

Switching to digital

Since the first form of recorded music was invented in 1877, music has been available in a variety of formats. Vinyl discs, more commonly known as records, first came out at the end of the 19th century. These were followed by cassettes. In the early 1980s, the development of digitally recorded sound led to the introduction of the compact disc (CD). Although global sales of CDs and vinyl are higher than digital music forms at the moment, many people believe they will go out of fashion in the near future. One thing is certain and that is that digital music sales are on the up. In 2012 a record £5 billion was spent on digital music worldwide.

Downloading digital music began as a way to get tracks free from the internet but was illegal. Since 1993 though, legal music downloads have been available through online digital music stores. Downloading music has become popular as you can store a large collection of music on your computer and on other electronic devices such as smartphones. Although some music lovers still prefer to get hold of expensive albums in hard forms, there is a trend towards buying individual digital tracks. Not only is it cheaper but it also saves space.

However, although sales from downloads are increasing, it is streaming that is the new area of growth for the music industry. In the UK alone, around 3.7 billion tracks (that's 140 per household) were streamed in 2012. Recent research shows that the money earned globally from streaming rose by 40% in 2012. This increase is far greater than for downloading, but why? Perhaps it is because with streaming you can instantly access music from digital music sites and as many are free, this is an even cheaper source of music. You just choose the track you want to listen to at that moment in time and although you do not own the music, you can create your own music library in cloud-based storage.

Of course, as technology develops more and more people are likely to choose digital music over physical formats. Analysts predict that by 2015, global spending on digital music will beat that of CDs and vinyl for the first time. However, knowing how fast things change, shouldn't we be wondering what is next?

1 Read the article and decide if the sentences are true (T) or false (F). Circle the correct statements and correct those that are false.

- | | | |
|---|---|-----|
| 1 | Cassettes came out after records. | T/F |
| 2 | More people are buying digital music than hard forms like vinyl. | T/F |
| 3 | It is illegal to download music from the internet. | T/F |
| 4 | You can save money and space if you download music. | T/F |
| 5 | There was a 40% increase in global streaming sales in 2012. | T/F |
| 6 | You can use some streaming sites for free. | T/F |
| 7 | When you stream music, you always own the tracks you get from the internet. | T/F |

2 Match the meanings below to the following words from the text.

cassette device download format store track vinyl

- 1 a machine or tool _____
- 2 a song or piece of music that is recorded _____
- 3 the form that a music recording is produced in _____
- 4 to move information to your computer from the internet _____
- 5 a small flat plastic case containing audiotape for playing music _____
- 6 to save information in electronic form, for example in a computer's memory _____
- 7 a collective name for music records used for listening to music before CDs were invented _____

3 Complete the questions with one word from exercise 2 above. Use the plural form of nouns if needed. Then ask your partner the questions.

- 1 Do you own any _____ records?
- 2 What electronic _____ do you use when you listen to music?
- 3 Do you think people should be able to _____ digital music for free? (Why / Why not?)
- 4 How many _____ have you streamed from the internet this week?
- 5 Where do you _____ your digital music: on your computer or on an internet site?
- 6 Have you ever heard music played on a _____?
- 7 What _____ of music do your parents prefer?

4 Choose the correct preposition to complete the time expressions in these sentences.

- 1 Records were invented *in / at* the end of the 19th century.
- 2 Compact discs were developed *on / in* the early 1980s.
- 3 Global sales of CDs and vinyl are higher than digital music *at / in* the moment.
- 4 *In / For* the near future, CDs and vinyl may be replaced by a new technology.
- 5 3.7 billion tracks were streamed in the UK *in / on* 2012.
- 6 When you stream music, you can listen to it *by / at* that moment in time.
- 7 The amount spent on digital music is predicted to beat CDs and vinyl *to / by* the year 2015.

5 Which word from each group has a different sound?

- 1 /ɜ:/ first certain technology earn worldwide
- 2 /u:/ own music you choose through
- 3 /aɪ/ library digital vinyl variety likely
- 4 /eɪ/ space sales save stream greater
- 5 /əʊ/ download although globally online moment

6 Discuss these questions with your partner(s).

- What formats for recorded music are the most popular in your country? Does it depend on age/generation?
- If you like accessing digital music, what are your favourite sites and why?
- What was the first track that you downloaded or streamed? Who was the artist?
- How might music technology change in the future?

Glossary

access (*verb*) - to find information, for example, on a computer

analyst (*noun*) - someone whose job is to study or examine something so they can tell other people about it

available (*adj*) - something you can buy, use or have

be on the up (*idiom*) - to improve or get better

cloud-based storage (*noun*) - the management of data through an internet-based network

come out (*verb*) - to be available to buy

create (*verb*) - make something new

digital (*adj*) - using a system where data is in the form of changing electronic signals

get hold of (*verb*) - to get something that you need or want

go out of fashion (*idiom*) - to become unfashionable or no longer popular

illegal (*adj*) - not allowed by law

instant (*adj*) - something that happens immediately and very quickly **instantly** (*adv*)

predict (*verb*) - to say that something will happen in the future

streaming (*noun*) - technology which gets sound or video to your computer through the internet in a continuous *stream* and is heard or seen before all the information is received

trend (*noun*) - the way that a situation is changing or developing

wonder (*verb*) - to think about something you do not know and want to know about