$0? $5.99?

$0.99?

10010110010110010101101010101010

01101001010101010011010101010101010

Music Piracy and Peer-to-Peer Music Downloading: How It Started, Its Debate, and Where People Stand on It Today

By Nick Norris

Downloading music over the internet has always been a hot discussion topic. Such discussions include its legality and whether people should pay for it or not. The three subjects presented here, on music piracy and peer-to-peer music downloading, is its history, the music piracy and peer-to-peer music downloading debate, and where music piracy and peer-to-peer music downloading stands now.

Its Start:

Music piracy and peer-to-peer music downloading first arose in the late 1990s with software programs such as Napster and Limewire. These programs allowed people to upload and download digital MP3s of songs, and full albums of music, for free without royalties being paid to the artists that created the music.
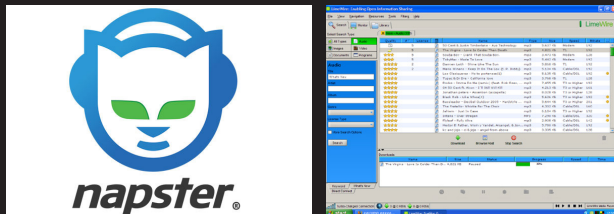
The Wikipedia online encyclopedia entry on music piracy and peer-to-peer music downloading defines it as: "the copying and distributing of copies of a piece of music for which the composer, recording artist, or copyright-holding record company did not give consent." Furthermore "it is a form of copyright infringement, which is a civil wrong, and under certain circumstances, even a crime in many countries." (1).

The Wikipedia online encyclopedia entry further states that "the late 20th and early 21st centuries saw much controversy about copyright piracy, regarding the ethics of the act redistributing media content, how much production and distribution companies in the

media were losing, and the very scope of what ought to be considered 'piracy' — and cases involving the piracy of music were among the most frequently discussed in the debate." (1).

By the mid-2000s, companies like Napster and Limewire have been sued by artists over their propriety rights. Companies such as Limewire struggled through legal battles and untimely were forced to shut down. (1).

The Debate on Music Piracy and Peer-to-Peer Music Downloading:

Since music piracy and peer-to-peer music downloading came to be, there has often been a debate among many people whether they should be for it or against it.

An article from The New York Times discuses the debate which the paper took poll on regarding music piracy and peer-to-peer music downloading. If people were for piracy, they used the hash tag "#artistsforpiracy." If people are against it, they used the hash tag "#artistsagainstpiracy."

The article notes that "so far the #artistsforpiracy hash tag has been used far more than #artistsagainstpiracy: 2,802 versus 93" on the Tuesday afternoon before the article was published. However, "comments by artists, and others, show it is not so easy for them to simply to pick a team."

According to the article, one responder to the poll, who identified him or her self as a guitar student in Milwaukee, struggled with the idea of music piracy and peer-to-peer music downloading, had concluded by saying "so, if anyone wants to support me as a musician, come to my shows, listen to what I have to say, or let me crash on your couch." (2).

The debate is often coincided with studies by the music industry which claimed that "many studies have shown that it negatively affects sales, but they have not been unanimous." A week before this New York Times article was written in 2013, the same article said that "a European Commission report found that piracy did not hurt digital sales, but music industry groups immediately blasted it as flawed." (2).

Music piracy and peer-to-peer music downloading today:

This leaves the music piracy debate in the state that it is in today with its legality and if artists get paid or not. This is where music piracy and peer-to-peer music downloading stands now. Currently, the main sources of peer-to-peer music downloading are from sites such as iTunes and Amazon.com.
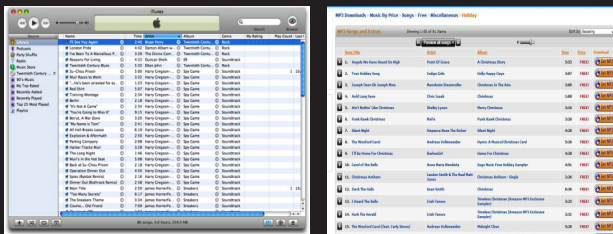
These sites offer individual songs for 99 cents and full albums at various prices which start at $3.99 and go up from there. This has allowed a more legal way of acquiring music and seeing that artists get paid for the music they create. This leaves less legal battles tying up the courts then there was ten years ago.

In conclusion, music piracy and peer-to-peer music downloading has always been a hot topic, since it started in the 1990s, regarding its legality and how artist could get paid from that avenue of music distribution. Through court battles, musicians can now get paid for the music they create on digitally downloaded music. However, some people still have reservations on it.

About the Cover Image:

The cover image was created from scratch for a college class that I took called Visual Thinking. A main point that the professor had in the class was for students to create images using Gestalt Theory. In the style of Gestalt Theory, the professor wanted us to create work with the intent of considering people's immediate reaction to a visual image.

With that said, the image shows the debate of music piracy and peer-to-peer music downloading, its continuing debate, and that it is a gray area. There is no black and white in the debate of music piracy and peer-to-peer music downloading. My idea for the image was to show music piracy and peer-to-peer music downloading, music being downloaded over the internet, and to show the debate over paying for music or not.

Cited works:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_music_piracy, History of music piracy, Wikipedia, 2014-01-07

Sisario, Ben. "Debate Over Music Piracy Writ Large, on Billboard." The New York Times 26 Mar. 2013, sec. Music: n. pag. Print