

Rock-n-Reel

Labels Screw Up

By Mary Ann Reyes

In an effort to thwart Apple's iPod success, several music labels released CD's which prohibited music from being used with any Apple iPod player. Label executives made this now regrettable decision not only from a customer satisfaction perspective, but also might have infected or compromised their customers' computers.

Fifty-two SONY BMG titles, have delivered more than just music to 2.1 million unsuspecting consumers worldwide and may have opened the door to serious computer viruses making playing music on your computer a security issue. In addition, music from Universal Music Group, Warner Music Group, EMI, RCA, Arista and Epic are using XCP containing copy protected software.

The XCP copy protection software provided by First4Internet was initially designed to prevent unlimited copying and unauthorized redistribution of the music on the disc.

According to CSO online, "The software contains root kit cloaking techniques that are also found in spyware and viruses, hiding them from system tools and antivirus software." This technology leaves holes for hackers to come through the backdoor and install malware.

Worried your music might have come with XCP? You can identify XCP protected CDs by looking at the front and back of the CD packaging. On the front, along the top, left edge of the transparent spine are the words "CONTENT PROTECTED." On the back, a black and white label with the words "COMPATIBLE WITH" on it and the following URL: <http://cp.sonybmg.com/xcp> indicates that the disc contains XCP software. Look for the word XCP at the end of the URL.

You can get rid of the harmful XCP software by downloading an update to uncloak the XCP components from your hard drive and prevent viruses from exploiting it. That website address is: <http://cp.sonybmg.com/xcp/english/updates.html>.

The URL also provides information about an exchange program Sony has implemented in an effort to make serious amends to consumers. A mail-in swap program is in place to replace XCP CDs with non-copy protected ones, along with a few free MP3s thrown in as a bonus.

In recent years, Sony has trailed on the portable electronic music front, focusing its attention on making bigger and better flat screen TVs while Apple has dominated the market in downloadable music and players with the wildly successful iTunes Music Store and the fact that 75% of all digital music players are an iPod, iPod Mini or iPod Nano.

Sony isn't the only music giant wary of Apple's stronghold. Warner Music Group chief executive Edgar Bronfman Jr. is not happy with Apple's unilateral pricing and refusal to raise prices of the \$0.99 cent iTune. Apple exec Steve Jobs cites his competitors as being "greedy" since the purchase of online songs eliminates the costs of manufacturing.

This all has turned into very bad news for the 'defender of artist's rights' as Sony's shares have dropped 2.2% and plans to cut 10,000 jobs are underway.

For a Blacklist of CD's with XCP, go to: <http://www.collegeradio.com>

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