

FKA twigs

Statement for US Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Intellectual Property

April 30, 2024

Thank you Chairman Coons, Ranking Member Tillis, and members of the Subcommittee.

I have spent my entire life immersed in the arts. My mother was a dancer, and my stepfather – a retired company director – is a devoted jazz fanatic and theatre buff. They sacrificed so much so that I could take ballet lessons, singing and acting classes, and enjoy all that the arts have to offer. From the age of sixteen, I began to explore both dance and music as a career, and that interest in multiple disciplines has defined my life for the past two decades both personally and professionally.

It has been an incredible journey. My music has been critically acclaimed and Grammy-nominated. I am currently a Creative Partner at On Running as well as having been the face of a number of prestigious global brands. Earlier this month, I made my solo debut with the Martha Graham Dance Company in New York and am co-starring in an adaptation of *The Crow*, which premieres in August. I am a Cannes Lions nominee and AIFC winner as a commercials director whilst being a winner of multiple prestigious music industry awards.

So why am I here today?

I am here because my music, my dancing, my acting, the way that my body moves in front of a camera and the way that my voice resonates through a microphone is not by chance; they are essential reflections of who I am. My art is the canvas on which I paint my identity and the sustaining foundation of my livelihood. It is the essence of my being. Yet this is under threat. AI cannot replicate the depth of my life journey, yet those who control it hold the power to mimic the likeness of my art, to replicate it and falsely claim my identity and intellectual property. This prospect threatens to rewrite and unravel the fabric of my very existence. We must enact regulation now to safeguard our authenticity and protect against misappropriation of our inalienable rights.

Three decades ago, we did not realise that the internet would embed itself so deeply into the core of our everyday lives. Policies and controls to keep pace with the emergence of the technology were not put in place to protect artists, young people, those who are vulnerable, and it ran away with us. AI is the biggest leap in technological advancement since the internet. You know the saying “Fool me once, shame on you... Fool me twice, shame on me”. If we make the same mistakes with the emergence of AI, it will be "shame on us".

Throughout my career I have always embraced and experimented with new technologies, I have even directed award-winning commercials for companies such as Google and Meta, some of which have been placed as part of permanent collections within art institutions such as The BFI and MOMA archives.

As a future-facing artist, new technologies are an exciting tool that can be used to express deeper emotions, create fantasy worlds, and touch the hearts of many people. In the past year, I have developed my own deepfake version of myself that is not only trained in my personality but also can use my exact tone of voice to speak many languages. I will be engaging my AI twigs later this year to extend my reach and handle my online social media interactions, whilst I continue to focus on my art from the comfort and solace of my studio. These and similar emerging technologies are highly valuable tools both artistically and commercially when under the control of the artist. What is not acceptable is when my art and my identity can simply be taken by a third party and exploited falsely for their own gain without my consent due to the absence of appropriate legislative control.

History has shown us time again that in moments of great technological advancement, those in the arts have always been the first to have their work exploited and, in many instances, fraudulently commoditised. Soon after it often follows that the general and more vulnerable public suffer the same types of image- and voice-related exploitation. By protecting artists with legislation at such a momentous moment in our history we are protecting a five-year-old child in the future from having their voice, likeness and identity taken and used as a commodity without prior consent, attribution or compensation.

I stand before you today because you have it in your power to help protect artists and their work from the dangers of exploitation and theft inherent in this technology if it remains unchecked. I am here on behalf of all creators whose careers depend on their ability to create, safe in the knowledge that they can maintain tight control over their own art, image, voice, and identity. Our careers and livelihoods are in jeopardy, and so potentially are the wider image-related rights of others in society. You have the power to change this and safeguard the future.

As artists and, more importantly, human beings, we are a facet of our given, learned, and developed identity. Our creativity is the product of this lived experience overlaid with years of dedication to qualification, training, hard work and, dare I say it, significant financial investment and sacrifice. That the very essence of our being at its most human level can be violated by the unscrupulous use of AI to create a digital facsimile that purports to be us, and our work, is inherently wrong. It is therefore vital that as an industry and as legislators we work together to ensure we do all we can to protect our creative and intellectual rights as well as the very basis of who we are.

We must get this right ... you must get this right ... now ... before it is too late.

Thank you.