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Music is my aeroplane, too

On Lockdown Day Whatever, kick back and rediscover your musical side with three audio apps

An App a Day (https://www.nepalitimes.com/nt/opinion/an-app-a-day/)

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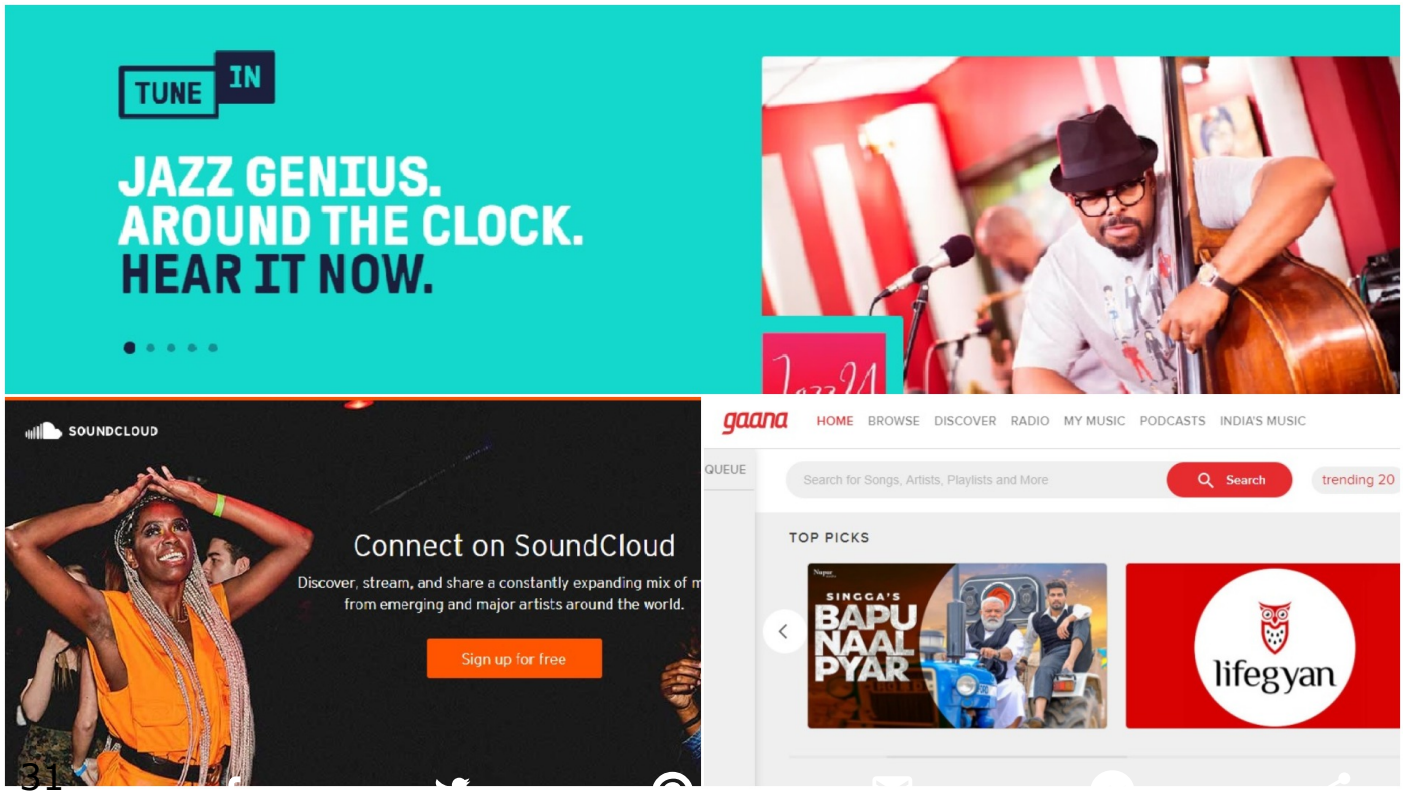
Saniaa Shah

May 6, 2020 (https://www.nepalitimes.com/opinion/music-is-my-aeroplane-too/)



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(https://zentravels.com/)

To quote Plato, music gives wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, and life to an otherwise quiet quarantine.

Between all the working from home and exercising and cooking and trying to be productive, we do need some relaxing and unwinding, don't we? Nowadays, any music, any artist, and any song in the world is yours for the taking, as long as you have decent Internet and a smartphone with a few hundred MBs to spare.

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When you wish to stream music, you probably instinctively pull up YouTube on your phone, but it sure comes with its limitations, the biggest one being: not being able to minimise the app and listen to the audio while using other apps on the phone. Play Music and Apple Music are fine as default players, but there is a buffet of music streaming apps out there to feast on. The question is: which ones?

