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Kevin MacLeod Documentary

by

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ABSTRACT

Kevin MacLeod is a film composer with over 2,000 songs that anyone can use for free in their films and projects as long as credit is provided to MacLeod. For over twenty years his music has been available via his website, incompetech.com. With the explosion of web content over the last few decades the need for free music has expanded greatly. As a result, his music has been heard billions of times. So how does Kevin make a living? If you are unable to provide him credit for using his music, he charges a modest one-time fee for a royalty free music license. He is also often hired to compose scores for entire feature films. By forgoing most of the profitability in his music he has become an important part of modern content creation. Without a profit motive or edifice behind Kevin MacLeod to promote his music or persona, he remains mostly anonymous. Yet, he is one of the most listened to musicians (and composers) in modern history.

Kevin's music has been a powerful force throughout my own career. As a result I am often able to identify his work in the background of countless films and web videos. I have also used his music in my own projects. His influence on my work and his global impact became so significant that I have decided to make my thesis film about him.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND ALTERNATIVE CONCEPTS

MacLeod is a twenty-four minute documentary that focuses on the impact that Kevin's music has had on the world of internet content. It examines the reach of his work but it shows how adding his music to a video can elevate the production value of the piece. Food Influencer Stephanie Perez who is featured in the film demonstrates

how a piece of music entitled *The Cannery* helped to make her Instagram video more entertaining and polished. John Brennan from Troma Entertainment speaks of the need for content creators to have immediate access to a library of music. Finally we meet Kevin MacLeod and learn his motive for releasing his music for free online.

I weighed a number of considerations when deciding what to focus on for my thesis project. I had made a short documentary about action figures that garnered some accolades and one idea was to expand that into a longer film. This film concentrated on how when you recreate the human figure, it can actually say a lot about the society we live in and how we view one another. For example, the clear absence of diverse of representation in certain toy lines is an issue. The absence of female or minority action figures can have profound implications on society. What does this say about us as a nation? Something so simple as a toy can spark profound discussions. Ultimately, I decided for my thesis project I wanted to explore a new subject rather than revisit a topic I already explored on film. I also considered making a documentary about the film festival circuit with the goal of pointing out possible corruption/nepotism within its structure or to simply examining how larger film festivals in the United States are an extension of the studio system and are more like corporate gatherings.

I started my thesis class during the first wave of the COVID epidemic and it altered the way I would normally work. I began to watch a lot of web videos and listen to lots of podcasts. I remember hearing one of Kevin's tracks (*Meatball Parade*) in a YouTube video. A very silly trumpet song, it is an unmistakable tune. I felt like I somehow knew Kevin through his music, but it struck me that I did not really know anything about him as a person. I knew he had been churning out many songs, creating

them the way he wanted to and that he did not seem beholden to anyone. He appeared to be a truly independent artist. It was then that I realized that I needed to make a film about him. As it turns out, Kevin was not the only person I needed to interview for this project.

Lloyd Kaufman (featured in the *MacLeod* documentary) is a fiercely independent artist known for making low-budget genre films. In my thesis film he shares his views about how copyright law needs to be reformed and how copyrights in the United States now effectively last “forever”. The reason why I chose to include him in my thesis film has its roots far into my past. In order to accurately communicate my perspective on independent media I have to explain my youthful relationship to media and my subsequent film and television career.

In middle school I watched Saturday morning cartoons like the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* and *Toxic Crusaders*. *Toxic Crusaders* started airing in 1991 and was a kid-friendly cartoon with an underlying environmental message (Kaufman, “*Toxic Crusaders*”). I remember one of my childhood friends asking me if I wanted to come over and watch the *Toxic Avenger* film. I thought to myself, “Wow, they made a film? I can’t wait to see it!”. *The Toxic Avenger* was released in 1984 long before the cartoon series. It was an “R” rated exploitation film with mutants, violence and nudity. One scene depicts a child’s head getting run over by a car. I was shocked but it forever changed the way I thought about film. This film was created by Lloyd Kaufman, Yale graduate and President of Troma Studios in Long Island City, NY.

