes of commodification of culture. Methodologically, our investigation is based on a one and a half year long qualitative observation of 40 French youtubers' channels that represent a diversity of themes. Some started with video game commentary (Squeezie, Cyprien, Michou, Amixem, Inoxtag, Prime, Seb), others are specialised in fitness (TiboInShape, Juju Fitcats), beauty (Nattoo, L'Atelier de Roxane), or comedy sketches (Mister V, Norman, Mcfly & Carlito, Joyca, Mastu, TheodorT). Finally, three are streamers on the Twitch platform, but publish musical content on YouTube. Their community varies from 95,000 (Ninety-five thousand) subscribers to 17.6 (seventeen and six tenths) million for

the first of them (fig. 1). All of these youtubers have produced original music content. We could have added other channels, but this corpus seemed diverse enough to be an interesting field of study for analysing the place of music in the activity of French youtubers. The quantitative data presented in the article (number of subscribers, views) were all collected on the platform in mid-November 2022. Finally, the analysis of the channels and musical content present was completed by an analysis of interviews with certain youtubers conducted in media related to YouTube culture such as *Clique* presented by Mouloud Achour and broadcast on the Canal+ channel, *Konbini* or *Booska-P*, internet media.

Figure 1: Number of subscribers in millions for channels observed in mid-November 2022



THE FOUR REGISTERS OF MUSICAL CONTENT: PARODY, THANKS, CLASH AND AUTHENTIC CONTENT

An article published in 2018 already revealed that out of 75 (seventy five) videos produced by the 15 (fifteen) youtubers with the most subscribers globally and in Europe, the presence of musical content was notable, as it was 17% (seventeen) of the sample, making original music one of the most realized genres by these selected successful youtubers (Himma-Kadakas et al., 2018). In the case of our observation, which is not intended to be exhaustive but indicative of a trend regarding a diversity of youtubers, we identified 288 (Two hundred eighty-eight) musical titles over a period of 10 years (Fig. 2). This first element shows that there is a real production of original music by French youtubers which has grown stronger over the years. This proliferation of youtubers' musical productions penetrates other media spaces such as other streaming platforms (Spotify and Deezer) where this content is present and where youtubers' music playlists can be listened to. While some publish one or two videos, others have a more regular and sustained production. Beyond these quantitative elements, we have analysed this musical content in more detail and noted several registers of creation showing the richness of these musical creations and the media complexity of such productions.

Parody

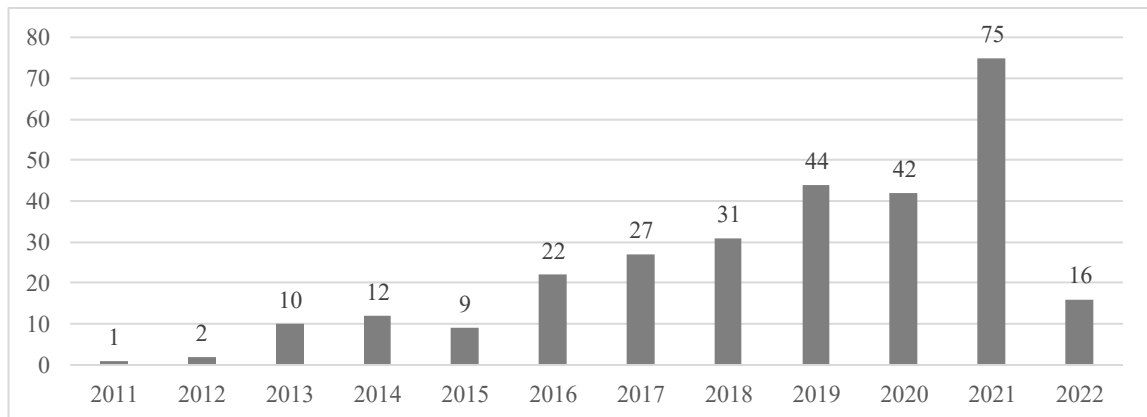
This is surely the oldest form of expression, which aims to continue the humorous activity of youtubers in song, sometimes in collaboration with other youtubers. There is no

shortage of examples of parody and some of these videos have been very successful on YouTube, such as "Luigi Clash Mario" (2014), which takes up the world of the video game Mario Kart, associating Norman and Cyprien, or "Assassin of the Templars" (2016), produced by Ubisoft to promote the release of the game Assassin's Creed with Norman and Squeezie.