TuneIn Radio

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An American audio streaming app over 75 million active users, TuneIn (https://tunein.com/) confirms the power of radio as a medium of news and entertainment even today. Using this one app alone, you can tune in to unlimited music with thousands of tracks, channels and genres to pick from, news broadcasts, podcasts by channels like TED or absolutely any local radio station in any part of the world. All this for free, with no sign-in or registering.

TuneIn Radio steams 100,000+ AM radio, FM radio and Internet radio stations from around the world, which explains its massive listenership. Stations can be searched by language (from Afrikaans to Malayalam to Welsh) or location, or check out 'trending' stations.

Podcasts are all the rage worldwide lately due the pandemic, since creators are unable to shoot videos and produce multimedia content. A large chunk of stations come under 'News', a section under which you can tune into news according to category, such as Coronavirus News, Business News and Arts & Entertainment News.

If you can ignore the occasional audio or still-image ad, unless you can pay for the Premium version of the app, TuneInRadio is a melophile's delight and worth every little byte.

Download TuneIn for Apple here (https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/tunein-radio-live-news-music/id418987775)
Download TuneIn for Android here (https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=tunein.player&hl=en)

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Gaana

Love it or hate it, Bollywood music has shaped Nepali childhoods, immortalised teenage love stories and filled not just our radio stations but our hearts. Gaana (https://gaana.com/) is a one-stop app for streaming Bollywood music, regional Indian music and popular English music. With unique shows, podcasts and Hindi radio channels as added features, Gaana expands its portfolio beyond music to varied audio content.

Unlike Jio Saavn (https://www.jiosaavn.com/), a competing app whose primary audience is also Bollywood music lovers, Gaana offers its free user endless songs, with display ads inserted, so one can make the most of the app without upgrading to Gaana Plus, the paid version. With a collection of 30-40 million MP3 tracks, Gaana employs a team of experts to curate thousands of playlists, creates lyrics videos to match your favourite songs, and also offers exclusive music videos of new pop releases.

A unique feature that gives a social aspect to listening to music, is the lyrics poster creating and sharing (via WhatsApp) option within the app. While you enjoy a song, the corresponding lines of lyrics appear on your screen, which you can grab and turn into a lyrics poster, and after selecting the appropriate background image and the right font, you can share with a friend who might relate to the words or appreciate them as independent poetry.

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The ‘Search’ button leads to a section designed to look almost exactly like the Instagram Discover feature, making it look familiar and visually exciting with video clips and colourful posters to browse through. A ‘Buzz’ button leads to a social media style feed full of news and updates on celebrities and musicians, redirecting to articles in *The Times of India*, *Bollywood Hungama* and such entertainment news portals along with original video content by Gaana that can be liked (tap on the heart, just like Insta) and shared externally with friends.

The Gaana team focuses on curating playlists based on mood (Romance is a popular category), weather (Rainy Day Unwind, anyone?) and typical daily activities like the Homework Playlist 2020 is the perfect study mix, while Workout Bollywood Style is different from your typical workout motivation jam. You can also create your own playlist by collecting artists, albums or specific songs and lining them up on your own.

If Arijit Singh’s slow sad songs, A.R. Rahman’s complex compositions or Neha Kakkar’s dance numbers are not your cup of tea, there are plenty international artists like Selena Gomez, The Chainsmokers, Imagine Dragons and legendary artists like Elvis Presley, Bob Dylan and Frank Sinatra waiting for you to press Play and sway to their famous tunes.

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You can check out jazz trumpeter Chet Baker, trippy tunes by Tame Impala, and the funky Mumbai-based duo Madboy/Mink. To put it simply, Gaana is much, much more than just Bollywood, so do give it a shot and get transported to a wonderful, wide world of music.