The *Toxic Crusaders* cartoon in a way represents sanitized corporate art for the television networks while the “R” rated film represents uncensored American

exploitation filmmaking. In 2018 while speaking at his 50th year reunion at Yale University (Class of 1968) Lloyd said the following, “We didn't want anyone telling us what to do and we stayed in New York and built a little tiny American dream from nothing and we still kind of have nothing.” (Troma Movies, “Yale Reunion 1968”). Lloyd Kaufman’s company, Troma Entertainment is the longest continuously run film studio in America. Lloyd has jump-started the careers of James Gun, Marisa Tomei, Eli Roth, Sam Jackson, Matt Stone, Trey Parker and many others (AMC, “Troma Team”). Lloyd was an inspiration to me. I knew his films were silly and so did he, but it made me feel like I could do it myself and become a part of the industry.

PAST INFLUENCES

Troma Entertainment became inspirational to me as a filmmaker. This idea of pushing the envelope of taste was forever imprinted on me. I would go on to make Super 8 and VHS films in high school with titles like *The Nuclear Warrior* and *Kick the Corpse*. I knew I wanted to study film production, but I was an average student in high school and it seemed like a good fit to attend Northwestern Connecticut Community Technical College. It was difficult for me. I worked at fast-food establishments during high school and college to make ends meet and as a result my grades suffered. Eventually I would be lucky enough to work in a video store which felt like a huge step up from being covered in grease.

The school I attended had a solid film and television program, and in 1998, I graduated with a visual communications degree. I knew I was going to be competing with people who had more impressive degrees so I did everything I could to gain

experience. In 1997 I started volunteering at Nutmeg Television, a Public Access TV station in Plainville, Connecticut. As I worked on a number of shows over the next few years, I came to realize how important public access television was and still is.

Professor Douglas Kellner of the University of California said it best "...the airwaves belong to the people, that in a democratic society it is useful to multiply public participation in political discussion, and that mainstream television severely limits the range of views and opinion. Public access television, then, would open television to the public, it would make possible community participation, and thus would be in the public interest of strengthening democracy." (Nutmeg TV, "About Us").

In the late 1990's public access was an important way for regular people to produce television programming in their community. This was long before YouTube and before Kevin MacLeod. There were selections of classical music and other free public domain music that we used at the time but the options were limited. There was a certain stigma attached to public access, as some of the content was poorly produced and the music in particular was pretty limited. For example the electronic version of the national anthem was commonly played at the end of the broadcast day. When I interviewed Kevin MacLeod for my film I realized that this was the type of content that Kevin was trying to improve upon. He lamented the state of free music and his goal was to try to make enough quality music to change things.

"Anyone could open a video store. They weren't owned by the major studios, the local dentist could open a video store and as you say now, a mom and pop video store."

- Joe Bob Briggs, *Drive-in Movie Critic*

I am the youngest of three brothers. My brothers Dan and Bruce started working for my cousin Scott Blair at Applause Video, a Connecticut-based video store franchise. After that Bruce opened his own video store called Fun Stuff Video and expanded it to twenty locations. The video store was one of the first times in history that the average person had consistent access to thousands of film titles. The first known video store popped up in 1977 in Los Angeles and was established by George Atkinson, but video stores were not really popular until the 1980's. (Greenberg, 63-66). More and more independent video stores emerged, many with different offerings. In the late 1990's, as I was finishing college, I began to see the potential for a filmmaker to actually carve out a career as an independent filmmaker.

By partnering with my brother Bruce and a few friends, I made my first 16mm feature film on a \$9,000 budget. We each saved up a few thousand dollars and rented a camera from the Boston Film Foundation by pretending that we went to college in Boston. The Foundation developed and transferred our film for just a few thousand dollars. Oddly, the first film we made was not a Lloyd Kaufman style B-movie. It was more influenced by Matt Damon and Ben Affleck's approach when they made *Good Will Hunting* for Ten Million Dollars as well as Wes Anderson's Five-Hundred Thousand Dollar *Bottle Rocket*. In retrospect, it makes me sad that we were so delusional to think we could emulate those directors with their comparably large budgets. Perhaps we were fooled into thinking that the \$7,000 miracle *El Mariachi*, directed by Robert Rodriguez, was something that everyone could pull off. When Columbia Pictures acquired *El Mariachi*, they spent Two Hundred Thousand Dollars on post production to "clean it up"

as Rodriguez explained in his book *Rebel Without a Crew*. At the time I didn't realize how much his film was transformed in post-production.

