

Master or Muse - The Role of AI in the Lives of Creative Practitioners

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"It is not impossible to imagine the machine of future ages and millennia. It will be able to listen to music and appreciate art; it will even be able to compose melodies, paint pictures and write poems. Is there a limit to its perfection? Can it be compared to man? Will it surpass him?" Vasily Grossman (1959)

Written before the invention of the microprocessor, Grossman's novel 'Life and Fate' imagined the creation of an intelligent machine that could replicate humans and eventually become so large as to cover the entire earth and surpass us all. The story eerily resonates today, with various models of generative artificial intelligence (AI) now able to compose and produce music, render artwork and create full video scenes through a short text prompt. The output is so advanced that most participants are unable to differentiate between human and AI generated work (Music Business Worldwide, 2025, Vinchon, McCormack, & Bartolucci, 2025).

While we are still a long way from being terminated there is little doubt that the "machine" is indeed growing and has now become a part of our lives, encroaching on what many believe to be the last bastion of humanity - to be creative. Until the doomsday prophecies arrive this article explores the concept of how we can incorporate AI into our everyday lives in a way that is measured, controlled and meaningful. As debated in history with earlier technologies - MIDI, the mobile phone, the internet – will AI become an invaluable tool or is it "time to say goodbye" to the careers of creative practitioners?

Overcoming the Blank Page

AI offers compelling advantages for creatives. The blank page (often referred to as a "creative block" or "paralysis by analysis") often occurs when ideating a new concept (eg. a song, design, script or book), and the mere thought of getting started can evoke feelings of anxiety. Before the internet it was common practice to source inspiration from books, foraging through music albums, visiting galleries and sketching ideas. This creative process is now supercharged with AI's intelligence and eagerness to assist, providing us with inspiration, past examples, alternative interpretations and historical context in a matter of seconds. Artists are even using AI to create new neural synthesiser sounds, as found in the song 'So Heavy I Fell Through the Earth – Art Mix' by Grimes. From taking minutes to mastering songs, video editing, transcribing audio and formatting artwork, AI tools can free us of time and energy for higher order thinking and creative work. ArtSmart AI (2024) estimates that 30.6% of recording artists are already using AI to master their tracks.

Using AI to help with repetitive and monotonous tasks should serve as a significant advantage for creators, however there are profound implications when we change the role from super assistant to the sole creator of our work. Using AI as "the master" poses a clear and present threat to human artistry. Suno and Udio are just a few of the latest AI music generators that can create entire songs, and even the ability to commercialise the music on streaming services and earn the same revenues as human creators. AI-generated bands such as the Velvet Sundown have amassed millions of streams on Spotify while French streaming provider Deezer announced that 18 per cent of its daily uploads, or an estimated 20,000 new tracks a day, are generated by AI (The Guardian, 2025).

Enter "AI Slop"

"AI slop", the 2025 word of the year according to the Macquarie Dictionary, is a newly popularised term referring to low-quality, online content created by AI with minimal human input. The explosion of slop in our lives has become so widespread that it's easy to become disorientated in the blur between truth and artificial noise. News articles, photos and entire video libraries with voiceovers and music have flooded the spaces that were once sources of social connection to the world, including news sites, social media pages and YouTube channels. So prevalent is the intrusion that, in a recent study

conducted by SEO research firm Graphite, over 50% of English-language articles published online between January 2020 and May 2025 were found to be AI generated (Futurism, 2025).

As AI continues its rapid evolution, I am reminded of the famous question posed by Pontius Pilate - "what is truth"? With the majority of new written work online now AI generated, there is an urgent need to enable discernment, form opinions and make sense of the world around us. Whether it be an article, a song, artwork or video, appropriate standards for transparency are required for both the audience and human creators of the content. In Australia the Department of Industry, Science and Resources has released best practice guidelines through the use of labelling, watermarking and metadata recording (Department of Industry, Science and Resources, 2024), however without regulation efficacy remains uncertain.

Guardrails

While many have embraced the potential of AI to enhance artist creativity and develop new audience experiences (International Federation of the Phonographic Industry, 2025) the rise of slop and unauthorised use of copyright-protected works by developers of generative AI systems poses a significant threat. Governments around the world are starting to shape a legal environment for AI, record companies Universal Music Group and Sony Music Entertainment are negotiating deals to respect the rights of music creators and streaming platform Deezer is now removing AI-generated music from its algorithmic recommendations.

Like another well-known technological advancement, the motor vehicle, our lives are being transformed and will continue to change across the world. However as of today, we are driving without seat belts, traffic lights, designated roads or any road rules. As with Grossman's envisioned "machine", AI infrastructure continues growing through hyperscale data centres, undersea cables and wires while companies such as OpenAI and Palantir race to deliver us the fastest and most powerful car. Unfortunately, we are missing the key guardrails to keep us safe and an urgent and pressing need has arisen for the protection of human authorship, ethical frameworks and regulation. According to APRA AMCOS as much as 23% of music-creators' revenues, or \$519 million, could be lost to generative AI by 2028 based on the current operating environment.

Live Performance – A Symbol of Hope

Our innate drive for social connection can be observed in the hit survival series "Alone" where even the most independent, lone-wolf type adventurers sink into depression from missing friends and family. While some may not care if the daily stock report, instructional video or elevator music is AI generated, when it's harder to find original human ideas they will be eventually be valued higher as a "deeper communicative medium of the human experience" (Anantrasirichai & Bull, 2023).

Congruent with this theory, live performance provides audiences the ability to find artistic and emotional connection in the human experience and is threaded into our cultural and social fabric. While there are real fears that AI generated music will pose a major risk to the live music industry (University of Melbourne, 2024) recent data shows the contrary with the industry seeing a 76% increase in US ticketing revenue from 2019-2024 (Goldman Sachs, 2024) and live revenue growing twice as fast in the UK as the global recorded music industry (Music Business Worldwide, 2025). According to Goldman Sachs (2024) live music has now become a key growth driver for artists with Millennial and Gen Z fans placing the "highest relative importance on live experiences vs prior generations".

Whether it be in literature, art, games, philosophy or music, as live performance symbolises the greatness of human connection, our creative work should be represented through the human fabric in the ideas that we produce and the content that we consume. Grossman's question on whether a machine might one day rival or surpass us is no longer speculation, it has become a powerful tool for creativity, productivity and access. However we are now at risk of stumbling into a situation where the muse becomes master, especially if we continue to allow AI to act as a substitute for human art, expression and culture. By failing to safeguard creators' rights, authorship, cultural diversity and authenticity we risk unsettling the meaning and value of creativity itself.

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