



GUIDE TO FILLING YOUR MP3 DEVICE FOR FREE WITH LEGAL DRM-FREE MUSIC

Recently, I've come across a few "guides" to filling your portable audio device. They all seem to benefit only the mainstream music industry, as they primarily guide the reader to finding music via costly methods that support the major record labels.

I'm personally not against spending money for music, quite the contrary. I've spent my fair share since I was a teen and will continue to do so on albums that are truly deserving of my cash. What I have a problem with is what has now become standard practice in digital music sales – the .89 to .99 price point per track. It's an absolutely unacceptable rate for music that's compressed and clearly not the equivalent of the music found on CD. Not only that, but .99 per track is more expensive than what one used to pay for music on CD singles. Two dollars used to get you 3 tracks. Even if the music were uncompressed and equivalent to CD audio, there's still no printing costs, much less distribution costs and 0 duplication costs. It's clear that online music should be priced less than in the real world.

In fact online music should be half the price or less of what is currently standard. Until the mainstream music industry "gets" this, it's popularity and sales will continue to decrease. Add to that the fact that the music the industry is releasing is of an incredibly lower quality than it has ever been before. Don't just let my statement be proof of this, think about recent movies you've seen... what percentage of the music played during the film is current music and what percent is from the 70s or 80s? Yup, you'll mostly find music from previous eras in films. This wasn't the case during the 80s when pop was king yet mainstream music was still enjoyable and high-quality (though perhaps a bit sugar-coated). The movies have given up on today's music, so why shouldn't music listeners?

Don't fret! Believe it or not, even with the state of the mainstream music industry being at such a low, music is more alive than it's ever been before and it's... um.... FREE.

There have been music artists freely distributing their music online in one form or another for years, but since the late nineties, a musical subculture has been making steady inroads into mainstream culture. As with anything, the more people get involved with something, the more momentum that something gains. With regard to the musical subculture, it's not only momentum that's been gaining, the quality has also been on the rise. Net audio or netlabel music is now ready for prime time. There's a tremendous amount of excellent music available for free download to fill all your audio devices. Much of the music available could be charting on Billboard if the industry wasn't so closed to outsiders. That's alright.... a new industry has begun to supplant the existing one. Let me introduce you with the following useful guide....



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For the crate diggers...

Some people are more inclined than others to dig through large amounts of music to find the gems. Let me introduce to you five archives of copyleft¹ music in no particular order.

Scene.org

The home of the non-profit 'The International Scene Organization'. This has been the center of the demoscene² since it's inception and was the center of the net audio/netlabel scene during the mid to late nineties. It features a huge catalog of music. If you're into electronic music, then you're sure to enjoy it there.

<http://scene.org>

Archive.org

When it comes to net audio, the Internet Archive has become the center of the universe. A large portion of what's available for free online can be found at the archive. As with scene.org, this one is for the diggers. Folks who prefer to find music through suggestion may not have the patience to wade through the extensive catalog. Don't worry, as you'll later find, there are ways of finding music housed at the archive without visiting the archive directly. Diggers will of course be in heaven with thousands of free albums at their fingertips.

<http://archive.org>

Jamendo.com

This is the new kid on the block when it comes to free net audio, but one that has been growing at a ferocious pace. This is one for the diggers and for the rest of you. Jamendo features many terrific recommendation tools and it's very easy to filter through their large catalog of close to 6000 albums. The streaming, recommendation and filtering tools make it easy to find gems in the ruff. My only problem with the site is that there are no direct downloads. To download an album, you need to be comfortable using either bittorrent or emule. Though the folks at Jamendo have mentioned in their forums that they are working on implementing direct downloads. Let's hope so.

<http://jamendo.com>

¹ See copyleft entry at Wikipedia for more — <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Copyleft>

² See demoscene entry at Wikipedia for more — <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demoscene>



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[ccMixer.org](http://ccmixter.org)

A unique site created by the same folks who created the Creative Commons licensing. More track-centric than the other sites. You'll find music here that you can not only download for free, but that you can also remix and then re-upload. Every month you'll find a new remix contest. In the past, artists such as Public Enemy, Beastie Boys and DJ Vadim have provided music for the remix contests.

<http://ccmixter.org>

[SonicSquirrel.net](http://sonicsquirrel.net)

A community site where you'll find a couple unique tools for filtering through much of the net audio that can also be found at archive.org. Although there is some overlap with the content at archive.org, you're likely to find a few things that are not found at the archive. It's worth checking out.

<http://sonicsquirrel.net>

The taste makers

No matter who you are, there's incredible value in being able to cut through the lower quality net audio to quickly find the real gems. That's where the taste makers come in. These individuals provide an invaluable service to the collective net audio community by investing their own time into digging through it all and presenting to us all the very gems that we're seeking out. This isn't unique to net audio, of course. The most well known "taste maker" of them all was John Peel, may he rest in peace. Will the net audio world have an equivalent? It's much too early to tell, but give the following sites a try. I'm quite sure that after spending some time with each of them, you'll end up finding a few selections which will become life-long favorites.