Many of the parodies focus on the music world itself. The Palmashow duo have become specialists in covering clips of well-known pop artists such as Aya Nakamura, Maître Gims, Julien Doré or SCH. Another example is the video 'Old rap vs. new rap' featuring several youtubers such as Mister V, Jhon Rachid, Maskey, Freddy Gladieux and Anis Rhali (2019). The latter show the conflict that could exist between politicised rap, with lyrics that would be typical of the rap of the origins, and current rap where the lyrics would be minimalist and promote the desire for personal enrichment.

These parody videos about the music world can be the result of challenges between youtubers and can be a real musical success. One example is Time Time, a parody song released in 2021. The song was created as part of a challenge in which two trios had to compete to come up with the best hit of the 2000s (2 thousand) in three days. The track Time time, by the trio called Trei Degete, parodies all the characteristics of that era: melody, lyrics in Romanian with the refrain "I'm happy to eat a watermelon without seeds", clip. To complete the parody, a 2-track CD was sold in Lidl shops for. These sales, as well as the number of listeners on streaming platforms, led to the track Time Time being certified as a platinum single (100,000 sales equivalent).

Figure 2: Number of music videos per year on the 40 channels studied



Thanking the community

The second register identified for the musical content present in our corpus consists of thanking the youtubers' community. These clips illustrate the relationship with the community that the youtuber calls upon and solicits with each video, to share, to comment in order to generate a flow and therefore a good positioning in the YouTube economy. In this web economy, metrics have a predominant place and subscriber thresholds represent a success that some youtubers stage by producing a song. These are sometimes based on collaboration with the music industry and lead to the production of music videos worthy of a professional rap video. The case of Inoxtag is symptomatic. He is a young youtuber, born in 2002, who broke through thanks to the game Fortnite. He is close to Michou, a young youtuber with growing success. Inoxtag is also under contract with Webedia, one

of the biggest French multi-channel networks, part of the Fimalac group. Its million-subscriber milestone is being celebrated by producing a song entitled Mili Mili (2019) which is also available on other music streaming platforms. For this, he collaborated with Loyal Game Music, a collective of composers, authors and performers. The video is shot in the Moroccan desert. In this song, the use of auto-tune is massive and the lyrics are brief, it is about thanking the community, praising his career and encouraging others to become youtubers. He completely assumes that he can't sing.

Nananinananana
I can't sing but the important thing is to enjoy it
They told me to do it like this, they told me to do it like that
[...]
I did it, I did the million subscribers, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah
[...]
Yeah, yeah, yeah, I've finally reached the top
I'm on my way (Himalaya) if I'm here, it's thanks to you
If you want it, know that you can
Inoxtag, Inoxtag, Inoxtag, Inoxtag, Inoxtag, Inoxtag, Inoxtag
I have my mili (milimili), Nananinananana

The clash

The third register identified in the musical content studied is the clash between youtubers set to music. This clash tactic is regularly used by youtubers, as it allows them to get the audience excited, to increase interest in the videos published and thus boost the metrics of the youtubers concerned. Cyprien was one of the first French youtubers to use music to stage a clash against Cortex in 2012 (Two thousand twelve), and then he engaged in a clash with Squeezie in 2019 (Two thousand nineteen). As Squeezie would overtake Cyprien in terms of subscribers, the first two youtubers orchestrated their competition over several weeks. They conclude this sequence with the making of two clash clips. Cyprien starts with "La cour des grands (clash Squeezie)" (2019), three days later Squeezie publishes the clip "Réponse à Cyprien" (2019) before making a reconciliation clip entitled "On fait la paix ❤️ (clip Cyprien & Squeezie)" in which they compliment each other.

Another clash, staged from scratch, was that between TiboInShape and JujuFitCats, two youtubers in a relationship who staged their break-up in a rap song before revealing to the public that it was staged. Juju Fitcats (2020) opened the proceedings, receiving a response two days later from TiboInShape in a professionally produced video (2020). The authors of the instrumental part, the directors of the clip and the art direction are by the way carried by the same team for both youtubers. The lyrics talk about the YouTube environment, the increase of views, the abusive practices to sign dedications with the community, but also their intimate life with gender bias.

