

Creating Music for Shorts Videos as a Transition to a New Modern Art Form

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the study of the phenomenon of creating music for short video clips (Shorts) as a new and significant direction in contemporary art. In the era of digital technologies and the rapid development of social networks such as TikTok, YouTube Shorts, and Instagram Reels, music has become an integral part of successful content. It not only accompanies videos but also defines their mood, rhythm, and virality. The article provides a detailed analysis of how the Shorts format influences compositional decisions, the creation of memorable musical “hooks,” and the role of music in increasing audience engagement. Special attention is given to the technical aspects of creating music for Shorts, including optimizing sound for mobile devices and using simple melodies and rhythms. The article explores how the accessibility of tools and platforms for music creation contributes to the democratization of musical creativity, opening doors for new talents. The article also examines the impact of music for Shorts on the music industry as a whole. The success of music in Shorts can lead to the revival of old hits and the popularization of new genres. In conclusion, the creation of music for Shorts is considered an independent art form that requires composers to possess not only musical knowledge and skills but also an understanding of the digital environment, user psychology, and social media trends. In the future, we can expect further development of this direction, the emergence of new techniques and tools, and the integration of music for Shorts into other forms of art.

Keywords

TikTok, YouTube Shorts, Instagram Reels

1. Introduction

In the era of digital technologies and the rapid development of social networks,

the format of short video clips has firmly established itself in the media landscape. Platforms such as TikTok, YouTube Shorts, and Instagram Reels have become powerful tools for self-expression, promotion, and entertainment. These platforms have not only changed the way content is consumed but have also created new opportunities for creativity, particularly in the field of music. YouTube Shorts is the short-form section of the online video-sharing platform YouTube.

YouTube Shorts are vertical videos that are of less than 180 seconds duration, and have various features for user interaction. Videos were limited to 60 seconds prior to September 2024. Creators earn money based on the amount of views they receive, or through Google Ads.

As of May 2024, Shorts have collectively earned over 5 trillion views since the platform was made available to the general public on July 13th, 2021, including views that pre-date the YouTube Shorts feature. The increased popularity of YouTube Shorts has led to concerns about addiction for especially teenagers.

2. Relevance of the Topic

The Shorts format has evolved beyond a mere trend into a cultural phenomenon that influences how we perceive and create art. In this context, music has ceased to be just background noise—it has become an independent element capable of making videos go viral. A memorable melody or rhythm can serve as the foundation for challenges, memes, and even new musical trends. As a result, the creation of music for Shorts is transforming into a new form of contemporary art, demanding from composers not only musical knowledge and skills but also an understanding of the digital environment, user psychology, and social media trends.

3. Objectives and Tasks of the Article

The goal of this article is to explore how the creation of music for Shorts is becoming a new direction in contemporary art and to analyze its impact on the music industry and culture as a whole. To achieve this goal, the article addresses the following tasks:

- Analysis of the features of the Shorts format and their influence on compositional decisions.
- Investigation of the role of music in enhancing content virality.
- Examination of the technical aspects of creating music for short videos.
- Consideration of the impact of music for Shorts on the music industry, including the revival of old hits and the popularization of new genres.
- Forecasting the future of this direction and its integration into other forms of art.

4. Problematic Aspects

One of the key challenges associated with creating music for Shorts is the need to convey a powerful emotional and artistic message within a limited time frame. Composers are forced to create music that instantly captures the listener's atten-

tion and remains memorable from the very first seconds. This requires not only a creative approach but also a deep understanding of the audience, their preferences, and behavior in the digital environment. Additionally, the accessibility of music creation tools leads to the democratization of musical creativity, which, on the one hand, opens doors for new talents but, on the other hand, creates intense competition.

5. Research Methodology

The article employs both theoretical and practical approaches. The theoretical part is based on an analysis of existing research in the fields of the music industry, digital content, and the psychology of perception. The practical part includes case studies of viral tracks on TikTok and YouTube Shorts.

6. Features of the Shorts Format and Their Influence on Music

The format of short video clips (Shorts) has become one of the most popular types of content on social media platforms such as TikTok, YouTube Shorts, and Instagram Reels. Its unique characteristics, including limited duration, high dynamism, and mobile-first orientation, significantly influence music creation. In this section, we will explore in detail how the specifics of the Shorts format shape new demands for composers and how music adapts to these conditions.

