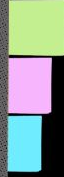


# WORLD- BUILDING

IN  
MUSIC

ONE SIXTY/NINETY



## HOW + WHY WORLD-BUILDING EMERGED IN MUSIC

- World-building in music is when artists create immersive worlds that fans return to and participate in across shows, visuals, digital spaces, stories, and shared rituals shaped by both artists and fans.

As music consumption accelerates with thousands of releases daily and culture moving feed-first, **individual tracks fade faster than ever**. The lasting value now lives beyond the song, in the worlds that sustain attention, deepen fandom, and extend cultural and commercial impact over time.

## HOW WORLD-BUILDING IN MUSIC CREATES BUSINESS VALUE

- Music already shapes how people identify themselves, connect with others, and express emotion. That makes it a natural foundation for world-building and a credible space for brands to participate.

When music becomes the starting point rather than the entire experience, brands can take ongoing roles across live moments, digital spaces, and fan communities.

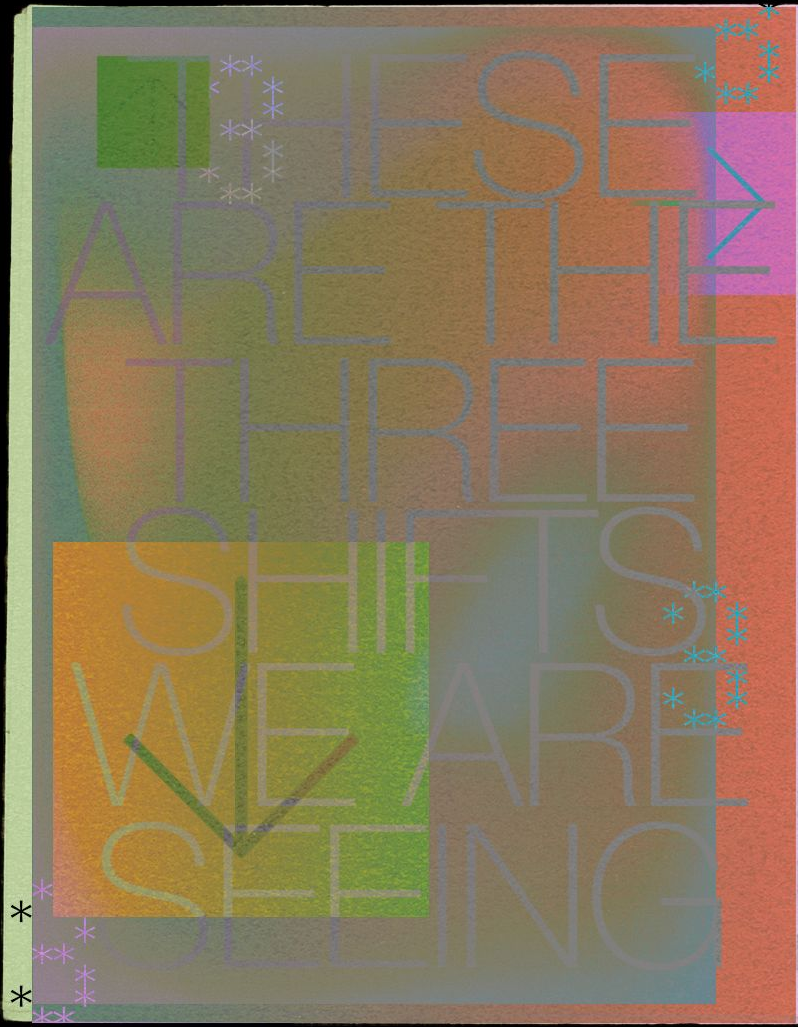
**This shifts music from isolated activations into a durable growth driver built on repeated presence and participation.**