Our first feature was completed a few years before Kevin MacLeod began to offer free music on his website and we couldn't afford to hire someone to compose an original score for the film. I had learned to play piano when I was younger and I was always fascinated by film composers like John Williams, Thomas Neuman and Hans Zimmer. I decided to try to create an original score for my film. I purchased a Roland XP60 keyboard and learned to do track recording directly on the keyboard. Since then, I have scored several more feature films. I loved the magic of dropping in a new song and seeing how it affects the visuals. I also have a deep respect for film composers because I have done it myself and know the immense work that goes into it. These experiences have sculpted the way I think about music and its importance in filmmaking.

My film was a comedic drama called *Everything Moves Alone*, and it caught the attention of a film critic who liked it. We hired him as our publicist. The plot of the film concerns a suicidal soldier who comes to a small town to reunite with his older brother. The film played at the East Village's Pioneer Theater for a few weeks. It was called "unfortunate backwash" by Elvis Mitchel of the New York Times; coincidentally, Elvis would later get into trouble for reviewing films that he had not watched (Frankel, *The Wrap*). The Times published a large picture of myself and my friend Phil who was featured in the film and as a result the film never received further distribution.

It was not all bad press. The Bare Bones International Film Festival awarded me "Auteur of the Year" and some independent press like *Film Threat Magazine* gave the

film 4 out of 5 stars. However, nothing was really powerful enough to counteract the terrible New York Times review. I was twenty-one at the time and this changed me. The New York Times was the paper of record and it single-handedly removed me from the film industry.

Breaking into the film and television industry can take years. At this point in 1999, I had a degree and some experience in film and broadcasting. This was all enough to score me a “Vacation Relief” editing position at CBS News in Hartford, Connecticut. I would get called in the middle of the night, sometimes at three or four in the morning to come into work. When people called in sick, the news still needed to air so I was on standby to come in at a moment's notice. This was brutal because video editing involves deep concentration and that is hard to do with no sleep. I do not think many people wanted this job, but for me this was my only way in. I did the vacation relief position for over a year until, at twenty-three, I was promoted to Staff Editor.

News cutting is a thankless career and that rewards people who can take directions, keep quiet and do the job. It is not unlike working in a factory. I did this for four years, even covering the events of 9/11. The work was intense at that time and I probably edited a hundred news packages related to the event of 9/11 (“WFSB”). At that point I was done with news. I would work for NBC Universal Digital Studios and IGN, working for junk removal companies, book stores and various other jobs in-between entertainment industry jobs. No one ever told me in college that working in the film and television industry can be nomadic and that the ups and downs can be demoralizing.

No matter what job I had, I continued to be obsessed with making feature-length films. Along with Lloyd Kaufman I was inspired by George Romero, director of the 1968

low-budget horror film *Night of the Living Dead*, Independent filmmakers who created their own features totally outside of the studio system - at least at first. Lloyd Kaufman is a unique filmmaker in that although he would delve into creating network cartoons, he never stopped producing and directing his own features. In the case of Kaufman's *Toxic Crusaders* cartoon, you get a sanitized version of the independent film *The Toxic Avenger* and its three sequels. In the case of my film *Everything Moves Alone* the reaction was an invitation by the mainstream press to stop making films altogether. So I started to think about how I could continue to make films outside of the mainstream. I could not spend another two years and another ten thousand dollars on a feature film and not get home video distribution for it. I needed to look at what Lloyd Kaufman was doing. I was compelled to explore the exploitation film arena.

The next film I created was called *Fountain of Death or Land of College Prophets* depending on what country it was released in. It was like a low budget superhero movie with violence, action and goof-ball comedy. The plot revolved around a haunted wishing well and some college students. The film was disorganized, but it did have a lot of action sequences and dynamic looking characters that could be easily marketed. Even though the film has not aged well, at the time it had enough production value to be acquired by the distributor York Entertainment. The film was sold to a dozen countries (territories) and was in many of the video stores of the time including Hollywood Video and even on Netflix DVD. This was really my first taste of success. I was twenty-five and had created a successful "direct to video" exploitation film.

I would not learn about the film industry's "creative accounting" until about a year later. York Entertainment was a large independent distributor that I was happy to be a

part of at the time, but they never paid me even though the film was financially successful. This is far more common in the industry than one would think. This was the last film I scored myself. It is a lot of work to score an action film. You have to time the notes carefully to the visuals and it pushed me to my limits as a musician. I realized that it was too much work to score a feature length film on top of producing, directing and editing it. At this point in my career I was working for Black20 Studios, a start-up company that created daily video content. This is when I discovered Kevin MacLeod and Incomptech.com. I not only used his music in literally dozens of comedy videos, but in 2010 I would score an entire feature length film using only his music.

