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'Dude! This Thing Is Awesome!'

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NEW YORK -- Oh, how far we've come from the 78, the 45, even the CD. Now, minutes after your favorite band sounds its last note on stage, you can load a live recording of the concert onto a cigarette-lighter-sized hard drive hanging off your keychain.

Take it home, toss the digital files onto your computer and then e-mail it to all your friends with the message, "Dude! These guys are awesome!"

On May 21, new digital kiosks offering the tiny drives will be installed at Maxwell's, a small indie-rock club in Hoboken, N.J. At \$10 a pop for the recording, and \$20 for the reusable, keychain drive, let the downloading begin.

"This is a tool that allows fans to take home and share some of the best independent music from small live venues around the country," said Daniel Stein, CEO of Dimensional Associates, a private equity firm that owns [eMusic Live](#), which created the machines, as well as [eMusic](#), a music file-sharing website, and [The Orchard](#), a marketing firm for independent labels.

For Scott Ambrose Reilly, president of eMusic Live, the idea is to let fans have a legal copy of a live show, which gives smaller artists and their labels creative control over the quality of the recording and a commercial stake in its distribution.

The understanding is also that it is not a one-time recording. Fans can share the files with their friends, providing free word-of-mouth publicity for smaller bands.

For eMusic Live, the devices are just the next step for a service that it and other competitors already provide: burning CDs of live performances right after a show ends.

"What we were seeing is that a large number of people were taking their CDs home and ripping them to MP3s, so we thought it would benefit music fans to eliminate that middle step," Reilly said.

The technology is quite simple: The music fan goes up to the touch-screen kiosk after the show and buys the keychain drive with a credit card from a dispenser alongside the screen. Once that's done, the miniature drive is inserted into a slot in the kiosk, and the recording — stored as MP3 files — is loaded onto the device's 128-megabyte hard drive. That is enough space for 110 minutes of music.

A receipt for the transaction is sent to the concertgoer's e-mail address.

"I can remember when I started the debate was whether the 45 or 33 would be more successful," said Richard Gottehrer, author of hits like "My Boyfriend's Back," and "I Want Candy," and chairman of The Orchard. "Now the Napsters of the world are yesterday's news and this is the newer, legal, next step."

Whether the technology will take off remains to be seen. But its creators are optimistic and hope to roll the machines into venues around the country soon.

"Admittedly this won't be for everyone," Reilly said. "But since the direction of music is increasingly going digital, I don't see why this wouldn't find its niche."

At a demo for the device at a sound studio in Manhattan on Tuesday, a New York-based band, [Elysian Fields](#), performed three songs, which were quickly loaded onto the "pen drives" afterward.

Later, at home, the device was inserted into the USB port of a laptop computer and -- voila! -- singer Jennifer Charles' smoky, lilting lyrics and Oren Bloedow's reverbed-out, brooding guitar

lines filled the living room.

Charles called the new technology "a beautiful thing."

"I'm very excited to be a part of this incredible and sexy technology," she said between songs. "It makes us feel very James Bond. You can have your little pens — wow, beam me up Scotty."

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