## THE MAKING OF MUSIC WORLD- BUILDING



1. Fans  
organize  
worlds
2. Artists  
formalize  
worlds
3. Scenes  
institutionalize  
worlds





THESE  
ARE THE  
THREE  
SHIFTS  
WE ARE  
SEEING





# 01. FANS ORGANIZE WORLDS

FANS ORGANIZE WORLDS

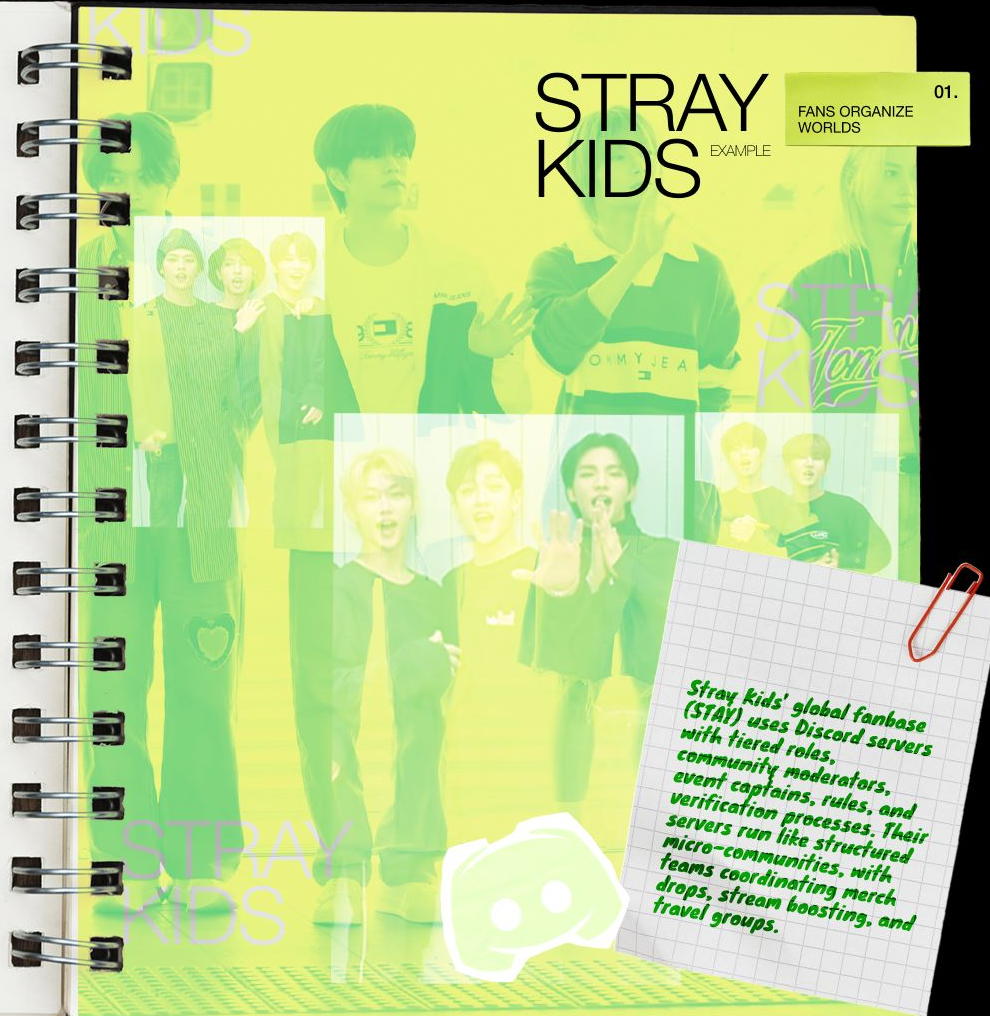
01.

- Fandoms now operate like brands, with their own rules, leaders, and influence. Fans aren't just consuming worlds anymore. They help build and shape them.



What once lived in the shadows of niche forums now operates in full daylight—meetups, travel crews, content squads, and community governance are mainstream behavior.

What was once concentrated in BTS and K-pop ecosystems now shows up across indie, country, hyperpop, EDM, Latin, and singer-songwriter subcultures.



# STRAY KIDS

EXAMPLE

01. FANS ORGANIZE WORLDS

*Stray Kids' global fanbase (STAY) uses Discord servers with tiered roles, community moderators, event captains, rules, and verification processes. Their servers run like structured micro-communities, with teams coordinating merch drops, stream boosting, and travel groups.*



HYPERPOP  
DAILY

# HYPERPOP DAILY

EXAMPLE

*Hyperpop Daily started as a niche fandom community for a budding music genre and has since turned into a full-scale content and experiential arm—throwing festivals, basketball tournaments and even signing + managing artists themselves.*



FLAWED  
MANGOES



# FLAWED MANGOES

EXAMPLE



*Flawed Mangoes and its devout followers who dub themselves 'The Midnite Cult' around its shoegaze-adjacent music before 'hopecore' became mainstream on TikTok.*

FLAWED  
MANGOES

# WHAT'S CHANGED

## New Platform = New Organizing Structures

Discord, TikTok Lives,  
Stationhead, Geneva enable  
squads, not just audiences.