Just like Cyprien and Squeezie, the sequence ends with a reconciliation clip (2020) where they celebrate their love in front of their subscribers.

We got into it like real kids
I don't want it to happen again
I'm taking this opportunity to tell you now han

*In front of all our subscribers
I love you more than all the proteins
I've been in the business for three years
It's been 3 years since I've lived my best years by your side*

In these different registers (parody, thanks or clash), the music does not totally represent the transition to another sphere of artistic production, even if the tracks are broadcast outside the YouTube space. The youtuber deploys his identity brand on other media without making a big leap, he talks about his life as a youtuber, his community, orchestrates challenges or clashes with other youtubers. Here, music takes the form of another format than the classic face cam video and makes it possible to renew the formats offered to subscribers.

The album: towards the affirmation of an authentic artistic project

Much more recently, we have seen the emergence of musical productions entitled by the youtubers themselves "album", "EP" or "mixtape". These productions are released both physically and digitally. They follow the codes of the album with the publication of several tracks at a time, depending on the format. These productions are accessible on YouTube, but also on other streaming platforms, and even on YouTube there is not necessarily an associated video clip. Sometimes it is just the soundtrack with the album cover as a visual. Some youtubers dissociate their channel by creating a music channel like Mister V music, Prime music.

In France, the first rap album produced by a youtuber was that of Mister V in 2017, entitled Double V. Following Mister V, other big youtubers have developed this type of musical project: Squeezie, Prime, Michou, Seb, McFly and Carlito. Apart from McFly and Carlito, which is more akin to French chanson, all of these albums are integrated into a rap aesthetic, the most popular on streaming platforms (Garcia, 2021). This movement is not unique to France, in England, KSI originally known for commenting FIFA games released the track Lamborghini which reached number 30 (thirty) in the UK charts. On the back of this success, the English youtuber/rapper released the album Dissimulation in 2020 (2 thousand twenty), then All Over the Place in 2021 (2 thousand twenty 1).

Apart from Mcfly & Carlito who make an album where "there is no style. [...] there's a lot of stuff on the album, there's deep stuff, there's stupid stuff, it's WE!", recalling their identity as youtubers (Video from the Mcfly & Carlito channel, "Too much stuff to tell you (album, crossing, president pledge, taxes)", 21 October 2021).

In the other productions, the musical creation asserts itself as a project different from the content usually produced by the youtuber, detaching itself from parody. More dramatic or sad elements can feed the lyrics of the songs in a kind of personal introspection, whereas the youtuber must project an image of someone cool, happy, here he can talk about his anxieties, analyse his career, his love relationships, his family relationships...

*I come back from the web and its mischief
I come back from the bottom, I'm the light in the abyss
I've got the number of all YouTube, but I don't follow the sons of bitches [...]
I say this for those who fantasize about us
I'm afraid for those who replace us [...]*

*The web made me but the web disgusts me
I love it but I hate it since I'm being listened to (No) [...] [...]
You've got the CV of a loser, invented success, you're welcome
Bloggers are ridiculous people
They believe in their lousy lifestyle
You only influence your navel
The number of follows means nothing
I don't give a fuck about your lifestyle
What does your insta matter
My arrogance makes me unstable
I only trust my instincts
The networks are rotten with ego
No one cares about your sub life [...]
I hate and love this web, but like an ex you still love
How can you not slip up, thirty-something Youtuber, failed comedian [...]*

This personal tone is even expected to legitimize the ambition to make an album. As Mister V repeats over and over again in interviews, who would want to listen to a parody album over and over? Thus, the youtubers have to bring out another image in these productions, which sometimes proves difficult for them and the public.

"I went to the antipodes of my basic profession which was to make a joke. Here I went into another field which is hyper risky, which is hyper dangerous. I would like to say, especially in France, where we don't like artists or celebrities or anything else to get out of their box. I've tried it and people accept it pretty well [...] I have a very open-minded audience. (Interview with Mister V, Clique programme, 2020)

"I suffered a lot surprisingly from the fact that I released this album, there's a lot of hate and everything around that. And it's normal when you change the box, it's terrible" (Squeezie interview, Popcorn show, 2020)

The intentions of these youtubers seem to be diverse and so are their postures towards the music world. Michou, in a video explaining his album, fully assumes that he knows nothing about music and that he is there to "enjoy it", assuming his lack of competence. If Squeezie says he wants to make a quality project, just like Michou he assumes his amateurism as a musical artist and his complete discovery of this professional music world.

