Epidemic Sound

Creativity in Motion

The Signals, Shifts, and Strategies

Taking Us from 2026 into 2027



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I'MIN, multi-genre Korean pop/R&B singer-songwriter

Introduction:

Even in the AI era, the human connection is key

The creative industries have never stood still. New tools, formats, and ways of working have continually reshaped how music and content are created, shared, and experienced.

AI is the latest force accelerating that evolution. And in 2026, it became increasingly embedded in the creative economy.

Brands, creators, and artists all used AI to support workflows, adapt existing content, market and distribute their work, and generate new content. Across all groups surveyed, 69% said AI had increased opportunities in their profession — rising to 73% among artists.



Rebecca Mardal, Swedish guitarist, songwriter, and producer, and Johnny Marr, legendary English guitarist, songwriter, and producer, during Epidemic Sound's artist mentorship program, The Bridge

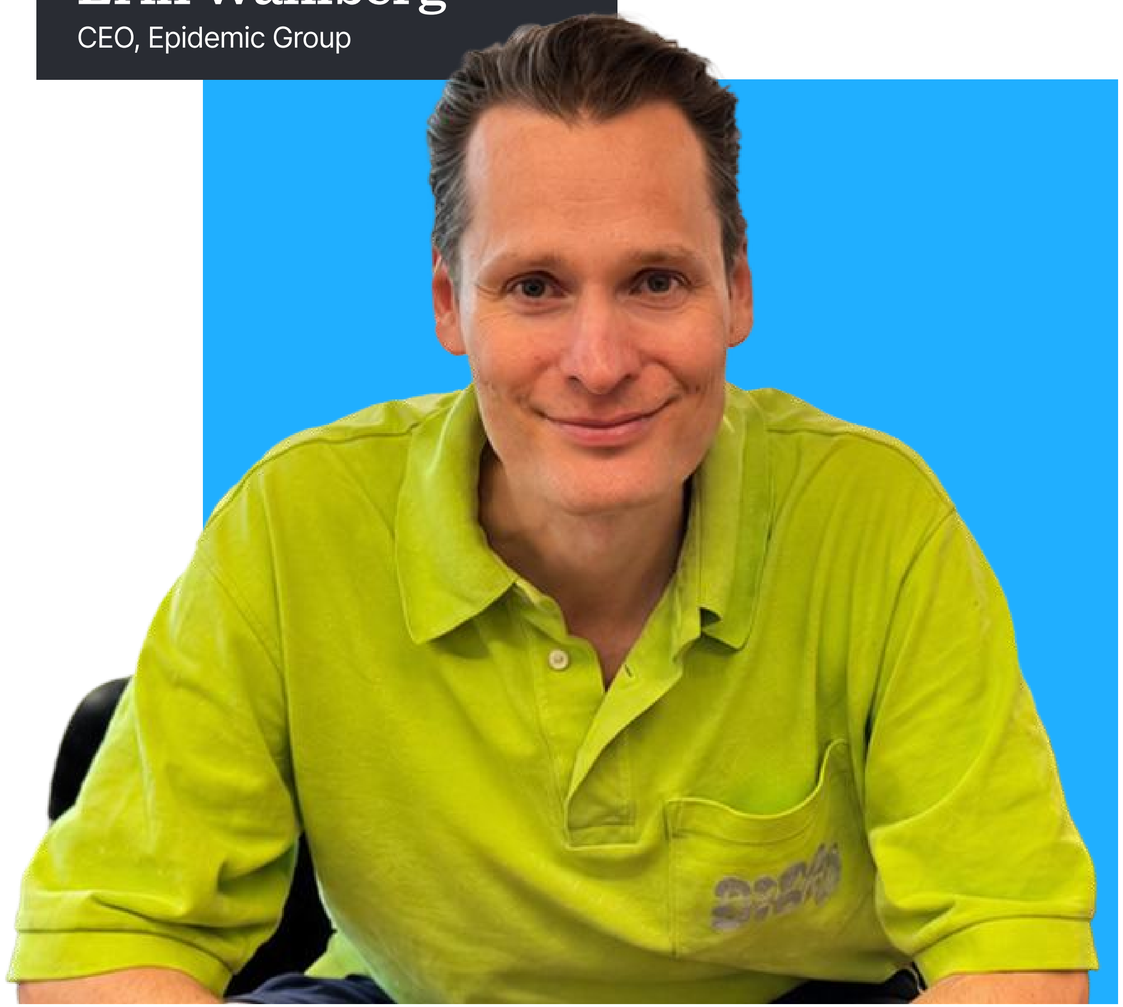
But opportunity did not always translate into value. Despite widespread use, only 66% of all groups said AI-generated content currently met their expectations for creative quality.