GENEVA

Fans are now organizers,  
archivists, event producers.

## Identity Became Modular

People use fandom as a way to  
belong without committing to a  
**single lane**.

(Spotify Paradox: we want shape  
without being boxed in).

## Music Scarcity Gone → Belonging Is Scarce

In an infinite-streaming world,  
fans **create rituals** to make their  
connection feel rare again.

# WHAT'S NEXT

## Roles

LORE KEEPERS  
EDIT CAPTAINS  
MEETUP HOSTS  
COMMUNITY DIPLOMATS

## Traditions

TOUR RITUALS  
COLOR CODES  
LEXICONS  
ALBUMS AS SEASONS

## Hybrid IDs

GENRE-BENDING "FAN  
NATIONS"  
E.G.  
COUNTRY-BRAT  
METAL-SWIFTIE  
LATINX-INDIE

■ Fandoms will behave  
more like informal  
clubs with:

FANS ORGANIZE  
WORLDS

01.

# BRAND



# IMPLI- CATIONS

# 1

Super fandoms are powerful but unregulated. Brands cannot “bottle” their fandom, but they can join them intentionally by taking a role, supporting fan rituals, or strengthening existing fan infrastructure.

**Don't beat super fans; join them.**



# 2

Rather than merely co-opting fan movements, brands have to earn participation by being useful, not just visible.

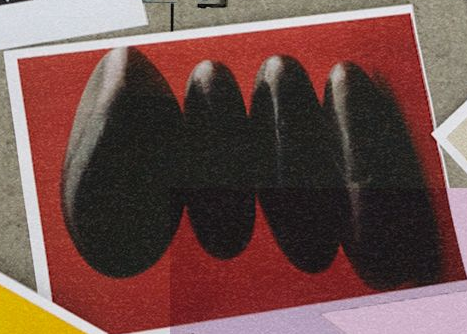
**Don't strive for control; strive for relevance.**

# 3

**Artists are Authority Figures.**

When a partnership is artist-led, it reduces friction because fans see the artist as the source of authority, the keeper of norms, and the bridge between commerce and culture.

■ Artists used to build worlds through music alone. Now they design how creative work, access, and participation connect and scale.



02.

ARTISTS  
FORMALIZE  
WORLDS

- No longer focused solely on albums, tours, or drops, multi-hyphenate talent build worlds where music, image, products, and fan participation reinforce one another.

This is not only about artists becoming entrepreneurs. It is also about artists designing how attention, access, and participation function over time.

The value is no longer just the song or the show. The value is the world built around it, sustained by ongoing fan involvement.

“IT'S RARELY JUST A PERFORMANCE NOW.”

# CREATING OWNED MOMENTS AND PLATFORMS

EXAMPLE

*John Summit debuted a new, sold-out EDM festival called Experts Only on Randall's Island in September 2025, designed to fill the gap left by NYC's biggest EDM festivals (Electric Zoo).*

# BEYOND MUSIC

EXAMPLE

# EXPANDING OWNERSHIP BEYOND MUSIC



ARTISTS FORMALIZE WORLDS

02.

*Ciara invested in the Seattle Sounders FC (Major League Soccer)*

*[WWE, sports]*

*Swizz Beatz was the first to own an American camel racing team in Saudi Arabia (Saudi Bronx).*

EXAMPLE

# SHAPING BRANDS FROM THE INSIDE



*Peggy Gou participated in a seed funding round for wellness brand, Cymbiotika, alongside Post Malone and The Weeknd.*

*[WME, wellness]*

*J Balvin has been named Chief Imagination Officer for Motorola and partnered with the brand of CES, rather than just being a "face" for the company.*

*[WME, tech]*

BUILDING  
COMMUNITY-LED  
ECONOMIES

ARTISTS FORMALIZE  
WORLDS

02.