London Betty was my next film. It was a comedy adventure film about small town thieves and it featured Daniel Von Barga from Seinfeld and narration by Clint Howard. It was my last attempt to make a film that could reach a wider audience. It had a release through Maverick Entertainment in 2010 and even made it into Blockbuster Video, which would then go out of business a few years later in 2013 (Olio, "the Rise"). Maverick Entertainment never paid us so we lost money on the *London Betty* as well. When we were in post-production on the film there was no money left. We had spent our entire \$14,000 dollars budget on the film shoot. I looked at Kevin MacLeod's website. I thought to myself, "could I build the whole score out of his songs?" Aside from a few royalty free songs I bought from Pond5 nearly all of the music in *London Betty* is from incompetech.com.

Working for major networks like NBC or CBS can be challenging; in both cases I was creating news packages and web videos on a daily basis. These networks had a large library of licensed music we could use in our videos. These libraries were

expensive and not accessible to the average person. This music made it possible for those news packages and videos to appear as if they had been professionally scored. It was a tremendous advantage that these large companies had over independent media. I learned a great deal about the expository style of news creation. Skills that I would use to hone *MacLeod* years later. At this point I was exhausted from the pace of working within corporate media. Even the start-up that I worked for was absorbed by Fox Studios before they shut it down. This is also a common business practice in the film and television industry. A media conglomerate buys a smaller company just to remove them from competition and then dissolves it. I was paid a very low salary, overworked for years and the great recession left me without a job in 2009. I had worked at the University of Hartford as a cinema technician in my twenties and I thought that working for a college might be a good change of pace. I was hired by the City University of New York at LaGuardia Community College in the Film & Television Program. I was well into my thirties. My last feature lost money but I really wanted to keep making films.

That's when I decided to pivot to documentary filmmaking. I could do it in my spare time, do an interview here and there and build the project over a few years, so that is exactly what I did. I started out hiring my best friend, Tim Kulig, to score my films. He is also an excellent producer, and we have worked together several times since. This is why I featured Tim in the *MacLeod* documentary. We started shooting in 2012 and by 2016, I had finished my documentary entitled *VHS Massacre*. It chronicled much of what I have discussed in this paper, including the death of the "Mom & Pop" independent video store and the decline of physical media. When I finished *VHS Massacre*, I submitted it to Troma Entertainment. Troma loved the film and decided to

acquire it. FilmRise, a major distributor, did the digital distribution so the film successfully played on the art house site MUBI, Amazon, iTunes and even screened at Yale University (Bechard, "NH Docs"). It won five awards, including two Telly Awards and a Gold Remi at Worldfest Houston. Although the film was scored by my longtime collaborator Tim Kulig, there are also a number of Kevin MacLeod songs in it. Some were classical, while others just hit the mark so perfectly that it did not make sense for Tim to score them. This was something that I really came to rely on. If we could not quite nail a song, I would search incompetech.com to see what Kevin had to offer. In some cases I would use Kevin MacLeod music to "temp score" a film. In other words, I would place Kevin's music on the timeline of my film edit as a rough idea for a score and sometimes (after mulling it over) I would keep the song as permanent score.

Apparently I was not the only one who used Kevin's MacLeod's music in this way. This was the case in the Martin Scorsese film *Hugo* in 2011. As Kevin notes, "they had put one of my songs in and forgot to take it out and the film was going out that way whether they wanted it to or not." Since he was not credited, they needed to get a license from him, for which he would normally charge Thirty Dollars. They of course offered him much more than that (the actual amount is undisclosed).

VHS Massacre was one of the few successes I had in regard to feature films. By the time the film was out things had already evolved in regard to streaming. In 2018 Amazon had removed thousands of Independent films with some vague quality standards regulation that didn't really hold water, seemingly to target low-budget Independent content regardless of its quality. There is evidence that they also pulled content for underperformance (Jarvey, "Indie Filmmakers"). I personally had a film

deleted out of my permanent library. Distributors like Troma, Maverick Entertainment and Tempe video collectively had hundreds of films deleted. Think about that for a minute: some large film distributors content was deleted off the platform without notice. “There is a realization that we are not in control of our destinies, they are.” - J.R. Bookwalter.