That gap, between possibility and value, and between opportunity and quality, points to a central question: as AI gives people more ways to create, adapt, and distribute work, what determines which choices create real value?

The answer is universal: human connection, creativity, and trust. These qualities didn't simply remain valuable in 2026; they became a premium.

In this business, understanding where we've been is essential to understanding what comes next. The insights in these pages will help define what 2027 looks like for creators, brands, and artists as they navigate an industry that is changing fast, but is still grounded in human connection.

Erik Wahlberg
CEO, Epidemic Group



The 2026 *Rewind*

In 2026, creativity found a new rhythm.

Possibility → **Human value →** **Trust**

2026 did not simply make more content possible; it changed what audiences value, what they expect, and what they trust.



Baha Bank$, Chicago-based hip-hop artist

The possibility boom

AI expanded the creative field.

69% say AI is increasing opportunities in their profession

- 73% Artists
- 70% Creators
- 59% Brands

And more people expect to use it in the year ahead.

73% expect their use of AI in music, sound or content creation to increase

- 80% Artists
- 72% Creators
- 65% Brands

The human premium

As AI became more prominent, human qualities became more impactful.

83%

human-created music and sound strengthens emotional connection

And also more valuable.

76%

human-created content is becoming a premium offering

The trust standard

AI creates value when creators, brands, and artists use it transparently, and with consent at its foundation. It only works when audiences know what they are being asked to trust.



Mimmi Bangoura, Swedish R&B singer-songwriter

Permission



98 %

of artists say permission is important for their music or voice to be used in AI systems

Transparency



76 %

of all groups say disclosure about when AI is used in music, sound, or content is essential for trust

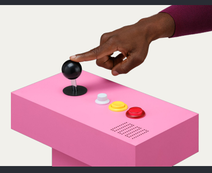
Rights



79 %

of brands say getting sound wrong in branded content can materially impact revenue, brand perception, or campaign ROI

Compensation



98 %

of brands say fair and transparent compensation for human artists is an important consideration when choosing a music or sound provider

The 2027 *Playbook*

So, where does creativity go next?

Below are Epidemic Sound's predictions for 2027 — combining insights and data that shows what creators, brands, and artists should look out for.

1 AI will help artists, brands, and creators do more with their ideas

In 2026, 58% of all groups used AI for workflow support

In 2027, we can expect to see AI becoming an increasingly important part of creative workflows.

This won't signal the reins being passed when it comes to creativity, however. The greatest value of AI will be how it amplifies human creativity; helping people get more from their original ideas and maximizing creative assets across channels and formats.

This approach to using AI will see brands and creators continue to look for tools that help them adapt music and sound across formats, find the right assets faster, and tailor content for the growing number of different audiences.

"2027 will be the year AI is truly adopted by the creative community, accelerating automation in a way that means more and better content, but not fewer creators."

Erik Wahlberg, CEO, Epidemic Group

2 Copyright compliance will be impossible to ignore

In 2026, 83% of brands were concerned their past use of music and sound wouldn't withstand a formal audit

In 2027, we expect brands to face growing pressure to prove that the music in their content is properly licensed and transparently sourced. Fifty six percent had faced copyright or takedown issues in the previous two years, and 83% were concerned their past music use might not withstand an audit or legal challenge. As AI changes how content is made, brands will need clearer rights and licensing practices to both protect their campaigns and be able to scale content at speed.