6.1. Limited Time and the Need for a “Musical Hook”

One of the key features of the Shorts format is its brevity. Videos last between 15 and 60 seconds, requiring composers to create a memorable “musical hook” within the first few seconds. A “musical hook” is a short but striking fragment of melody or rhythm that instantly captures the listener’s attention and remains in their memory.

- **Example:** Many viral tracks on TikTok, such as Måneskin - “I wanna be your slave” or Doja Cat - “Paint The Town Red,” begin with a bright and memorable musical fragment that immediately grabs the viewer’s attention.
- **Technical Aspects:** To create such a hook, composers often use simple yet powerful melodies, repetitive rhythms, and striking sound effects. This allows the music to “hook” the listener from the very first seconds.

6.2. Synchronization of Music with Visuals

Music in Shorts must perfectly align with the visual content, enhancing its mood and dynamics. This requires composers to possess not only musical talent but also an understanding of visual art.

- **Emotional Impact:** Music can amplify the emotions conveyed through the video. For example, a fast rhythm and energetic melody can emphasize the dynamics of a dance video, while a slow, melancholic tune can heighten the drama of a romantic storyline.

- Example: In popular Shorts featuring dance challenges, the music is often synchronized with the dancers' movements, creating a sense of unity between sound and image (Bentley, 2021).

6.3. Understanding the Target Audience

Creating music for Shorts requires a deep understanding of the target audience's preferences. The age, interests, and musical tastes of viewers play a crucial role in determining the type of music to be created.

- Youth Audience: Platforms like TikTok primarily cater to a young audience that prefers contemporary genres such as pop, hip-hop, electronic music, and hyperpop.
- Example: Taylor Swift, in collaboration with rapper Post Malone, released the song "*Fortnight*" on April 19, 2024. This 1980s-inspired electropop ballad quickly gained popularity on TikTok, where users created videos reflecting the song's themes of love and loss. The track broke streaming records on Spotify and topped the charts in multiple countries (Thomas, 2024).

6.4. Optimizing Sound for Mobile Devices

Most users consume content through smartphones, so it is essential for the music to sound high-quality even on small speakers. This requires special attention to mixing and mastering.

- Technical Aspects: Composers must consider that low frequencies may be lost on mobile devices, so the emphasis is placed on mid and high frequencies. It is also important to avoid distortion and maintain sound clarity.
- Example: Many popular tracks for Shorts feature pronounced high frequencies and crisp percussion, making them ideal for playback on smartphones.

6.5. Use of Simple Melodies and Rhythms

Short videos require instant engagement, so composers often use simple yet memorable melodies and rhythms that are easy to reproduce and quickly "stick" in the viewer's mind.

- Example: American rapper Doechii released the song "Anxiety" on March 4, 2025, although the track was originally recorded in 2019. The composition, which samples Gotye's hit "Somebody That I Used to Know," went viral on TikTok in early 2025 as users began creating videos reflecting themes of anxiety and self-discovery. As a result, the song climbed the charts in the U.S. and the U.K., becoming Doechii's most successful single to date.
- Technical Aspects: Simple harmonies and rhythms make the music accessible to a wide audience, which is particularly important in the Shorts format. An unusual performance style with sharp shifts in intonation and tempo creates a sense of spontaneity and keeps the listener engaged. Repetitive phrases and a rhythmically precise chorus make the song easily memorable and encourage sing-alongs. A mix of chaotic sounds, a hypnotic beat, and aggressive synthesizers creates a

unique sonic texture. Doechii's vocal delivery is full of drama, making the track emotionally infectious. Catchy phrases and the song's dynamic energy make it perfect for short videos and challenges on TikTok (Deneva, 2020).

6.6. Adding Original Sound Effects

Sound effects, such as claps, clicks, or unusual samples, can add uniqueness to the music and make it more appealing to listeners.

- Example: Tracks for Shorts often incorporate sounds that mimic natural noises, such as hand claps or finger snaps, creating a sense of intimacy and engagement.
- Technical Aspects: Using samples and sound effects requires composers to have skills in audio editing and knowledge of modern technologies.

