

English 092 Unit 3.5

Sample Student Persuasive Essay

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English 092
September 15, 2008

Online Music Downloading and the Freedom to Express

The big record companies would have us believe that online music downloading is immoral and should be made illegal. They like to say that internet music sharing is hurting artists and is going to “bring the industry to its knees.” Perhaps bringing the industry to its knees is just what is needed. The sharing of music on the internet should definitely not be restricted by legal or any other means. The rise of the internet has marked a new age in the recording industry. **The freedom offered by the internet has allowed artists to escape from the grip of the record companies, forced a new business model on the music industry and allowed the unprecedented exchange of ideas and information, including the sharing of artistic works.**

Historically, the music industry has been controlled by an elite few who control the destinies of the artists that they represent and have controlled the release of the music to the public. When artists had an album they wanted to release to the public, they would first have to sign a recording contract that would allow a record company to exercise their control over the whole process. Excepting the rare cases of independent releases in which artists raise their own capital, the record company effectively assumes ownership of the creative work that the artist has produced. The record company then takes over the entire process of production and marketing, oftentimes ignoring the artistic vision of the artist thus turning an art form into a business. With the widespread use of the internet, music release has been simplified to the point where anyone with a PC can upload an album to the net and sell or give away a work without any interference. This has forced the creation of a new business model.

The modern music world is finding the big record companies increasingly redundant. Recently, the band Radiohead offered their latest album exclusively online for free. While it was not the first time an album had been released in this manner, it was the first time that a major successful band had abandoned the traditional release method. Fans were encouraged to pay whatever amount that they felt the album was worth. Most paid nothing, but many paid a small amount. In the end, Radiohead made over 11 million dollars in pure profit. No money was made by the record companies. Eventually, the album was released in the conventional way, but without the help of the big labels. The CD was funded by the profits earned from the online release. The album went to the number one spot on the sales charts immediately and stayed there for several weeks. This is only one of the countless examples that prove that the record companies are outdated and that the traditional methods of doing business are changing.

Online music sharing sites and programs have been available for well over a decade, and online music sharing is on the increase. A recent study found that in 2007, 0% of teens under the age of 14 purchased CD's. It would follow that this demographic must have downloaded all of the music that they acquired during that year. The music business continues to make record profits despite the ever increasing "piracy" of the online music downloader. Live music and its associated ticket sales, voluntary download fees, merchandising, and traditional CD sales all remain as lucrative income sources for musicians. The free exchange of music on the internet has done little to hurt the profit making potential of artists. On the contrary, online music sharing allows fans to easily hear new music and new bands and to "try before they buy". It has never been easier for new bands to get exposure and for existing bands to promote new music.

The days of the big record companies exploiting artists and their work are over. The internet allows artists to free themselves from the chains of the record companies, forces a new business model on the record industry, and allows fans the unprecedented freedom to share and spread music around the world. By eliminating the middleman from the equation, the artists are allowed more freedom to express their ideas and creative vision. Making online music sharing illegal would just be taking away the freedom that the artists have only recently begun to enjoy.