

FEEDBACK

The decision to buy versus stream music goes beyond how much entertainment one is 'missing.'



LET 'ER RIP!

I just finished reading Bill Howard's "Rent, Don't Rip" column (October 19, page 71), and I do not agree with his money-saving tips.

He says that buying 100 CDs will cost \$1,500 and that money would be better used renting music from online music stores. Although I agree that the \$1,500 would probably cover downloads I make from online music stores for a decade, what about the hardware needed to play the music? If you do not already own an MP3 player, then you will have to shell out anywhere from \$100 to \$300 for a portable device. And what about the devices he mentions for the car? The prices I see for a PhatNoise jukebox kit for a car range from \$300 to \$400 depending on the size of the hard drive. And then there's installation.

If I didn't own a portable player or a car player, I would be looking at \$400 to \$700 up front just for the hardware. And what happens when I fill up that player and need a new one with a bigger hard drive?

Existing CDs may not make sense to Mr. Howard, but I already have lots of them and I already own the hardware necessary to play them in my home, so why bother? Artists don't have to deal with the added time required to transfer them between devices.

CHRISTOPHER MORRIS

REASONS TO BUY MUSIC

While I sort of get the "Rent, Don't Rip" concept, I do think the decision to buy versus stream music goes beyond how much entertainment one is "missing." The reason to buy is to have access to the discographies of your favorite artists when and where you want them. Computers and digital music formats have given us so many more options for listening.

I have not found myself wanting to spend another \$10 or \$15 per month for streamed content, perhaps because I find so much of the current content to be largely undistinguished and not all that compelling. I don't feel I'm missing very much, though I'm sure there are a few bands or artists that I might want to hear more of. And if "yield management" will slowly increase streaming and usage costs, there will be even less reason

to rent music.

I find I'm buying music from the past most of the time. Just got the Faces boxed set. I'd only hear a fraction of the music on these four discs from any of the streaming providers. And I have ripped all the discs onto my iPod using the Apple Lossless format. There are very good reasons to buy music.

A far greater concern should be the erosion of fair use. Consumers who want to rip CDs onto portables or make copies for the car and for travel should be able to do so. The entertainment industry has a long, ugly history of fighting technology instead of seizing the new opportunities it offers. They love the renting concept because it means that they can create further impediments to fair use. Is there another industry that is as hostile to its customers?

EDWARD BAUMAN

VIVA XYWRITE—AND KILL WORD

John Dvorak's diatribe against Microsoft Word (September 7, page 59) was much appreciated, including his new (to me) word, "kludge." I'm stuck with Word at work, where it drives me up the wall for all the reasons he mentions plus a whole range of others, which all boil down to the fact that the program was never designed for writers. And that's why, like a surprisingly large number of people, I'm still using XyWrite for writing and editing. For ultimate safety I keep an archived version on an old DOS box, but day to day it runs happily under Windows 98 and XP, and it keeps me happy while doing so.

FRANK BROWNLOW

NET 1, JOHN DVORAK 0

It was ironic to find such an elitist piece of drivel as John Dvorak's "The Zeros vs. the Ones" (Fall 2004, page 61) in a magazine dedicated to the PC, this generation's most powerful symbol of egalitarianism. Its offspring, the Internet, is no less of an equalizer in an information marketplace dominated by individuals of the same political persuasion. The Internet is not a passive medium. That Dvorak feels "confronted" by the opinions of people he believes to be disturbed or feeble-minded may say more about him than it does about the Net.

CLAYTON LEE

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We regret that we cannot answer letters individually.

Corrections and Amplifications

■ Because of an editing error in "Smart Phones" (October 19, page 100), rumored information on a palmOne Treo 650 was printed as fact. We regret the mistake.

■ A list of on-demand application providers in "Business 11: Rent or Buy?" (October 19, page 136) contained an incorrect URL for Salesnet. It should have been <http://web.salesnet.com/index.asp>.