6.7. Sharp Transitions and Accelerations

Shorts often feature abrupt transitions between scenes, and the music must align with these changes. Accelerations, pauses, and sudden tempo shifts can enhance the emotional impact of the video.

- Example: In dance Shorts, sharp transitions in the music are often synchronized with changes in the dancers' movements, creating a sense of surprise and dynamism.
- Technical Aspects: To create such effects, composers use techniques like time-stretching or audio compression, as well as sudden changes in volume.

6.8. Blending Genres

One of the key features of music for Shorts is the blending of various musical genres and styles. This allows for the creation of original sounds that stand out among other videos.

- Example: Tracks that combine elements of pop, hip-hop, and electronic music, such as Cardi B - "Bongos," (2023) gain popularity due to their versatility and ability to attract diverse audiences.
- Technical Aspects: Blending genres requires composers to have a deep knowledge of different musical styles and the ability to combine them into a cohesive whole.

7. The Influence of Music on Content Virality

Music plays a key role in the virality of content in the Shorts format. It not only sets the mood and rhythm of the video but also makes it memorable, emotionally engaging, and, as a result, viral. In this section, we will explore how music influences content virality, which elements of music contribute to its spread, and provide examples of successful cases.

7.1. Music as the Foundation for Viral Trends and Challenges

When a track becomes popular on platforms like TikTok or Instagram Reels, users

begin creating their own videos using that music, leading to its widespread dissemination.

- Example: In October 2024, French DJ David Guetta and American singer Ava Max released a new version of the classic 1984 hit *Forever Young*. The song gained a second life due to the viral popularity of the original on TikTok in September 2024, which led to it topping the TikTok Billboard Top 50 chart. Guetta and Max's remix incorporated modern electronic elements and new verses, fueling its widespread success on short-form video platforms and inspiring over 3 million creations on TikTok.
- Mechanism of Virality: When music becomes the basis for a challenge, it becomes associated with a specific type of content. This encourages users to create their own versions, leading to repeated playback of the track and its widespread distribution (Sibeldin, 2021).

7.2. Memorable “Musical Hooks”

As mentioned earlier, a “musical hook” is a short but striking fragment of melody or rhythm that instantly captures the listener’s attention and remains in their memory.

- Example: Russian bloggers Betsy and Maria Yankovskaya released the song “Sigma Boy” on October 4, 2024. The track became an international phenomenon thanks to its viral popularity on TikTok, landing on the charts of streaming services like Spotify and YouTube. The song topped the global Viral 50 Global chart on Spotify, showcasing how local tracks can gain worldwide recognition through short-form video platforms.
- Psychological Aspect: The musical hook of “Sigma Boy” lies in its hypnotic, monotonous rhythm combined with a minimalist yet catchy synth motif and repetitive lyrics. This structure creates a “sticky” effect, making it highly adaptable for TikTok short videos and perfect for challenges and memes (Gateway to Russia, 2024).

7.3. Emotional Impact of Music

Music has the ability to amplify the emotions conveyed through a video. This makes the content more memorable.

- Example: Slow, melancholic tracks like Lola Young - “Messy” (2024) are often used in romantic or dramatic Shorts. These tracks enhance the emotional impact of the video, making it more touching and memorable.
- Engagement Effect: When music evokes strong emotions, viewers are more likely to interact with the content—liking, commenting, and sharing the video.

7.4. Music as a Tool for Creating Memes

Music often becomes the foundation for memes that spread across social media. Short, memorable fragments of tracks can be used in humorous or satirical videos,

contributing to their virality.

- Example: The track “Yes, And?”—Ariana Grande (2024) gained popularity through its use in memes, where users created humorous videos set to the track. This led to the track becoming widely recognized and extensively used in Shorts.
- Spread Mechanism: Memes based on music often have high virality potential, as they are easily reproducible and adaptable to different contexts.

7.5. Music as a Way to Boost Brand Recognition

For brands, music in Shorts can become a powerful tool for increasing recognition and engagement. Unique music created specifically for a brand can help it stand out from competitors.

- Example: “My Love Mine All Mine”—Mitski (for Zara). Zara featured this track in their Fall 2024 campaign. Users created cozy aesthetic videos showcasing the brand’s clothing to the song’s melancholic vibe.
- Recognition Effect: When music is associated with a brand, it becomes part of its identity, increasing recognition and audience loyalty (McLuhan, 2023).

