

# How the internet has affected music

[Technology](#), [Internet](#)



Before the invention of the Internet, Music was available from many sources. Most commonly, people would venture out into their local town and buy CD's and records from music stores such as HMV and Virgin. Sometimes they would even record a friend's CD onto tape instead of buying it. With the advance of technology, people could even record from CD to CD. Music piracy existed before the invention of the Internet. This essay will focus on the effects the Internet has had on the Music industry

Microsoft are one of the most important companies involved in this issue because they make they make the most readily recognised software to access the Internet and to stream media. (Streaming media is when media is listened to or watched when the media is situated on the Internet and not on your computer). Due to Microsoft's monopolisation of the software market, few other companies were significant. However, in previous years, other companies have started to greatly affect the Internet side of this story. The most well known story of a company defying Microsoft's power is the story of Napster and Metallica.

Napster provided a free file-sharing service which let millions of users across the Internet 'share' their music files, which meant anyone with this program could download any music that was on another user's computer. Metallica, a Heavy Metal band formed in 1981, are the second highest grossing Heavy Metal band after Iron Maiden. They filed a lawsuit against Napster in the US District Court, Central District of California, alleging that the company encourages piracy by enabling and allowing its users to trade copyrighted songs through its servers.

This is the main disadvantage of the Internet's affects on the Music Industry. Bands, record companies and music shops are all suffering from this new craze to download or 'share' music files across the Internet. The common misconception is that the music is on the Internet, but most people get music from Peer-to-Peer programs (P2P). This means that people can share their music with the rest of the world. Users then search for the music they want and download it. Although Napster has now been reduced to a subscription based service, the main program that is used with Internet piracy is Kazaa.

Not only can you download music using this program, but you can also download videos, pictures and software through the new Broadband services available to the public. Broadband is up to ten times faster than a normal Internet connection. As you can see from above, you can find hundreds of files to download, some with a download time of only 32 seconds for one whole song. If I can draw your attention to the magnified section of the picture, you can see there was over 3 million users sharing their files at that point in time.

This is the reality of the Internet; people download albums instead of buying them, which severely damages the music industry. However, before the invention of file sharing programs, and before Windows 98, the Music Industry was beginning to be helped by the Internet Music Companies were the first to capitalise on the new medium to advertise their company. Record companies such as EMI and Sony set up websites that advertised their corporate image and focused little on product promotion.

However, with the release of Windows 98, web pages could be viewed in a secure form, where no one else but you could view the web page. (See left) Once consumers had been convinced that their credit card numbers and their personal details could not be 'hacked', the Internet was revolutionised. The most famous companies to capitalise on this technology are Amazon.com and CDNow. Both offer services where the consumer buys the product from the website, and then the product is delivered to the consumers doorstep.

The choice is overwhelming, with the consumer not only having the luxury of purchasing from home, but they also have a huge choice of products which are not available at their local record store. Here is an example of a rare Judas Priest import which is difficult to find here in the U. K. However, you simply need to type in your details and depending on how you have it shipped; you can have it the next day. This is both an advantage and a disadvantage for the Music Industry. It is positive for the consumers and the artists, because their material is easy to buy.

Conversely, it is a disadvantage for music stores because people will simply stay at home and buy music. Bands have a lot to gain from the Internet. They can promote their band by making a website full of details, pictures, news and event dates, and even samples of the band's music. This draws larger audiences for bands and they can also be 'discovered' by record companies who have seen their website. A further advantage is that bands can save money while controlling their CD sales.

A band can record their own music in a studio and then distribute it themselves, therefore cutting out the publishing costs. Finally, to the present day, where connection speeds to the Internet are rising, and the number of people sharing music is soaring. How will the Music Industry survive?

Microsoft could hold the key. It is rumoured that the next version of Windows will only play media that has been created on your computer, stopping the file sharing craze dead in its tracks. Is it true? Only time will tell.