

I am a 'net pirate'

I have been downloading music from online services such as Kazaa for the last couple of years. I probably have about 50 CDs worth of music on my PC's hard drive and about five CDs onto which I have copied some of my favourite tracks.

I am a casual music pirate, not the tough downloader that the music industry is trying to track down, and I am not worried about the FBI, or whoever, knocking on my door to hand me an injunction.

I know what I am doing is illegal, but I feel it is no more illegal or threatening to the music industry than my videotaping of programmes from TV is threatening to broadcasters.

There is clearly a distinction between casual music piracy and the industrial-like piracy some users carry out, downloading thousands of songs, copying them onto CDs and offering them to friends.

The record industry has a valuable product to protect and is right to do so, but it will not accept the fact that the vast majority of people who download songs from the Internet do so without paying for it because there is no legitimate and convincing alternative.

For the last 10 years the music industry has resolutely refused to accept that technology and music lovers have changed and instead is clinging on to a view of the world forever stuck in 1993.

The music industry still wants us to buy expensive CD albums from record shops and does not care if we like tracks 1 to 5, but hate tracks 6 to 11.

The music industry is afraid of losing control. It is afraid of giving too much choice to consumers. It is afraid that it won't be able to dictate what, how and when we listen to music!