7.6. Music and Social Media Algorithms

The algorithms of platforms like TikTok and Instagram actively promote content featuring popular music. Videos using trending tracks are more likely to appear in recommendations, increasing their virality.

- Example: Tracks that gain popularity on TikTok often appear in the “For You” (FYP) playlists, leading to their mass distribution. Videos using these tracks also receive more views and interactions.
- Algorithm Mechanism: Platform algorithms take into account the popularity of music when recommending content. The more users use a track in their videos, the higher the likelihood it will go viral.

7.7. Music as a Way to Attract New Audiences

When music goes viral, it attracts new audiences not only to the track itself but also to the content in which it is used. This is particularly important for emerging musicians and content creators.

- Example: Lil Nas X’s “Old Town Road” went viral through its use in Shorts, leading to massive popularity and attracting a new audience to the artist.
- Synergy Effect: The virality of music and content are interconnected. When a track becomes popular, it draws attention to the video, and conversely, viral videos contribute to the popularity of the music.

8. The Democratization of Music Creation

The Shorts format and the accessibility of modern technologies for music creation have led to a significant democratization of musical creativity. Now, anyone with

minimal skills and internet access can create and distribute their own music.

8.1. Accessibility of Software and Online Services

- Examples of Software:
 - FL Studio.
 - Ableton Live.
 - GarageBand.
- Online Services:
 - Soundtrap.
 - BandLab (Sarah Perez, 2023).

8.2. Social Media as a Platform for Promotion

Social networks such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube have become powerful tools for promoting music.

- Example: Many artists, such as Lil Nas X and Doja Cat, began their careers by publishing music on platforms like TikTok and SoundCloud. Their tracks went viral, leading to massive popularity.
- Promotion Mechanism: Social media allows musicians to interact directly with their audience, receive feedback, and quickly gain popularity.

8.3. Collaborations and Communities

- Example: On platforms like SoundCloud and BandLab, musicians can connect, share their work, and create collaborative tracks. This is especially useful for beginner artists who want to learn from more experienced peers.
- Community Effect: Collaborations and the exchange of experience contribute to the development of musical skills and the creation of higher-quality content.

8.4. Educational Resources and Courses

- Examples of Resources:
 - YouTube: The platform hosts numerous channels dedicated to music creation, such as “Andrew Huang” and “You Suck at Producing,” offering free lessons on using DAWs, creating melodies, and mixing.
 - Coursera and Udemy: These platforms offer paid courses on music creation, covering both basic and advanced techniques.
- Learning Effect: Educational resources enable aspiring musicians to quickly acquire the necessary skills and start creating music, even without formal music education (Sibeldin, 2021).

8.5. Monetization and Independence

Musicians can independently release their music without relying on major labels and earn income through streaming platforms and social media.

- Example: Platforms like Spotify, Apple Music, and Bandcamp allow musicians to upload their tracks independently and earn revenue from streaming and sales.

- Independence Effect: Independent musicians retain full control over their creative work and receive a larger share of the income from their music (Pierce, 2022).

8.6. Global Audience

- Example: Artists from Africa and Latin America, such as Burna Boy and Rosalía, have achieved worldwide popularity thanks to platforms like Spotify and YouTube.
- Globalization Effect: Musicians can find their audience worldwide, fostering cultural exchange and diversity in the music industry.

8.7. Potential Drawbacks of Musical Democratization

In my assessment, the democratization of music creation has unequivocally expanded opportunities for artists who previously lacked access to professional studios, high-end equipment, and record labels. However, as with any sociocultural shift, this phenomenon presents both advantages and significant challenges that warrant scholarly examination.

- Market Saturation and Diminished Visibility

The proliferation of smartphone-based production tools and digital audio workstations (DAWs) has enabled widespread content creation. This oversaturation of digital platforms has created a hypercompetitive environment where even exceptional talent struggles to achieve audience engagement.

- Erosion of Quality Standards

While reduced barriers to entry promote inclusivity, they do not inherently ensure artistic merit. Algorithmic curation systems prioritizing virality frequently reward formulaic compositions emphasizing simplicity and “hook-based” structures over musical complexity or innovation.

