

Music Piracy – The Internet, The Future of Music, One Person's personal views.

Music Piracy on the Internet today is so rampant and apart of the very fabric that is the Internet people don't think twice when they say "Go download this song...". I truly think that Music Piracy is the one of the few things keeping the music industry afloat. On one side the RIAA and other organizations would have you believe that you are stealing the food out of the very mouths of the artists themselves. On the other side you have entire sectors of an industry that have sprung up or have built themselves on selling pieces parts of Music Piracy. What follows are my own personal views and are not sanctioned by any one body. If you have a problem with my views, feel free to inform me of your difference in thought. Just keep it under control.

Music Piracy is as old as recording technology itself. People have always recorded concerts or events that they may not have had authorization to record. These people were generally far and few between and posed little threat to the machine that perpetuated music across our world. Sometime in the mid 1990's the Internet caught on as a communications medium. Pretty quickly people were trying different things on the Internet. One of these things was "Streaming Music" which was/is the process of a file being played while you are downloading it. This was nice for promotional reasons and was easy to control. Then along came MP3, which not only sounded better then streamed audio it was also downloaded to a users hard drive and stored there. To be played as many times as a person wanted. This was still not a problem for the RIAA since a few geeks on the Internet were making copies of the CD's they had bought. As long as the person had bought the CD who cared?

So people started to amass large collections of music. Since all of the music was on a computer people started to trade music on Local Area Networks (LAN). Pretty quick a

couple of college students figured out the best way to trade music was to put their collections on the internet. Napster was born out of that thought. That was late 1998 early 1999. Fast-forward a year to April 2000. The RIAA finally figures out what is going on with Napster and begins the process of trying to shutdown the network ultimately the RIAA succeeds. During the RIAA fight and after the eventual shutdown of Napster a new crop of music service rise out of the Internet. Some are pay for play models others are free file sharing networks. Somewhere along the line the RIAA gets the idea that people are not buying recorded music anymore. For the market report year end 2001 the RIAA reports that music sales have fell 10.3%. From the previous year. Among the factors blamed the Terrorist attacks of 9/11, a sluggish economy, and online music piracy and CD Burning. (http://www.riaa.com/News_Story.cfm?id=491)

Now talking from a purely business standpoint. If I am in a luxury goods business or business that allows people to spend their extra money I would expect that I would see a sales hit from time to time due to outside influences. In an industry that makes billions of dollars annually a 10.3% dip in sales is a pretty good chunk of change. Now I have no control over Terrorists and the Economy but I do have some control over the Internet. This is the type of thinking that leads to bad things for the consumer, things that could ultimately prove to be fundamentally bad for the consumer. A few of the things that RIAA would like to see in place are;

- DRM Digital Rights Management, software that lets the computer control how and where a song can be played.

- P2P blocking, this would be the turning the tap off at the source method.

- A complete reworking of recorded music from the ground up.

These are the major things the RIAA would like to see happen to protect it's assets. I do think that ultimately something does have to be done, however I do think that the RIAA and music consumers can come to some sort of understanding.

Lets go back to the 10.3% dip in sales for 2001. I would propose another possible cause for the dip in sales. **Lack of choice in music for consumers to purchase.** I am in my

early 20's and I've been a music consumer for well over 10 years now. I can honestly say that there is nothing out there that I have heard on the radio that I would buy. Why? Simple I've heard it all before, there is nothing compelling to buy music. No great social causes, no great bands, nothing. Just the same stuff I've been listening to for the last 10 years repackaged into another form. To put the above statement in less than elegant terms... music sucks right now.

This may not account for all 10.3% of all the lost music sales in 2001 but it helps to put a different light on things. I'm curious to see the sales totals for 2002. In 2000 I bought 8 CD's in 2001 I bought 4 CD's in 2002 I bought 1 CD. Meanwhile the amount of money I had to spend on entertainment grew from year to year. Why did I buy fewer CD's? Simply I found the music that was coming out to be less than great and I didn't feel that I needed to spend my money on these items.

I'm one consumer with some disposable income, the real consumers that the RIAA and Music Industry in general needs to be worried about are the 13 year old girls out there that have 80GB hard drives full of music they have downloaded. Why? Because these are the consumers of least resistance. These are the consumers that will buy or take things that they want without regard to how their money was acquired. They aren't the only reason out there, but they help to start to explain the question.

What can the RIAA do to help stem the tide of Music Piracy? First the RIAA has to realize that Internet is not a threat it is an opportunity. That is the first lesson; the second lesson is P2P networks provide the greatest single source of advertising for music. Third lesson don't bite the hand that feeds you. The first and third lessons are easy enough for the RIAA to figure out for themselves... the second lesson is more of a puzzle let's take a closer look at it.

P2P networks provide users with almost instant access to all the music that they could ever want with just a few clicks of the mouse. The RIAA's beef with P2P networks is

they allow people to make entire CD's available on the Internet. Which in turn allows people to download and burn a CD that they did not pay for.

I think a possible way for the RIAA to use the P2P network system would be something that allows users to download music still but only singles and not entire albums. Yes this would still cut in music sales, but this method would provide for a way for the RIAA to put new music out there or as a way push older music. My hope is that people would download the music and then if they liked it go and buy the album or purchase more songs by the artist. Now this is a personal opinion, This also happens to fly in the face of one of my core beliefs that all information should be freely available to anyone at anytime. I find this to be a much more palatable solution then being forced to use a computer or other electronic device that has Digital Rights Management Technology built in to it so that I can do with the Music I bought as I please.

This editorial only scratches the very surface of the music piracy. I hope that this paper compels you to think next time you download a song. Don't think about the starving artist think about a better way to do download the music so that all parties win in the end. As always this document is Copyleft feel free to use any part or the whole just remember to give credit to me.

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