# SoundCloud sparks backlash with AI use clause amid music industry copyright clashes



Recent developments surrounding SoundCloud's use of artificial intelligence have ignited significant debate within the music industry, particularly among artists concerned about their rights and the ethical ramifications of AI technologies. An obscure update to SoundCloud's Terms of Use revealed that by utilising the platform, users implicitly agree that their content may be used to "inform, train, develop or serve as input to" AI technologies. This change, made in February 2024, was only brought to wider public attention after tech ethicist Ed Newton-Rex highlighted it through social media, provoking considerable backlash from artists and advocates.

In response to the uproar, SoundCloud maintained that it has never used artists' work to train any AI models, aiming to reassure its users that their rights remain paramount. A spokesperson clarified to TechCrunch, "This update was solely meant to clarify how content may interact with AI technologies within SoundCloud's own platform." Additionally, the company announced a "no AI" tag for artists, allowing them to explicitly prohibit the unauthorised use of their content in AI applications. The updated communication strategy highlights a growing trend among digital platforms to increase transparency as pressures mount from user communities.

This assertion of a commitment to artist rights is significant, particularly in light of recent incidents involving AI and intellectual property in the music industry. For example, in June 2024, major record labels began suing AI music startups for alleged copyright infringement, claiming that these companies improperly trained their AI models using copyrighted music without consent. Legal actions taken by industry giants such as Universal Music Group and Sony Music have underscored the growing tensions between traditional music production and emerging AI technologies. The labels seek damages of up to $150,000 per work infringed, indicating the serious stakes involved.

Moreover, the ethical implications of generative AI tools are becoming increasingly scrutinised. Tracy Chan, CEO of AI music company Splash, expressed concerns in a recent op-ed about generative AI companies profiting from artists' creative outputs without appropriate compensation or recognition. The absence of a clear framework ensuring that artists are compensated raises questions about the equity of AI's role in the creative industries and exacerbates fears over the devaluation of artistic work.

Despite these controversies, SoundCloud has asserted that any AI-driven offerings, which include tools for music recommendation and playlist curation, are designed with artists' interests at heart. The company insists that it is committed to enhancing artists' discovery, protecting their rights, and expanding their opportunities within the evolving landscape of digital music. The introduction of AI tools for generating remixes and new tracks indicates a dual focus on innovation and artist empowerment.

This situation illustrates the complex relationship between digital platforms and their users, especially in sectors as dynamic as music. As artists and tech companies navigate the integration of AI, establishing ethical guidelines and ensuring fair compensation will be crucial. The recent changes to SoundCloud's policies, while positioned as artist-friendly, may be seen as a reflection of the broader industry’s struggle to balance innovation with the rights of content creators.

Ultimately, as AI technologies continue to reshape music production and distribution, both artists and platforms must collaboratively refine their approaches to maintain fairness and transparency. Continuing dialogue in this area is essential not just for safeguarding artists' rights but also for fostering a sustainable future where creativity and technology can harmoniously coexist.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7: Source 1
2. Paragraphs 3, 6: Source 2
3. Paragraphs 3, 7: Source 3
4. Paragraph 4: Source 4
5. Paragraphs 5, 6: Source 5
6. Paragraphs 5, 6: Source 6
7. Paragraphs 5, 6: Source 7

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

* <https://www.engadget.com/ai/soundcloud-says-its-never-trained-ai-using-artists-work-after-getting-called-out-for-terms-of-use-change-174433356.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
* <https://www.theverge.com/2018/10/29/18037700/soundcloud-verge-report-self-monetization-contract-premier-change> - In October 2018, The Verge reported that SoundCloud had revised its SoundCloud Premier agreement following criticism over its fairness to artists. The updated contract removed a broad 'covenant not to sue' clause and clarified payment terms, including regular accounting periods and a defined payment schedule. SoundCloud committed to notifying artists of any future changes to the terms with two weeks' notice via email. These revisions aimed to address concerns about transparency and fairness in the monetization program.
* <https://djmag.com/news/soundcloud-removes-dont-sue-clause-clarifies-payment-info-monetisation> - DJ Mag reported in October 2018 that SoundCloud had removed a controversial 'don't sue' clause from its SoundCloud Premier contract after an investigation by The Verge. The company also clarified payment information, committing to regular payment dates and eliminating the requirement to reach $100 in revenue before payout. These changes were made to address concerns about the fairness and transparency of the monetization program.
* <https://www.musicbusinessworldwide.com/it-is-unethical-for-generative-ai-companies-to-make-money-off-the-backs-of-artists-and-songwriters-without-compensation-or-attribution/> - In May 2024, Music Business Worldwide published an op-ed by Tracy Chan, CEO of AI music company Splash, criticizing generative AI companies for profiting from artists' and songwriters' work without compensation or attribution. The piece highlights the ethical concerns surrounding the use of copyrighted material in AI training and the need for fair compensation and recognition for original creators.
* <https://www.forbes.com/sites/virginieberger/2024/06/27/why-major-labels-are-suing-ai-music-startups-udio-and-suno-for-mass-copyright-infringement/> - Forbes reported in June 2024 that major record labels, including Universal Music Group, Sony Music Entertainment, and Warner Records, filed lawsuits against AI music startups Udio and Suno for alleged mass copyright infringement. The lawsuits claim that these companies used copyrighted music without permission to train their AI models, leading to the generation of derivative works that closely resemble original recordings. The labels are seeking damages of $150,000 per work infringed.
* <https://www.theverge.com/2024/8/2/24211842/ai-music-riaa-copyright-lawsuit-suno-udio-fair-use> - The Verge reported in August 2024 that AI music startups Suno and Udio responded to copyright infringement lawsuits by accusing major record labels of attempting to stifle competition. Both companies admitted to training their AI models on copyrighted materials, arguing that their actions fall under fair use. They contend that their services promote new artistic expression and that the lawsuits are an attempt to suppress innovation in the music industry.
* <https://arstechnica.com/information-technology/2024/06/music-labels-sue-ai-music-generators-for-copyright-infringement/> - Ars Technica reported in June 2024 that major record labels, including Universal Music Group, Sony Music, and Warner Records, filed lawsuits against AI music-synthesis companies Udio and Suno for alleged mass copyright infringement. The lawsuits claim that these companies used recordings owned by the labels to train their AI models, potentially leading to AI-generated music that competes with and devalues human artists' work. The labels are seeking damages of up to $150,000 for each work infringed.