

Michael Robertson

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Diet Soda and Your Music Going Flat!

June 29th, 2006

My wife got me hooked on diet soda. Each morning I'll grab a Diet Dr. Pepper, Diet Pepsi or Diet Vanilla Coke. They stopped making Diet Vanilla Coke which was my favorite so I bought a big stockpile when I heard the announcement. Unfortunately, I learned that diet drinks go bad fairly quickly. Unlike their sugar laden counterparts which last a long time, the Aspartame in modern diet sodas has a short shelf life. I learned to look at the date on the bottom of the can to avoid a mouthful of brown soda water.

Unfortunately, for some music lovers their music library could go flat as quickly as a soda. In 2004, Coke launched an online music store called mycokemusic. They quickly became the #1 online music store in the UK. Well, a lot changes in a couple of years on the net and what was once a shining success is now a distant player behind iTunes UK. So, Coke has decided to shutter the service by the end of July.

The problem for customers is that mycokemusic sold digitally restricted files in Microsoft's Windows Media format. When buyers play their songs they are required to phone to the mothership and request authorization. But Coca Cola's announcement means the mothership is going away. With no authorization those purchased songs become digital flotsam because they will not play at all and the consumers entire music investment vanishes. It's a stark illustration that buying DRM songs is really a rental not a purchase because someone else controls your access to the property. (See: [You Own Nothing](#))

Now in mycoke's defense they have told customers another company has said they will step in to continue the authorization process. But what if they hadn't? And how long will this second company commit to do this given the fact that there's no financial incentive for them to do so? It's just a matter of time before some of the vendors of DRM files goes bankrupt and in the process deletes entire personal music libraries in the process.

There is an alternative that an increasing number of consumers are turning to and that is to only purchase digital tracks from vendors selling non-DRM tracks. While Apple infatuated press focus entirely on iTunes with a token reference to Napster, there's a number of digital music vendors selling tracks in MP3 format with solid success. Sites like [Magnatune](#), [Bleep](#), [eClassical](#), [Broadjam](#), [Wippit](#), and [emusic](#) all sell tracks that will never evaporate even if the seller does because they do not have DRM. Once they are purchased they are truly owned by the buyer not rented. ([MP3tunes](#) continues to operate an MP3 store although more of our focus is on our [Oboe music locker](#) business.)



A friend of mine just bought the deluxe home music system called Sonos. While he raves about his Sonos system's brilliant engineering and ease of use, he lost hundreds of dollars of music in the process. He was an iTunes customer and none of his purchases will play on his Sonos system because it's not a device from Apple. So he'll have to repurchase all that music or go through the cumbersome process of burning CDs and re-encoding his music. He's vowed to never buy another DRM track after this experience.

XML

MY YAHOO!

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[Gizmo Project 2.0* \(That's the GOOD kind of Asterisk\)](#)

[TiVo Becomes A Music Machine Courtesy of MP3tunes](#)

[Desktop Linux Summit Report](#)

[ajaxTunes - The Everywhere Mini Music Player](#)

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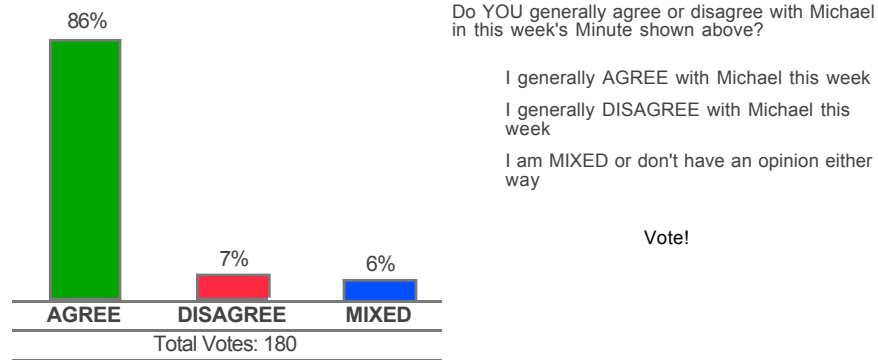
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I think DRM tracks should have expiration warnings printed on them just like Diet Cokes. Like diet soda cans, all DRM tracks will eventually go flat and stop working. It may not be on a specific date, but sooner or later you'll want to play them on a device that the DRM supplier (Apple or Microsoft) doesn't approve (see Sonos example above) or from one to many "authorized" locations or the vendor will simply go out of business. Everyday, consumers are losing music purchases to DRM expiration. Your insurance is to buy CDs or frequent online music vendors who sell in open formats and then put your music into an [online locker](#) where you can always access it from any device.

- Michael

The Michael's Minute Meter



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