- Algorithmic Constraints on Artistic Expression

Platform architectures (e.g., TikTok, Spotify) increasingly dictate creative parameters through enforced brevity, repetitive song structures, and tempo standardization. This institutionalizes creative homogenization and potentially stifles experimental approaches.

- Recontextualization of Music as Ancillary Content

The predominant consumption model now frames music as utilitarian audio-backing rather than a primary artistic medium. Viral success often correlates with functional adaptability to visual content formats rather than intrinsic musical value.

- Countervailing Opportunities

Conversely, this democratization has disrupted traditional gatekeeping mechanisms. Independent artists can now cultivate niche audiences without institutional mediation, while genre hybridization has become empirically more prevalent across streaming platforms.

- The Core Dilemma

The pivotal question remains whether artists can maintain equilibrium between

algorithmically optimized content and substantive artistic expression. Historical analysis reveals cyclical patterns of commercial simplification within music industries, yet truly innovative practitioners consistently develop strategies to transcend mass-market constraints.

9. Primary Challenges in Balancing Artistic Merit and Viral Potential

9.1. Temporal Constraints

Music for Shorts must capture attention within the first seconds, leading to simplified musical structures, short hooks, and repetitive motifs.

Artistic concepts may suffer as complex musical ideas are difficult to convey within 15 - 30 second formats.

9.2. Algorithmic Formatting Requirements

TikTok and Shorts algorithms favor music with clear rhythms, memorable melodies, and strong hook potential.

Composers are compelled to create tracks featuring abrupt dynamic shifts, tempo accelerations, or vocal phrases that may become memes.

9.3. Commercialization and Predictability

High competition among music producers leads to widespread replication of successful formulas, reducing musical distinctiveness.

Creators may abandon artistic experimentation due to concerns that unconventional approaches will fail to gain traction.

9.4. Trend Conformity Pressures

Virality requires adherence to current trends (e.g., specific beats, samples, effects).

This may constrain creative freedom, as composers focus more on replicating “success formulas” than personal expression.

9.5. Devaluation of Complete Musical Works

The popularity of short-form content conditions listeners to prefer song fragments over full versions.

Some artists create music solely for trends, neglecting cohesive albums and conceptual projects.

9.6. The Artistic Compromise: Assessing the Risks

While compromise is possible, it does not always equate to quality degradation:

Positive Aspect: Musicians learn to adapt their art to modern formats, creating minimalist yet expressive compositions.

Negative Aspect: The risk of homogenized content increases, where “trend songs” dominate over artistically valuable works.

9.7. Strategies for Maintaining Balance

- Develop a dual approach: create viral tracks for promotion while releasing full-length versions with deeper composition.
- Pursue uniqueness within trends: maintain a recognizable style even when producing social media-oriented music.
- Utilize short-form formats as tools to attract audiences to more complex artistic works.

10. The Impact of Music for Shorts on the Music Industry

The consumption of music in short-form formats can lead to a shift in how music is perceived overall. Composers are forced to create music focused on instant memorability and replayability. The success of music in Shorts can influence the popularity of certain genres and styles in the music industry.

The influence of viral music and short-form video formats (e.g., Shorts, TikTok, Reels) on traditional music structures is already evident, and this trend is poised to intensify. Below are key transformations emerging in response to the growing dominance of bite-sized, algorithm-driven content:

- -Simplification and Structural Adaptation

Shorter Track Lengths: The traditional 3 - 4-minute song is being supplanted by 1.5 - 2-minute compositions optimized for platform attention spans.

Modular Design: Songs are increasingly crafted with self-contained, high-impact segments (e.g., intro + chorus) to facilitate clipping for short-form videos.

- The Primacy of the “Hook”

Platform-Centric Composition: Artists now prioritize creating 5 - 15-second “hook-laden” fragments (e.g., catchy beats, vocal stunts, or rhythmic drops) designed to trend as audio memes.

Fragment-Driven Virality: A song’s success may hinge entirely on one viral moment rather than its holistic artistic value, altering creative incentives.

- Algorithmic Determinism in Creativity

Formulaic Optimization: TikTok’s and Spotify’s algorithms reward specific attributes (e.g., 100 - 125 BPM tempos, repetitive structures), prompting artists to conform to platform-derived templates.