There was a hope at one time that streaming could somehow save independent film, but as things developed, I started to see how unfairly the large companies were behaving. *VHS Massacre Too* would concentrate on how media consolidation is financially starving out low-budget filmmakers.

Kevin MacLeod was also an essential factor in *VHS Massacre Too*. The tone of the film was complicated, so the score couldn't be too dramatic or depressing. Tim Kulig and I worked together on it. We used a combination of Tim Kulig's music and Kevin MacLeod's compositions and recordings. It worked out well. The film has won twenty Independent film and festival awards to date and it is due to be released in the first quarter of 2021. Kevin's music had become such an essential part of the way that I worked in the film and television industry that the idea of making a Kevin MacLeod documentary seemed like a natural progression.

RESEARCH ANALYSIS

Although *VHS Massacre Too* has done well critically so far I realized that I may never make a profit off of an independently made feature. But I still feel compelled to keep making them. I couldn't help but reflect on others like me. In the span of most of my career there was a musician quietly making music in a dark room in Brooklyn and

offering it to the world for free. It's a rare person who has the will, time and talent to pull this off on a large scale. Kevin MacLeod has created over 2,000 songs and offered them free on the internet years before the introduction of Creative Commons was even invented (an American non-profit organization founded in 2001 that made it easier for people to share their music using a simple standardized license). Kevin MacLeod's music has been heard more than most contemporary pop singers yet very few people know who he is. This seemed so strange to me and I was compelled to investigate. As I started to research how much his music has been used, I realized that most people never knew that they were listening to his music because it's buried under the sound of someone talking or layered within casual video games.

I was familiar with his music but I really didn't know anything about him. I had met him once briefly at a bar in Brooklyn when I was a director at Black20 studios. This was back in 2008 when the first YouTube boom was happening and a group of content creators were meeting in New York. I spoke with him only briefly. It wasn't until years later that I realized I really should have picked his brain on everything from recording to why he decided to offer his music for free to the world.

So how many people have heard MacLeod's music? Kevin has been quoted as quantifying it as billions of listens from his websites alone. There is a single YouTube channel called "Eric's Archive" that only carries Kevin MacLeod music, and its purpose is for people to find music to download for their own projects - this site alone has nearly half a billion listens. If you look at the average download versus listens on Kevin's site, eight percent of the time people download the song that they listened to. If only half of those downloads, four percent of the total listens end up in a YouTube video and the

average YouTube video has thousands of listens this would put the amount of listens Kevin has into the trillions based upon his 2,000 song catalog (Marshal, "Views"). I wasn't concerned with proving an accurate estimate - I was trying to give a general sense of the scope of Kevin's musical reach. If the viewer thought I was too conservative or conversely not conservative enough, either way the numbers would still be in the billions. A large percentage of his traffic is very difficult to track. Some of his work exists on physical media, video games, theatrical screenings and web radio where individual plays of songs may not be counted. I considered the idea of data scraping the internet, but I decided that this wasn't really necessary for the purposes of the thesis film. I just needed to show that his listenership was in the billions and from there I could focus more on Kevin himself.

After completing the film, I realized that Kevin could make his songs the way he wanted and then offer them to the world. This "take it or leave it" style of film composing gave Kevin total creative freedom. It is rare for someone with that approach to have so much success on a global scale.

THESIS PRODUCTION PROCESS

In August of 2020 I began work on the film. The COVID pandemic severely limited my choices. The pandemic was hitting New York hard and my whole family had coronavirus back in late April. We were all a little rattled. I reached out to Kevin and he agreed to do the interview. I didn't want to use the video from a Zoom video conference session so I asked Kevin to record himself on his iPhone while I interviewed him on Zoom and then send it to me after. I interviewed him collectively for nearly two hours

but, he really wasn't giving many illuminating answers. I don't think he wanted to come off as arrogant (which he certainly didn't), but what I realized in the editing room was that his answers were unclear. I had about ten minutes worth of quality material.

I had to build a mystery in the first half of the documentary and then reveal him in the film's second half. After remotely screening the cut to a few dozen people and getting several rounds of feedback the film began to take form. The point of the film is to bring awareness to a specific way of being a professional film composer and content creator. Create music and offer it for free, based upon the success of having your music used billions of times, you then can be hired and paid to compose entire feature films. Or, those who choose not to credit him, they pay a one-time fee of thirty dollars for use of his "royalty free" music. This has worked for Kevin. He has composed over twenty original scores for feature films and has nearly 3,500 credits on IMDB from editors and producers using his music.