"In 2027, music sourcing and copyright compliance will be part of brands' risk management, similar to data protection, cyber security, and AI matters. Brands will start asking where every track came from and who has the right to use it. Leading brands won't ask creators to play it safe. They'll make it safe to play, setting the guardrails early so creativity can move fast."

Emil Henriksson, VP, Head of Commercial Legal, Epidemic Sound

3 Human-made content and sound will be how to stand out

In 2026, 76% said human-created content was becoming a premium offering

Human-made content strengthens emotional connection, builds identity, and drives engagement and revenue. Eighty-three percent of all groups also say that human-made sound strengthens emotional connection with audiences. To stand out, humans need to be more than just in the loop — they need to be center stage.

"Human experience, taste and expertise will be the crucial differentiator in navigating today's oceans of human- and machine-produced music and content."

Jesper Staffas, VP Strategic Music Partnerships, Epidemic Sound

4 Creative control will shift from reactive to proactive

In 2026, 89% of artists say maintaining control over their music, data, and creative identity will define their long-term success.

2027 will increase the pressure to establish clearer rules around how artists' music, voices, and identities are used. The focus will grow from addressing unauthorized AI training, replication, and use to something more proactive — meaningful consent, attribution, and compensation.

"AI can open up new possibilities around music, but music's creativity, identity, and emotion have to remain human. For artists to trust AI, they need full transparency into and control over how their work is used. Rights have become a foundation for innovation, so the strongest businesses in the AI era will be those that protect artists and rights holders while ensuring they share in the value technology creates."

Erika McRoy, Director Commercial Music Partnerships, Epidemic Sound

5 Creators and artists will build closer, more direct audience relationships

72% of creators are already actively building direct audience relationships

In 2027, creators and artists will build lasting fan relationships beyond the platforms that made them. As AI intensifies competition for attention, they'll invest in distinctive identities, loyal communities and direct engagement — and, at the same time, protect and develop their identity as IP to sustain their careers.

"Artists and creators have realized that lasting success comes from a recognizable personal brand and a community that doesn't depend on any single algorithm or feed. The strongest ones build direct connections, through email lists, online courses, and more, so they control how they reach their audience. Music is the key ingredient that helps turn viewers into a community, since it carries a voice, a point of view, and makes your content recognizable."

Gracie Schram Stedt, Head of Creator Partnerships & Strategy, Epidemic Sound

Who is Epidemic Sound

Epidemic Sound is the world's leading soundtracking platform, helping creators and brands soundtrack their content with human-made, world-class music, Hollywood-grade sound effects, AI-powered tools, seamless workflow integrations, and a 100% IP-owned catalog that lets them publish safely anywhere online. All while empowering artists to build and grow a career in music.

Epidemic Sound is part of the Epidemic Group, a global creative platform on a mission to reimagine storytelling through music, sound, video, and AI.

- **Over 20 billion**
  streams a year of the Epidemic Sound group's tracks across music streaming platforms
- **Over 3.5 billion**
  average daily views of YouTube and TikTok videos soundtracked by Epidemic Sound music
- **70%**
  of the top 300 US YouTube channels use Epidemic Sound
- **Nearly 200 hours**
  of music downloaded from Epidemic Sound platforms per hour

Methodology

The survey was conducted among 3,000 creators, 1,000 artists, and 500 brands across the UK and US. The interviews were conducted online by Sapio Research in March–April 2026 using an email invitation and an online survey.

Unless stated otherwise, “all groups” means the full sample of 4,500 respondents.

*Base varies by question. Q12–Q16f: brands and creators, n=3,500; Q17–Q27: brands, n=500; Q28–Q39: creators, n=3,000; Q40a–Q49d: artists, n=1,000

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Ooyy, Swedish electronic producer