

Students in America say that file sharing is a good thing for the music industry.



THE MP3 CONTROVERSY

By Joseph England

MP3s are an easy and convenient way to store music on your computer's hard drive. The internet has made it very easy to download your favorite songs onto your computer with just a simple click of a button. Most sites, for a small fee, allow you access to the music of your choice and are approved by the music industry in America. Free MP3 sharing sites such as Napster have failed because of American copyright laws. That being said, there is no way to stop websites in other countries that have no copyright laws from MP3 sharing. The effort to police those internet companies is to prosecute the people here in the United States that use the sites. College students have come under attack because they are the ones that use these sites the most. Students in America say that file sharing is a good thing for

the music industry because it allows them to listen to an album and decide if they like it or not before they buy the CD. The music industry argues that CD sales have dropped a lot since file sharing began. Money, of course is the bottom line and there doesn't seem to be an easy solution to the problem.

One band, Pearl Jam, has used the MP3s to their advantage by releasing all of their concerts in an official bootleg series. Once you purchase the CD, the Pearl Jam website allows you access to all of the songs from that particular show for MP3 download. They also send you an official CD in the mail. This is an inexpensive way to satisfy both parties' interests. Also, MP3s are a good way for a band to gain recognition. If a small band uses their website to release their music in MP3

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format at a cheap, or free price, then they can get the exposure they are missing. Record companies have a way to find good bands through these websites.

MP3s offer a great marketing tool for record companies whose bands are not receiving great publicity. One might purchase a CD after listening to an MP3 of an album that they may not have purchased because they had never heard of the band or their music. If a band is good enough, people will buy their CD even with file sharing available.

It is clear that MP3s are the future of music and are easy for consumers to access. It is best for everyone to find a way to make it work. The last thing the music industry should do is to attack college students because they are the ones that purchase the most music. If they decide to prosecute everyone that shares MP3s in college, then they will lose a lot of the people who are buying albums and nobody will win. It is true that the industry could lose some money in the short term, but if they look at the long-term effects it is obvious that prosecuting students will do more damage than good. The ones that share MP3s and don't buy albums will continue to do it even if there is a law, but those that buy albums after hearing MP3s are the ones that will stop buying records if they prosecute them.

The controversy of file sharing is a difficult one to fix, however, with a little planning the music industry can turn this problem into something good and discover that the positives are greater than any losses in the long term. *SW?*

KEY VOCABULARY FOR THIS ARTICLE

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Bootleg: unofficial copies
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Prosecute: to take someone to court
with lawyers and a judge