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SoundCloud

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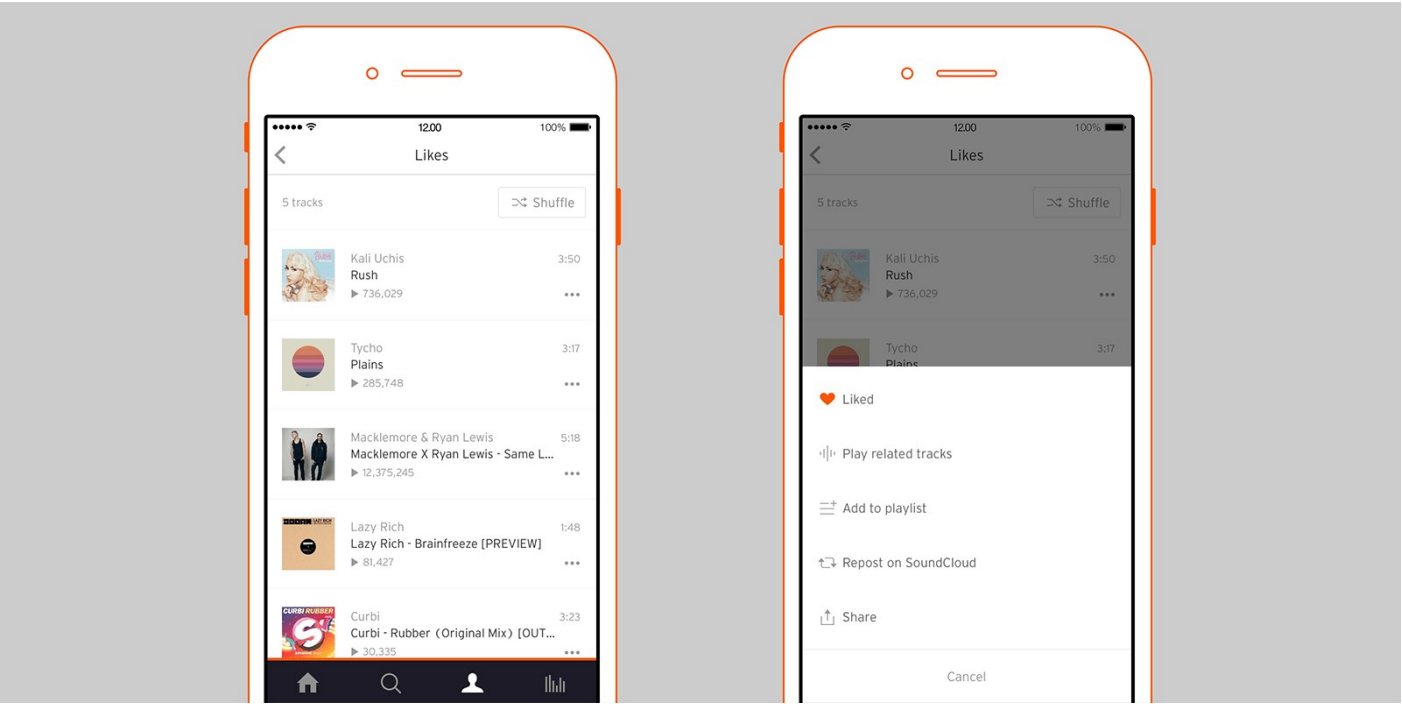

A co-worker introduced me to SoundCloud five years ago because it smoothly played audio despite buggy Internet, and it was easier to enjoy music while working without risking letting the boss see blown up images of an album cover or music video playing on YouTube on my screen. Soundcloud was open, democratic and a hundred percent cool then, and still is. Anybody can upload any audio track or music for free, and global audiences can enjoy it, add it to their playlist, or download it onto their computers easily.

SoundCloud does not use fancy bells and whistles to attract users, it believes that the discerning ear will invariably log on to discover audio worth appreciating. The user interface and design is lean, with a small cover image leading to audio-wave like horizontal tracks laid out in a creative, complicated-looking but actually very simple way. Every orange play button leads to a different track, and every track has a timeline where you can highlight a particular point and insert a comment at, to correspond to the exact second that you find particularly satisfying or pleasing to listen to. As a user, you can point your cursor at other users' thumbnail images and read their comments chronologically, as the track progresses, as if you are all experiencing every musical or intellectual moment of the track together.

Unlike sales-focused big-ticket music release channelssuch as VEVO, SoundCloud makes it super easy for bands and independent artists to drop studio experiments, demo tracksand mixtapes for their followers to enjoy and give feedback. The casual vibe that the platform emits really contributes to a liberating and stress-free creative environment for musicians of all kinds to share their work. No matter where they are in terms of their career, find an audience they will – and that is a solid motivation for artists who struggle to justify why they're keeping at it.

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Downloading tracks or creating personal playlists makes collecting music instant and fun for passionate curators using SoundCloud to put together a party mix or, on a deeper level, expand their horizons. Audio geeks and bloggers will thank their stars when they come across the unfussy and user-friendly way that SoundCloud tracks can be embedded into external websites.

Even when it comes to automatic curation, it looks like minimalism runs deep in SoundCloud's system. Tracks are indiscriminately placed under the sections 'Chill', 'Party', 'Relax', 'Study', 'Workout' and 'Sleep on the app feed. Once you start actively using the app, real-time personalisation and recommendations get integrated into your feed, with sections like 'More of what you like' and 'Artists you should follow' to help you discover more, new musicwithout wasting time on other music-related sites.

Indie Nepali artists Jerusha Rai, Bartika Eam Rai and Diwas Gurung have been naturally gathering followers on Soundcloud. Meanwhile, the funny, feminist podcast BojuBajai is probably the only Nepali podcast that has found a decent audience on the app, and for good reason. SoundCloud, truly a platform of creative opportunities, proves to be the music streaming app for the artist and the audience, both treated as one and the same.

Download SoundCloud for Apple here (https://apps.apple.com/us/app/soundcloud-music-audio/id336353151)
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