Platform-First Creation: Music is now often conceived for algorithmic discovery rather than radio, albums, or organic listener engagement.

- Promotion and Monetization Shifts

Pre-Release Testing: Artists deploy 15 - 30-second teasers in Shorts/Reels to gauge audience response before official drops.

Influencer Synergy: Collaborations with content creators to seed songs in challenges have become a primary marketing channel.

Direct Social Monetization: Revenue from platform-native features (e.g., TikTok’s Creator Fund, YouTube’s ad-share for Shorts) rivals traditional streaming payouts.

- Live Performance Adaptations

Concerts as Content Farms: Performances integrate “clip-ready” moments (e.g., choreographed transitions, visual stunts) to maximize shareability.

Hybrid Setlists: Live shows blend full tracks with abbreviated “viral versions” to cater to short-form recording.

- The Decline of the Album Era

Playlist Dominance: Listeners increasingly favor algorithmically curated playlists over cohesive albums, reducing demand for thematic or narrative-driven projects.

The “Always-On” Release Model: Artists prioritize frequent singles/EPs to sustain algorithmic visibility, sidelining traditional album cycles.

The rise of short-form content and viral music is undeniably transforming the music industry, compelling traditional formats to adapt. While some critics dismiss this shift as an oversimplification of art, it is, in fact, fostering a new era of creative innovation—one where technology, content, and artistic expression merge into a dynamic symbiosis.

The role of music in short videos continues to evolve, with the growing use of artificial intelligence (AI) in content creation playing a significant part. However, AI is unlikely to completely replace traditional music composition—rather, it will become a powerful tool that enhances the music creation process for social media.

- AI has democratized music production by enabling creators without formal musical training to generate melodies, rhythms, or complete tracks by simply specifying parameters such as genre, mood, and tempo.
- AI facilitates the creation of unique musical compositions tailored to individual videos, adapting to visual content and emotional tone. In the future, content creators will be able to access automatically generated tracks that perfectly match their video content.
- AI-generated music can analyze current trends and produce tracks that align with viral styles.
- Despite AI’s capabilities, human-composed music and authentic artistic creativity will remain foundational to musical content. Audiences value personal narratives, emotional authenticity, and musicians’ unique styles. Viral tracks on social media are often tied to specific artists, and trends initiated by musicians drive engagement with their full releases, concerts, and brand collaborations.
- AI can assist in adapting tracks for different social media platforms—for example, creating shortened versions for Shorts or slowed-down/sped-up variations for trends. Artists may use AI to generate drafts and ideas, which they can then refine manually. Composers can leverage AI for arrangements and sound design.
- AI-generated music also raises questions about authorship and ownership. Who holds the rights to a track created by AI? Many platforms are already implementing tools to identify and monetize such content, which may lead to significant changes in music licensing practices.

Examples of the Impact of Shorts on the Music Industry

Revival of Old Hits: Many older songs, such as Fleetwood Mac's "Dreams," have experienced a resurgence thanks to their use in Shorts. TikTok users began using the track en masse in their videos, leading to a sharp increase in streaming numbers.

Popularization of New Genres: The Shorts format promotes the popularization of new musical genres. Genres, with their simple yet memorable melodies, are ideally suited for short videos.

11. Conclusion

Creating music for Shorts is not just background accompaniment but an independent art form that requires composers to possess not only musical knowledge and skills but also an understanding of the digital environment, user psychology, and social media trends. Music for Shorts plays a key role in content virality, trend formation, and the discovery of new talents. This new format undoubtedly influences the perception and consumption of music as a whole, shaping a new culture of musical content. In the future, we can expect further development of this direction, the emergence of new techniques and tools, and the integration of music for Shorts into other forms of art (Groys, 2023).

AI will not replace traditional music composition for social media platforms, but will significantly transform the music creation process. Viral trends will emerge at the intersection of technology and human creativity: musicians will utilize AI as a tool to accelerate production, while content creators will be able to personalize musical accompaniment for their videos. Consequently, we are witnessing not a displacement, but rather a convergence of artificial intelligence and musical artistry.

Balancing art and virality remains one of the key challenges in today's music industry. While creators making music for Shorts must adapt to new realities, this doesn't require abandoning artistic expression altogether. Successful artists find ways to maintain originality while still following trends.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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