Unlike Michou or Squeezie, Mister V and SEB seem more credible on the rap scene because they are partly integrated. Concerning SEB, his interest in rap is attested by the making of a documentary on the history of rap in 2017, 26 minutes long, with over 6 million views.

As for Mister V, he is surely one of the most connected youtubers in the world of rap. Since the beginning of his channel, he has multiplied parody videos mobilising rap aesthetics and had already participated in the video *On verra bien* of the well-known French rapper NEKFEU in 2015. In a video presenting the release of his album, Mister V is keen to justify himself and say that he can have two projects, that of a comedian and that of a serious rapper.

"For a guy like me, making an l'album is kind of like coming out in reverse, meaning that people aren't shocked [...] Actually, I really want to respect rap, I don't want to be that guy you're ashamed of." (Video on Mister V's channel, "Making an album", 18 May 2017)

These productions, if they seem sincere and logical in the case of the youtubers most integrated into the rap scene, they appear suspicious for those who say they want to "try to enjoy". This has led to numerous debates on YouTube about the sincerity of youtubers who start producing albums, EPs or mixtapes. So, can we analyse these strategies as a way of responding to the platform's economy?

A RELEVANT STRATEGY FOR THE YOUTUBE ECONOMY?

It was impossible to conduct interviews with these youtubers or multi-channel networks due to the absence of responses to my requests. In order to understand the reasons that lead to the production of music, mainly in the rap aesthetic, we relied on the analysis of the youtubers' discourse, while putting this into perspective with the functioning of platforms based on the information brokerage model - such as YouTube (Bouquillion, 2013).

The youtubers studied are characterised by their professionalisation and thus their remuneration by YouTube for their performance on the platform. Despite the opacity of the remuneration system on YouTube, researchers, in conjunction with the agency Wizdeo, have been able to understand the elements of remuneration for youtubers and, more broadly, for influencers (Benbouzid and Kusterer, 2022). With the introduction of advertising on YouTube from 2006 onwards, the "views" counters associated with videos went from a documentary ranking criterion to a market indicator, likely to determine values and remuneration flows. Views' are in fact intended to transform practices into signs and signs into vectors of transactions on the advertising space market (Heuguet, 2020). Although contracts vary according to the youtubers, from 10,000 subscribers onwards, a channel would be an economic entity capable of generating an interesting income from different elements: advertising, product placement, subscriptions and donations that YouTube has developed copying the way Twitch works, merchandising and finally copyright (Benbouzid and Kusterer, 2022). The advertising market - the second largest source of revenue after product placement - depends on the youtuber's audience, his ability to generate streams and therefore to maintain an engaged community. Thus, youtubers must not only produce videos, but videos that are highly viewed. For Beuscart and Mellet (2015), authors of humour videos can accumulate the greatest monetisation opportunities as they concentrate large audiences that correspond to relevant targets for advertisers.

In this race for audience to generate revenue, youtubers must keep their audience on their toes and regularly offer new content that contributes to the attractiveness of their channel. While music contributes to this renewal, it can also have another interest, that of generating a large flow of content, which opens up the possibility of advertising revenue for youtubers. Thus, authors hypothesised that by publishing music videos, youtubers would attract the attention of the audience and that of music producers (Himma-Kadakas et al., 2018). While I am puzzled by the second part of the hypothesis, the first part is worth exploring, and this in the context of the economic functioning of YouTube where

views are a key determinant of monetisation. So, would youtubers start producing music content just to increase their income?

To question this possible gain from music, we analysed the views of the 288 selected music videos. Placing this data on a graph, we observe different elements. First of all, the curve follows a classic phenomenon of cultural consumption where the "winner takes all", as the saying goes. The graph shows that not all youtubers benefit equally from the music they produce (fig. 3). Some titles are very successful, while others remain in the shadows.