*Cimafunk, dubbed a global ambassador for Cuban music, built a touring micro-economy and community events rooted in afro-diasporic fans joining 'brigades' and cultural workshops.*

BUILDING  
COMMUNITY-LED  
ECONOMIES

EXAMPLE

WHAT'S CHANGED

**Direct-To-Fan  
Tools Became  
The Norm**

Shopify, memberships, and D2C merch enable artists to operate like founders, not just talent.

**Always-On  
Culture Reshaped  
Expectations**

Fans now want **sustained access and involvement**, pushing artists to build beyond the music alone.

**Label Dependence  
Weakened &  
Artist Control  
Increased**

Artists gained the freedom to launch products, festivals, partnerships, and fan communities **on their own terms**.

■ NEW BUSINESSES  
BECOME PART OF THE  
ARTIST'S WORLD

Products, drops, and mini-ventures become extensions of the artist's offering, not side merch but standalone consumer brands.

■ FAN ACCESS  
TURNS INTO  
MEMBERSHIP

Micro-communities become ongoing spaces where fans participate and return over time.

■ PHYSICAL  
MOMENTS  
CREATE  
CONSISTENCY

Festivals, pop-ups, and residencies act as recurring touchpoints — the physical (and digital) landmarks of the artist's world.

WHAT'S NEXT

# BRAND

# IMPLI- CATIONS

## 1 Fans behave like customers, not just listeners.

They return, participate, and invest attention over time, not just during releases.



## 2

The strongest partnerships help artists expand into new spaces through access, product, or infrastructure, not surface-level sponsorship.

## Brands must extend artist worlds, not borrow attention.

## 3 Access is increasingly more valuable than reach.

Smaller, controlled moments like secret shows and hometown pop-ups now carry more cultural value than mass exposure.



■ Music scenes are no longer loose movements. They now function like institutions, with their own spaces, rules, and ways of sustaining culture.

SCENES  
INSTITUTIONALIZE  
WORLDS

03.

03.

SCENES  
INSTITUTIONALIZE  
WORLDS



■ No longer waiting for the mainstream, communities like alt-Latin, queer club nights, hyperpop, and the indie-sleaze revival are building their own worlds through regular events, shared rituals, and recognizable sounds and visuals.

These scenes create their own momentum. They pull in fans, shape identity, and stay relevant without needing approval from major labels, charts, or traditional industry gatekeepers.

*Brooklyn-based collectives like Club Q are shaping queer rave culture*



SCENES  
INSTITUTIONALIZE  
WORLDS

03.

## LOCAL SCENES BECOMING CULTURAL HUBS

EXAMPLE

*LA's Sad Girl Indie Scene as a lifestyle micro-economy*



*Detroit techno's new generation is turning local heritage into global "exports"*





1

1. Boiler Room has become the default method for upcoming artists/DJs to either solidify their status or rocket into stardom via virality.

2. Cercle Music has created an immersive global community that invites fans into a world where music and visual storytelling are inseparable, celebrating extraordinary artists while showcasing some of the world's most iconic cultural and natural landmarks.

EXAMPLE

# FROM YOUTUBE DJS TO SOCIAL COLLECTIVES



EXAMPLE

# SCENES AS SOCIAL SYSTEMS

RIO DE JANEIRO FUNK CARIOCA



RIO DE JANEIRO FUNK CARIOCA

SCENES INSTITUTIONALIZE WORLDS

03.

1. Rio de Janeiro Funk Carioca: It's an ecosystem built around the bailes. It exports sound, style, and ritual globally, operating more like a cultural institution than a genre.
2. Seoul Nightlife, Dance Crews, and Style Tribes: Seoul's club and dance world has become a global engine for nightlife culture, and then into global fashion, beauty, and music trends.

SEOUL NIGHTLIFE, DANCE CREWS, AND STYLE TRIBES

SCENES AS SOCIAL SYSTEMS



# WHAT'S CHANGED

# WHAT'S NEXT

## Scenes Are No Longer Tied To Geography

They form on **TikTok, Discord**, and cross-pollinate **IRL**.

## Scenes Became Identity Engines

**Microvenues, club nights**, and **local collectives** have become lifestyle signifiers, not just nightlife experiences.

