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Concert on Your Keychain

April 30, 2004

[Eric Olsen](#)

Wow - this takes the instant live recording concept another step farther:

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 Web site, 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.

...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."

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"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." [AP]

Post-punk vets Fugazi have joined the live CD generation themselves:

For many years, Fugazi has made a point of taping our live shows. We started out using a simple cassette recorder, then moved on to a digital audio tape recorder (DAT) and finally just burned straight on to CDs. Most of the tapes were made from a combination of board mixes and live mic-ing and over the years we have amassed literally hundreds of these recordings in our tape library.

This site is a way to offer our audience access to selected tapes from that bank of recordings. We have digitally transferred to compact disc an initial sampling of twenty of these shows from various points in the band's career and outfitted each with a uniform generic cover with individual concert information and a track listing. Shorter shows that fit on one disc are available for \$8 postpaid. Longer sets are on 2 discs and are available for \$10 postpaid.

It should be noted that these are very much the original recordings without any

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attempt to correct for things like volume changes, strange mixing effects, the occasionally out-of-tune guitar or the tape running out. Though the sound quality on these tapes does vary, if a show was too poorly recorded it didn't make the cut. We hope to add more shows in the future but for now here's twenty.

I saw Fugazi in the early-'90s at some teen club in the Cleveland area - it was louder than hell and the subtleties that make their records so great were lost.

Career media professional [Eric Olsen](#) is honored to be the founder and publisher of Blogcritics.org, which, quite frankly, rules - as do his [wife](#) and four children.

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Article

- » Published on April 30, 2004
- » Filed under: [Sci/Tech](#), [Music: Indie Rock](#),
[Sci/Tech: Internet](#), [Music: News](#), [Music: Punk Rock](#).

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#1
Tom Johnson *"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."* *Rolling Stone*

April 30, 2004
11:21 AM

#2
Tom Johnson

what exactly is their material cost for mp3s? Nothing.

April 30, 2004
11:22 AM

Let me restate that: "what exactly is *the venue's* material cost for mp3s? Nothing."

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