Figure 3: Curve of views per video in the corpus



Of those that work, 40 tracks in our corpus far exceed the size of the youtuber's community. Squeezeie alone has 20 music videos with over 10 million views. The most successful videos are all parody videos. Many of them combine several youtubers (Cyprien, Norman, Joyca, Maxenss, Maskey), or even rappers (Bigflo & Oli), a strategy that makes it possible to cross the capital of fame. Beyond the case of Squeezeie, for many youtubers (Inoxtag, Michou, Natoo, Norman, Cyprien), these are the videos that have generated the most views on their channel and sometimes with a big gap. For Norman, for example, the first two videos on his channel - both music videos - have 91 and 81 million views respectively, while his first comedy video has 37 million views. This seems logical because music, even parody music, can be listened to several times, which is helped by its limited duration of 3 to 5 minutes, unlike the usual videos of youtubers, which, according to our observations, are around 20 minutes long. The fact remains that the success of a music video is not guaranteed, if Norman manages to make clips that have made 91 million views, other big budget clips like "VALHALLA" (2021), inspired by the Wikings series, stagnates at 2 million views.

As for the albums, EPs or mixtapes produced, the strategy does not always seem to be a winning one. Apart from Michou, whose four album clips are the most viewed videos on his channel, the rest of the youtubers do not perform well with their album videos. This is the observation of Mcfly & Carlito:

"We prepared an album in secret, then we released "je scrolle" [one of the album's tracks] and you loved it, not liked it, no, it didn't take off like we wanted, that's the game, that's YouTube too. But it doesn't matter because the main thing is to have fun" (Mcfly & Carlito's channel, "Too many things to tell you (album, crossing, president's pledge, taxes)", 21 October 2021)

The analysis of views allows us to qualify the contribution of musical content to the careers of youtubers. In many channels, parodic content performs better in terms of views than the youtubers' more classic videos. In this case, the production of thank-you, clash, or parody videos allows the youtuber to increase the metrics and thus an interesting remuneration. Nevertheless, not all musical content is destined for success, and a certain number of them, particularly those produced as part of musical artistic projects, generate modest visibility performances. Nevertheless, they introduce a new relationship between youtubers and the music industry, which we question in the third part of the article.

A STAGING OF THE RELATIONSHIP TO THE MUSIC INDUSTRY

In our corpus and among the youtubers who have produced an album/EP/mixed album, we have observed different relationships with music industry actors. Some of them seem to have managed to make these productions independently, while others have formed partnerships with traditional music industry players. This reveals different formats of cooperation between this digital scene and the actors of the cultural industries. We return here to two identified production models: that of self-production, particularly widespread in rap (Garcia, 2021) and that of support from an established music label. Although we did not have access to the type of contract signed with the labels, we can nevertheless analyse, here again through media discourse, the vision of these youtubers of the music industry.

Self-production as an image of the YouTube self-made man

Among our corpus, two artists are self-produced: Prime and Mister V, both of whom have created their own structure, Prime Corp Productions for the former, Hey Pelo for the latter. Entrepreneurial activity on YouTube has certainly enabled them to transfer knowledge from one field to another.

Prime is the kind of jack-of-all-trades youtuber whose success story is a model. As a young man from a working-class neighbourhood in the Paris region, the cité des 4000, he became a professional American footballer, ranked among the 50 best players in the world. After an injury, he became famous on YouTube by commenting on football games, then made vlogs and finally started producing music on his own. As he explains, it was first the change in YouTube's policy in 2017 to demonetise videos to enforce copyright (Mattelart, 2022) that pushed him to create music. "I started making music because YouTube was blocking my videos because I was putting in other people's music." (Interview excerpt included in a video from the Potager channel, "youtuber rap 2", 2022). Throughout the interviews, Prime cultivates the idea that anyone can succeed and develops the image of an entrepreneur without limits, independent of the traditional cultural industries.

"I try to do the best I can, it's an entrepreneurial life in real life, I try to get by as best I can with the limited means [...] everything I can do you can all do, I film with my phones,

that's all. I don't believe in big productions and all that, I just believe I put my heart into my project if it works out so much the better. (Prime interview, Clique, 2019)

In another interview, when asked "will you make a new album?", Prime displays the freedom he has gained, according to him, thanks to his declared independence from the music industry, which allows him to make an album whenever he wants and not because of a commercial strategy.

