

expressions of solidarity with the Black Lives Matters movement, and in this context several BIPOC creators have reported a significant drop in their views and likes (Peterson-Salahuddin 2024, 2391). In addition, *white* creators are often accused of appropriating the ideas of Black TikTokers and then enjoying greater success with them than the original creators (Ile 2021, 62; Martinez 2022, 40). In response, in 2021, BIPOC creators uploaded a series of videos under the hashtag #BlackTikTokStrike, declaring that they felt robbed of their ideas and no longer wanted to produce videos for TikTok (Ile 2021, 67–68). This leads to the suspicion that TikTok is also a “white space” (Ile 2021, 68), “fueled by an oppressive algorithm that privileges white, heteronormative content” (Ile 2021, 68).

4.9 Sound on TikTok

Due to the functional logic of TikTok, sound and specifically musical elements play a prominent role on the platform. In light of its predecessor platform Musical.ly, whose name emphasizes the importance of sound, this is obvious, and important platform features of TikTok are inconceivable without the use of music. After all, a key feature – *use this sound* – is based on the “spreadability of sounds” (Kaye et al. 2021, 3209), and on TikTok sounds often function as a mimetic medium, i.e. as an essential basis for the imitation practices that are central to lip-synching and dance challenge videos (Abidin and Kaye 2021, 59). In addition, musical elements are sometimes used to acoustically support the narrative of TikTok videos. For example, a pause in the action of a video may be accompanied by a musical drop. Sometimes musical elements are also used to support the “tonality” of a video, such as a shift from serious to sarcastic content (Abidin and Kaye 2021, 58). And thanks to the duet function, there is always the possibility of recontextualizing the auditory track. In this way, musical elements on TikTok contribute significantly to the dissemination of content and the creation of viral phenomena on the platform (Abidin and Kaye 2021, 61).

Since TikTok videos sometimes have an enormous reach and can therefore be used for marketing purposes, specific music-related processes of professionalization take place in the context of the platform. For example, short excerpts of songs – usually hooks – are uploaded to TikTok before the songs appear in full on other platforms such as Spotify. These excerpts are more likely to become viral phenomena, and it is assumed that professional music creators must learn to produce music specifically for use on TikTok (Radovanović 2022,

61). However, it is not only the music creators themselves who are undergoing a process of professionalization in this regard, but also people who specialize in supporting musicians in the context of TikTok. In recent years, a growing number of agencies have been founded that try to develop success strategies for musicians which they then communicate, for example, in the form of YouTube tutorials. Strategies for platform-compatible production and composition are also a recurring theme in this context; for example, the division of songs into approximately fifteen-second parts that can be used as the musical basis for dance challenges (Radovanović 2022, 62). In addition, TikTok is sometimes seen as an effective tool for jump-starting musicians' careers. For example, the phrase "TikTok-to-Spotify pipeline" refers to the possibility of being placed on major Spotify playlists as a result of becoming successful on TikTok and thus reaching a large number of listeners (Radovanović 2022, 63).

4.10 Revenues on TikTok

The TikTok-to-Spotify pipeline is important for musicians because TikTok has been used primarily as a marketing tool, rather than as a direct source of income for musicians. A viral video on TikTok will not automatically result in a large amount of revenue, but there are several ways for musicians to earn money directly on the platform. One way is through the live stream feature, which is only available to users who already have a large number of followers. Users can buy TikTok coins, which they can use to buy gifts and send them to creators as part of a live stream. The creators in turn have these gifts converted into diamonds, which are then converted into real money and paid out, with the platform retaining 50% (Kaye, Zeng, and Wikström 2022, 151). Sponsorship deals with companies who want their products promoted by TikTokers are another way for creators to generate revenue. This is a classic source of income in the influencer industry, and the TikTok Creator Marketplace was launched in the U.S. market in early 2020 to bring advertisers and content creators together. There is also the TikTok Creator Fund, which was launched in July 2020. TikTok is tight-lipped about the specific distribution mechanisms, but in principle, content creators are compensated individually and based on their level of success. Initially, only U.S. TikTokers were eligible to receive compensation from the Creator Fund. They also had to be at least eighteen years old, have 10,000 followers, and have 100,000 video views in the previous month (Kaye,