[Black Sweater, White Cat](http://biotic.blogspot.com)

Online home of the Black Sweater, White Cat radio broadcast which can be heard at WBCR-LP 97.7 Great Barrington, Massachusetts, KWMD in Kasilof, Alaska and online via podcast. On the show, Biotic spotlights excellent selections from the great wide world of Creative Commons licensed net audio. Online, both Biotic and Subsystem7 present One-A-Day and Once-in-a-While blog posts which also spotlight net audio gems. A great way to discover some terrific music of all genres.

<http://biotic.blogspot.com>



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Free Albums Galore

Every couple of days, Marvin at Free Albums Galore uses his superinterwebssearchingpowers to find and share with us free and legal copyleft licensed albums from deep within the innermost nooks of the internet. I'm regularly surprised by the gems he digs up.

<http://freealbums.blogsome.com>

Netwaves

Netwaves is another net audio focused radio show which is broadcast on the air from Radio Scorpio 106FM in Belgium and heard online via podcast. Interviews are conducted in English and the rest of the show is in Dutch.

<http://www.netlabelism.net/blogs/netwaves>

ccNelas

ccNelas is a one man blog at which Bruno aka nelas spotlights some his favorite net audio tracks and albums. Also highly recommended.

<http://ccnelas.org>

Wundertunes

This is another blog/online magazine which features excellent selections from the world of net audio. At Wundertunes, there's a focus on complete albums and they also release their own compilations of some of their favorites. Be sure to check out their first compilation available here.

<http://www.wundertunes.com/tunes07>

Electronic Music World Netlabels

Another excellent blog which regularly spotlights and reviews net audio albums. Specifically, these folks keep their fingers on the pulse of electronic net audio.

<http://net.electronicmusicworld.com>



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Bleepwatch

Everyday Bleepwatcher spotlights 3 or 4 net audio albums from a variety of genres. Make bleepwatch part of your daily routine.

<http://bleepwatch.com>

Last and quite humbly... us... blocSonic

As you may or may not know, my name is Mike Gregoire and I run blocSonic.com. A site that's devoted to finding what may be the best in net audio and presenting to you a monthly compilation called a netBloc. Each netBloc volume features 10 tracks in a choice of three audio formats — lossless FLAC, 320kbs mp3 and 192kbs mp3. You'll also find complete package artwork in three file formats — eps, pdf, tif and a PDF with photos/covers and complete liner-notes of all included tracks. I'm passionate about net audio, I hope to make you passionate about it as well. In the future, I hope to bring to blocSonic other features that will further help filter through the lesser quality net audio and spotlight the gems.

I invite you to visit the above mentioned sites regularly and I also invite you to make our monthly netBloc compilations part of your life. The mainstream music industry is failing to give us music that touches our souls, you'll find that the world of net audio can fill that void.

Also, be sure that you check out the special netBloc volume 7 presented by both blocSonic and Black Sweater, White Cat. It's a special collection of my particular favorites that I found via their excellent One-a-Day series.

<http://blocsonic.com>

Keeping up to date

If you want to be kept up to do date on most new net audio releases you can visit blocSonic each week on Thursday or Friday for an new release listing. You can also check the following sites for up to date listings:

- * Phlow.de — http://www.phlow.de/netlabels/index.php/New_Netlabel_Releases
- * Archive.org — <http://www.archive.org/search.php?query=collection%3Anetlabels&sort=-publicdate>
- * Jamendo.com — http://www.jamendo.com/en/?p=music&tag=&geo=&o=release_date_desc&minrights=&class=2+3



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A few favorite netlabels

In blocSonic's netBloc series, I try to include a variety of netlabels and net audio artists, but on occasion you'll find that I return to a few names. Here are a few of my personal favorites among the thousands of existing netlabels. I regularly return to them because the quality of their releases are consistently of a high caliber and a joy to listen to.

- * 12rec. — <http://12rec.net>
- * Series Media — <http://www.seriesmedia.org>
- * iD.EOLOGY — <http://www.ideology.de>
- * Error! Lo-Fi — <http://www.error-lofi.com>
- * Laridae — <http://www.laridae.at>
- * Alpinechic — <http://www.alpinechic.net>
- * WM Recordings — <http://www.wmrecordings.com>
- * Monotonik — <http://www.mono211.com/content/news.html>
- * Go, Jukebox! — <http://www.gojukebox.net>

Extra help

For help in listening or utilizing a particular format or technology, you should find the following resources helpful:

- * MP3 FAQ — <http://webhome.idirect.com/~nuzhathl/mp3-faq.html>
- * Ogg Vorbis FAQ — <http://www.vorbis.com/faq>
- * FLAC FAQ — <http://flac.sourceforge.net/faq.html>
- * Bittorrent FAQ — <http://btfaq.com/serve/cache/1.html>

That's it. I hope you'll find this guide helpful but before I go I want to add one more thought regarding all this wonderful, freely available music. If you find artists or labels that you really like, please consider supporting them by either purchasing the music in CD format or by donating a little something. These folks involved in the net audio/netlabel movement are clearly not doing this to make a buck, but wouldn't it be great if donations could help them keep on doing it and pay a few bills with it?

Peace

Mike Gregoire

Owner/Creator blocSonic.com



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