

AI, Creativity & Manufactured Popularity

ANALYSIS

2025-2026

SHIFT 26 - OMNES EDUCATION

Visionary
MARKETING & INNOVATION



BREAKING RUST

WHAT HAPPENED

Breaking Rust: The Stats Behind the #1

An AI country act hit **#1** on Billboard Country Digital Song Sales in November 2025 — with almost no real-world footprint behind it.

- AI country act hit **#1**, Billboard Country Digital Song Sales — Nov 2025
- **2M+** Spotify monthly listeners
- **3M+** streams in under a month
- "Aubierre Rivaldo Taylor" — almost no real footprint
- Digital Song Sales = paid downloads only. Real streaming charts: unmoved.

Breaking Rust: The Numbers

Spotify Payout

~\$0.003–\$0.005 per stream → **\$9K–\$15K** that month

Annualized

Low-to-mid **six figures** — if streams hold

Cost to Buy the Chart

1,000 downloads ≈ **\$990–\$1,290** — price of a used car

The Chart Itself

Thin, historically gamed. Easy to top.

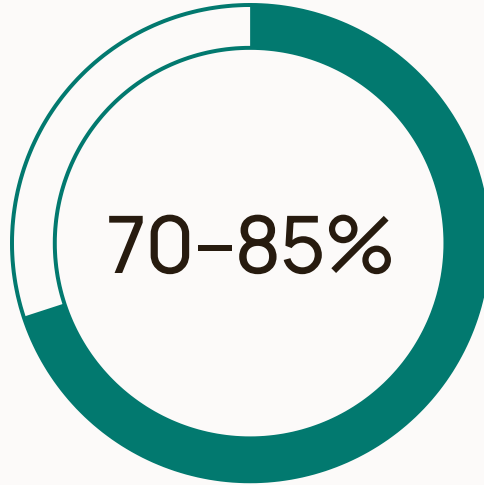


SAME TRICK, DIFFERENT MEDIUM

Faking the Applause, Not Just the Content

Streaming Fraud

Bot-driven streaming is considered by the **Music Fights Fraud Alliance** to be a bigger threat than AI content itself.



Fraudulent Streams

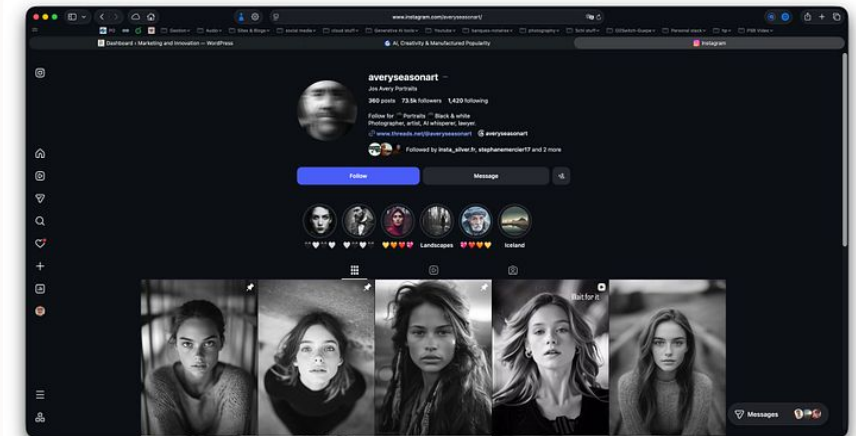
Deezer's share of streams on flagged AI tracks that are fraudulent

The Playbook: Bot farms loop playback → harvest micro-royalties → stuff playlists. No proof
Breaking Rust used bots — but the method is common.

Jos Avery — Instagram "Photographer"

32,000+ followers. Invented names & backstories for every "portrait."
Claimed shot on a Nikon D810 — actually **Midjourney + Photoshop**. 95%+ of followers never suspected.

Real creator. Fake subjects. Real audience.



DATA

Visual Arts: What the Flood Costs Real Creators

32%

Lost Commissions

UK illustrators who lost work to generative AI (2026 survey)

£9K+

Avg. Annual Loss

Among UK illustrators affected — per Creative Boom

26%

Lost Work

Society of Authors members who lost work to AI (UK 2024–2025)

37%

Lost Income

Society of Authors members who lost income to AI (UK 2024–2025)

Stanford GSB study: AI grows platform sales overall — but **shrinks human sellers' income**. The pie grows; creators' slice shrinks.

Film Photography Revival

As digital imagery becomes indistinguishable from AI output, analog film is resurging — not just for aesthetics, but as verifiable proof of a human hand behind the lens.

+127%

Wholesale film orders since 2020

312 New Labs

Film labs opened globally in 2025 alone — Pellica

Silver Up 4x+

Since 2015 — drivifilm costs more

\$15–22 a Roll

Was under \$5 in the 2000s. Kodak Alaris raised prices again, Feb 2026.

Scarcity + a dated lab receipt = proof nobody synthesized it.



TAKEAWAYS

Conclusion

When algorithms write the hits — and bots buy the charts — what does authenticity cost?

Charts Can Be Gamed — For Now

Breaking Rust proved streaming is easy to trick. But bot-driven fraud won't last. Spotify, Deezer, Apple, and the EU AI Act are shifting the burden toward **disclosure**.

Creativity Survives. Livelihoods Don't.

AI won't kill creativity — but making a **living** from it gets harder for real creators. The economics are shifting fast.

Film's Revival: Marginal in Stats, Essential to Culture

A market already pricing in "**proof of human**." Scarcity as authenticity. The analog receipt as credential.



KEY SOURCES

Further Reading & References

Cited Organizations

Music Fights Fraud Alliance: musicfightsfraud.com

Pellica: Global film lab data, 2025

Creative Boom / Society of Authors: UK creator income surveys, 2024–2026

The Bigger Picture

The intersection of AI-generated content, algorithmic chart manipulation, and bot-driven streaming fraud is reshaping creative economics at speed.

Stanford GSB, Deezer, and the EU AI Act are among the institutions now tracking — and responding to — these shifts. Disclosure is coming.