During COVID my ability to go out and gather supporting footage and interesting visuals was limited; It was difficult to get standard shots like, people signing documents in a courtroom, a dark room with someone playing piano or a scientist's lab. I was able to bring my friend Carlos Friere on as a producer to get some exterior and drone shots, however most did not make the final cut. So how did I get the handful of shots I needed to illustrate my story? I decided to use Stock footage from iStock, Pond 5 and a few other sources. Coincidentally this stock footage was "royalty free" though I did have to spend a few hundred dollars on it. The fact that Kevin MacLeod's music is mostly heard online worked for the virtual aesthetic that I had to adopt for the film. I constructed the

film primarily with shots of websites, YouTube video montages, Zoom Interviews and After Effects generated imagery.

Kevin is not only known for his music. His website incompetech.com offers graph paper. As a matter of fact Kevin was the first person to offer downloadable and customizable graph paper for free online starting in 1999. This actually pre-dated Kevin's music, so the idea was given to me to try to integrate the various graph paper styles as a visual theme in my movie. This required a tremendous amount of work over the next few months editing whenever I had time. I used Adobe After Effects to create multi-screen shots that have so many images that they begin to resemble graph paper in the patterns they form. Also I was able to integrate graph paper patterns into wave-forms that used to visualize his music. The film eventually came together in a way that I believe represented the visual and auditory elements of Kevin's work.

AUDIENCE AND EXHIBITION

MacLeod has already been acquired by Troma Entertainment and will be available soon on the Troma Now Streaming network. The film will compete in the film festival circuit and has already been entered into the Webby Awards and the True/False Film festival. The goal would be to screen it in around twenty film festivals and try to raise awareness of the importance of people like Kevin MacLeod that provide free music to the world. I have built some connections in the film festival circuit at the New Haven Documentary Film Festival, Miami International Science Fiction, Bare Bones, Telly Awards, Houston Film Festival, Spirit of Independence and other festivals. I would enter these contests as well as research festivals that celebrate subjects such as

technology, the internet, music and free content. The audience should include anyone who is an independent content creator. This includes mediums such as film, video, podcasting, blogging, video games and mixed media projects. I believe the film is entertaining enough to reach a mainstream audience. Winning a Webby Award would be a big step in proving it's mainstream appeal. Kevin himself may not be famous in the traditional sense but within the Independent film production world he has a significant presence. It may be worth reaching festival programmers to ask if they know who he is before I enter a specific festival. Lastly I will use my social media network that includes Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Podbean and Stitcher Radio to advertise the film. My network consists of about 5,000 followers that I can use to help spread the work.

SUMMARY

“The system was never designed for us, there are times when independent filmmakers could sneak in and make a profit before the window closes but that’s about it” - J.R. Bookwalter, *President of Tempe Home Video*.

If we look back on Lloyd Kaufman and Troma Entertainment, they’ve been able to eke out a living as one of the longest running independent film studios in American history. At times, they had to work with media conglomerates like NBC in the case of the *Toxic Crusaders* cartoon and this year they've had to license their popular *Toxic Avenger* franchise to Legendary Pictures which makes most of the DC comics films. There is a big budget reboot being made of *Toxic Avenger* starring Peter Dinklage and directed by Macon Blair (*Todisco, "People"*). Troma’s flexible approach is necessary to

keep their doors open and provides further evidence of the monopoly over profitable media. This is why Kevin's music is so important for low-budget content creators trying to compete with corporate media. Adding professionally created music to a project can add production value and Kevin has provided this service for hundreds of thousands of artists for over twenty years.

In regard to music Kevin MacLeod took the opposite approach compared to Lloyd Kaufman: don't try to make money, instead make music for the public to use for free and then see what happens as a result. Without a profit motive or edifice behind Kevin MacLeod to push his music or persona forward he remains largely anonymous. As a result, one of the more listened to musicians in modern history is nearly invisible.

There is money to be made in the film and television industry by participating in-house on the projects that these media conglomerates create. This is essentially corporate media and there are impressive careers available within that ecosystem, but making a living outside of this system is much more difficult. True creative freedom is much easier to achieve if you can transcend the need or desire to make profit. If you are not beholden to the audience or production company, you can create according to your vision. People like Kevin MacLeod are truly free to create what they want. He represents a rare case of a musician's catalogue being "famous" but truly untethered from the constraining strings of corporate media.

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