"I don't have that process, you know, of releasing albums, of releasing stuff because I'm not on a record label. If I want to make music this morning and have it released tonight, I can do it, there is nobody who will tell me "no, but strategically speaking...". No, brother, I don't play with those cards. Then, will I make an album? Maybe, probably, you know, but yeah, it'll be more of a desire. (Interview on Phoenix Stories, 2019)

On the strength of his online success, Prime managed to fill the Bataclan and then the Olympia in Paris in 2019, a legendary venue with a capacity of 2800 people. He sees the concert as an extension of his activity as a youtuber, allowing him to give a satisfying encounter to the public. Music is then one of the possible extensions of his identity and the construction of his brand "Prime". Here again, he self-produced his concert.



The second figure of self-production for music is Mister V. However, the latter is well inscribed in the YouTube seraglio. Launched by Studio Bagel (an MCN of Canal+), Mister V has built a career in connection with intermediaries. Nevertheless, as far as music is concerned, he has shown a desire to emancipate himself from the intermediaries. To do so, he created the label Hey Pelo. In a video to his community for his first album, released in 2017, he explains his approach and precisely his choice of production. This self-production marks in his speech a form of sought-after sincerity.

For the second album, released in 2020, he also self-produced. Nevertheless, his position in the rap scene was strengthened by the presence of well-known artists such as rappers PLK (gold record), Jul (several platinum records and biggest seller of rap records) or Dosseh.

"2nd album, it's coming out in a week, 18 unreleased tracks, it was done in family. It's staying indie and it's not moving, not because after the first album, there were record company proposals to take care of the second with more or less interesting ideas...

[parody of record company managers]" (Video on Mister V's channel, "Faire un 2ème album", 27 January 2020)

These musical productions will be consecrated by the public, since his first album is certified platinum and one of the golden single titles occupies the first position of the French charts for a week. The second album obtained two gold singles and a platinum single. Nevertheless, making it as a successful rapper from a youtuber career remains complex. Mister V's testimony to follow is indicative of an interesting tension that reveals two distinct logics between success on YouTube and success in the music world. In the first world, it is based on the ability to please the greatest number of people, whereas in the world of rap, it is just as important to be aesthetically unique and not to be a good imitator of the latest rap trends.

"There were two colours, it's true, but in both [albums] there is always the same desire to please as many people as possible to get the message across to as many people as possible. And to get the message across to as many people as possible, you have to adapt to all musical genres and touch on all styles, but without really having an extremely strong identity... And that's my mission for the third project. Now that we've managed to speak to the greatest number of people, to have a feat with Jul somewhere, to speak to a certain public, to do a feat with PLK, who is a diamond [...] but then to do something more niche, more rapped, to be able to widen the spectrum [...] now I have to manage to bring these people together in my world. (Mister V interview, Booska-p show, 2022).

Although Mister V is less insistent than Prime on the entrepreneurial dimension of his activity, he is part of the success story of YouTube and its rhetoric of disintermediation, which can enable talent to come to light. "It's still crazy that I'm a platinum player when I was basically in my room in Grenoble" (Interview with Mister V, Clique, 2020).



Discovering the music industry

For the other youtubers in the corpus who produced an album (Mc Fly & Carlito, Michou, SEB, Squeeze), contracts were signed with players in the music industry (table 1). Among them, Allpoints seems to have participated in the albums of Michou and Squeeze, released within a month of each other in 2020 and then both at Webedia which they have since left. Allpoints is one of the associate labels of Believe, the independent leader in the market of distribution and services for musical artists (marketing, promotion, brand, image). The label represents French artists such as Gaël Faye or Oxmo Puccino, but also many international artists. Without an interview, the contracts between Allpoints and the youtubers remain mysterious. Obviously, it is not an artist's contract, but surely a distribution contract, since Squeeze states that he has spent "a lot of money because I did everything on my own and I financed everything myself, the clips, the studio sessions, everything that had to be paid for, so I will clearly never find myself financially on this project" (Squeeze interview, Popcorn programme, 2020).

While self-produced artists emphasise their resourcefulness in making the music they want on their own, Squeezie and Michou talk about the encounters they had with the music industry.