## Scenes Learned How To Export Themselves

**Pop-ups, residencies**, and **curated listening spaces** allow scenes to move across cities and cultures while staying intact.

## SCENES WILL OPERATE WITH MORE STRUCTURE

They will support creators through merch, micro-labels, and shared income streams.

## SCENES WILL INVEST IN THEIR OWN SPACES

Venues, festivals, and residency-style hubs will anchor activity and continuity.

## SCENES WILL PROTECT THEIR CULTURE

Curators and organizers will set norms, decide what fits, and manage growth.

# WHAT'S NEXT

# BRAND

# IMPLI- CATIONS

## 1 Build something with the scene, don't just borrow from it.

The most effective partnerships will build something new — an artifact, experience, digital layer, or product — that feels mutually owned by both brand and artist.

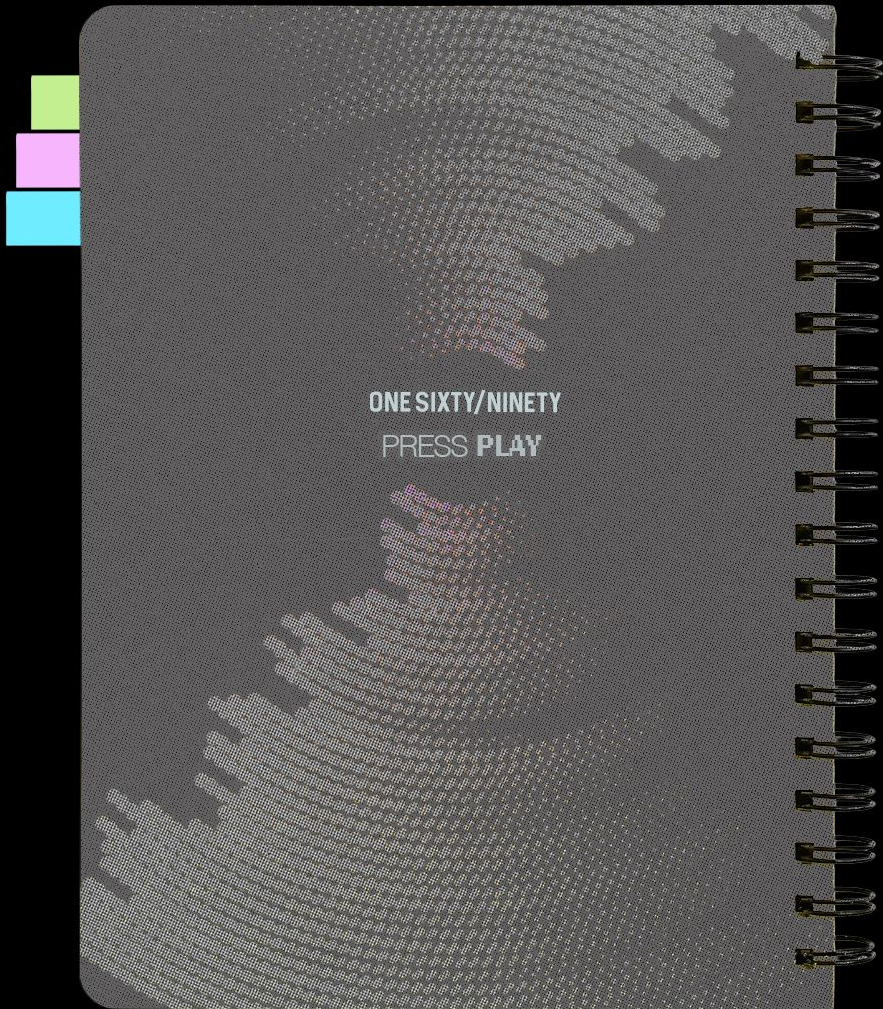


## 2 Help make the scene work, not just be louder.

Scenes don't need more ears, but they do need support. Think: production tools, logistics support, tech layers, distribution solutions, or "creative infrastructure" that unlocks the artist's vision and the world fans want to explore more of.

## 3 Keep showing up.

Instead of activation-hopping, brands should integrate into the artist ecosystem the way sponsors enter sports or gaming: structurally with continuity and building lore together.



ONE SIXTY/NINETY  
PRESS PLAY