

COMMENTARY

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Music for a song

Ever since 1999, when Napster emerged to enable music fans to download their favorite songs for free, the music industry has stumbled in the dark looking for a solution to illegal downloading. They may have finally found it.

The recording industry has joined forces with Apple to offer the iTunes Music Store. This new downloading service offers any music fan with a credit card the ability to download 200,000 songs for 99 cents apiece or \$9.99 per album, with no subscription fees.

"Consumers don't want to be treated like criminals, and artists don't want their valuable work stolen," Apple CEO Steve Jobs said in a press release. "The iTunes Music Store offers a groundbreaking solution for both."

This represents a shift from the record companies' former tactics, when they attacked Napster, flailing like a bitten animal in a blind rage. While the music industry's lawsuits succeeded in shutting down Napster, music consumers simply used other services, such as Kazaa and Morpheus.

Perhaps the recording industry has realized the futility of this tactic. By offering legal downloads, the iTunes Music Store aims to reawaken consumers to the concept of paying for music. Apple's gamble seems to be working. While it remains to be seen whether consumers will desert the many free services to plunge into legal downloading, consumers bought more than one million songs in the service's first week.

To its credit, the iTunes Music Store tries hard to be user-friendly. It lets consumers listen to 30-second song previews before deciding whether to buy the song. The music store also offers comprehensive search options, exclusive songs and free music videos.

The available music exists in AAC format, which Apple claims takes up less space and downloads faster than traditional MP3s. The files can be copied onto a CD, an iPod or up to three Macintosh computers.

The iTunes Music Store represents the music industry's realization that downloading is here to stay. That realization has been a long time coming, but the industry is making amends with this bold move.



Chuck Slothower
 Clocktower
 hush



Peter Utsey Emerald

The music store's greatest disadvantage is that it only works with Macs that have the OS X operating system, version 10.1.5 or newer. That eliminates more than 95 percent of home computer users. Fortunately, Apple plans to rectify that situation by unleashing a Windows-compatible service near the end of 2003. The service also requires iTunes 4, which can be downloaded for free from Apple's Web site.

Another disadvantage of buying songs online is that it deprives consumers of the lyrics, photos and other features frequently included in the booklets that come with store-bought CDs. However, that didn't seem to stop the Napster faithful. The iTunes Music Store also doesn't offer the bootleg music that is often the best part of free downloading services.

While the music store's library is impressive and increasing, Rhapsody has the greatest selection of the licensed downloading services, with more than 320,000 songs, according to the

San Francisco Chronicle. Unlike iTunes, however, Rhapsody charges a subscription fee of \$9.95 per month.

Finally, don't expect to find the new Floater or Courtesy Clerks album through the music store, as the service only includes music put out by the five major labels that comprise the Recording Industry Association of America.

Whatever its shortcomings, the iTunes Music Store represents the music industry's strongest effort yet to stem the tide of illegal downloading. Apple and the RIAA have seen the future, and it is good.

You can check out the iTunes Music Store for yourself at apple.com/music/store.

Contact the columnist at chuckslothower@dailyemerald.com. His opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

Taxpayers deserve their benefits

Guest commentary

I work on campus, and for nearly a year now, I have been reading the Emerald's Commentary page — I guess because I like to see what University students are thinking, but probably more because I enjoy getting worked up over controversial issues.

I have been continuously amazed at the extreme liberal opinions presented. DJ Fuller's column ("The mega-rich cash in," ODE, May 20) prompted me to finally respond. It would be easy to argue point by point with Fuller, but I would like the numbers to speak for themselves on this issue.

The following story's original author is unknown. The figures are fairly close to accurate, which can be verified at the IRS Web site. Fuller should read this story because in the real world, he will pay taxes, and this is how they work.

Every night, 10 men ate together at a restaurant. At the end of the meal, the bill for \$100 would arrive. At first they weren't sure how to divide it. They decided to pay based on how blessed they were. Because of their financial state, the first four men paid nothing at all. The fifth man paid \$3. The sixth man, feeling more blessed, paid \$5. The next three men paid \$6, \$8 and \$11, respectively. The last man, who was the richest, paid the remaining \$67.

They did this every night. One day, the restaurant manager told them because they were such good customers, he wanted to lower their bill by 20 percent. Now dinner for the 10 men would only cost \$80, and they had to divide

the savings. The first four men were unaffected. They would still eat for free. But how could the other six divvy up the \$20 windfall so everyone would get a "fair share?"

The six men realized that \$20 divided by six is \$3.33. But if they subtracted that from everybody's share, the fifth man would be paid to eat. The restaurant owner suggested that each man's reduction be based on the amount he paid. So the fifth man paid \$2, the sixth paid \$3, the seventh paid \$4, the eighth paid \$6, the ninth paid \$8, leaving the 10th man with a bill of \$57 instead of his earlier \$67. They all were better off than before. And the first four men continued eating for free.

But outside the restaurant, the men compared their savings. "I only got \$2 out of the \$20," declared the sixth man, who pointed to the 10th. "But he got \$10!"

"Yeah, that's right," exclaimed the fifth man, "I only saved a dollar. It's unfair that he got 10 times more than me! The wealthy get all the breaks!"

"We didn't get anything at all!" the first four men yelled in unison. "The system exploits the poor!"

The nine men surrounded the 10th and beat him up. The next night, he didn't show up. But when they tried to pay, the others discovered they were now \$57 short!

And that, boys and girls, journalists and college instructors, is how the tax system works. The people who pay the highest taxes get the most benefit from a reduction. Tax them too much, attack them for being wealthy, and they just may not show up at the table anymore.

Mark Butler lives in Eugene.

Letter to the editor

Officials must address park conservation

Sen. Ron Wyden and University President Dave Frohnmayer should immediately explain to the community what development is going on currently in the Riverfront Research Park area of the Willamette, near the University.

Wyden and Frohnmayer publicly supported conservation and restricting development to north of the railroad tracks until land south of the tracks was fully developed. Wyden is pushing for passage of the 21st Century Nanotechnology Research and Development Act, which will fund building the

Multi-Scale Materials and Devices Center at a proposed site along the river's edge north of the tracks.

This site would break all previous agreements made with the community because there is so much undeveloped land remaining further from the river. If these two leaders are able to directly address concerns and open debate about this development early, the many large-scale complexes are likely to be properly designed and placed.

Wyden and Frohnmayer are obligated to address the students on this very important issue.

Bryan Anderson
 OSPIRG Willamette
 Campaign organizer
 sophomore, environmental science

Last chance for letters to the editor! Send us your opinions by Tuesday!

Finals are nearly upon us, and the Emerald's last issue for the 2002-03 academic year will be Monday, June 9. The opinion page is generally planned a few days in advance of publication, so we encourage any readers who wish to submit letters to the editor or guest commentaries to do so promptly.

We have special content planned for the final issue, so Friday's Emerald will be the last time we will print reader submissions. Given the time constraints, it is unlikely we will be able to print submissions received after 5 p.m. Tuesday, although we will try.

Letters to the editor and guest commentaries are encouraged. Letters are limited to 250 words and guest commentaries to 550 words. Authors are limited to one submission per calendar month. Submission must include phone number and address for verification. The Emerald reserves the right to edit for space, grammar and style.