"I understood what the real world of music was all about and frankly it was super cool, like really and crazy human adventure I learned too many things it was great, too many beautiful encounters, it was really really stylish" (Squeezie interview, Popcorn show, 2020).

As for SEB, under contract with MCN Studio71, a subsidiary of TF1, he collaborated with Belem Music, a French music label of the independent Wagram Music label which produces, among others, OrelSan (one of the most famous rappers in France), -M-, Philippe Katerine or Bertrand Belin. He is the only one to clearly mention the type of contract he signed with this music industry player.

"By signing, I had an artist contract, I signed my editions, I understood even more all the workings, I made a kind of investigation in the music world with my personal experience, but I know that I learned so many things, that I could reuse in my videos on the history of music, obviously. It made me understand some of the issues that artists were talking about even better than before." (Video from SEB's channel, "I'm releasing a mixtape!", 25 November 2021 - video removed from YouTube).

Concerning Mcfly & Carlito, the credits of the album mention the Golden Child label, and BMG as the publisher, which therefore manages the copyrights of the composers of the album. In their video presentation of the album to their community, without specifying details, they mention the incentive that was given to them by maybe their agent or the MCN to do this musical project and that allowed them to have ideal conditions to do it.

"And in fact, they told us guys, go ahead, if you like it, if it comes from the heart, let's go! And they made us meet people in the music business, it's a world we don't know, so we've been in the studio for several months and we're having a blast with them. (Mcfly & Carlito channel video, "Too much stuff to tell you (album, crossing, president pledge, taxes)," October 21, 2021)

Of all the youtubers, Mcfly & Carlito have surely been the most criticized for making an album. This was also apparent on the set of the Clique programme in October 2021, where the presenter Mouloud Achour told them "music must be done seriously". Mcfly justified himself by the professional entourage of the music world that accompanied them for this album.

"We were even accompanied and arranged by the Leopolds, who are a duo of producers and directors, so it's serious, even the compositions that you... you're a basic composer and everything, it's done very seriously, that's for sure, it has to have a good base behind it, and even for the live show, we want there to be real musicians" (Émission Mcfly & Carlito, Clique, 2021)

Youtubeur	MCN au moment de l'album	Acteur de l'industrie musicale
SEB	Studio 71 (TF1)	Belem Music (Wagram Musique)

Squeezie	Webedia (jusqu'en 2020)	Allpoints (Believe)
Michou	Webedia (jusqu'en fin 2022)	Allpoints (Believe)
Mc Fly et Carlito	Webedia (jusqu'en 2020)	Éditeur : BMG rights management Label : Golden chlid

There are no big players in the music industry who are really involved in these musical productions. There are few artist contracts and some claim to be independent, which fits in well with the rhetoric of YouTube. To better understand these relationships with the music industry, it would be necessary to conduct interviews with the actors involved in the production of these albums.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, all the elements collected for this study show the important place that music holds in the media productions produced by youtubers. This study sheds light on productions that have been little dealt with by researchers who have sometimes analysed the types of videos produced by youtubers, and sometimes their passage into cinema (Louessard and Farchy, 2018). The relationship of youtubers to music remains complex and lies between an extension of their identity as youtubers and the emergence of an authentic artistic project.

By putting these productions into perspective with the YouTube economy, the contribution of musical content in the statistics can be very useful, but the contribution of making an album remains limited in terms of views. Nevertheless, there have been a few successes that have gone gold, platinum, won NRJ Music Awards... Do these experiences show the limit of album production in the context of a youtuber's career.

But what if the interest in making an album lay elsewhere? To get out of the immaterial culture and introduce in 360-degree career strategy possibilities of live performances?

"I've been on the internet for nine years and I've hardly ever seen you! [...] I see concerts as an opportunity to offer you a real thing, a real show, to make you enjoy something other than virtual things, to tell you something, to offer you a real show and that we all enjoy together in real life in fact.

"The second aspect of this album is that we rarely see you [...] but it's not real meetings where we see each other for a long time, so this album is a pretext for the tour to defend this album live in your cities" (Video from the Mcfly & Carlito channel, "Too many things to tell you (album, crossing, president's pledge, taxes)", 21 October 2021)

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