

The Leading Question

Essential Music, Media & Technology Research

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Music fans still prefer CDs to Downloads

****New research shows the death of the CD is not as imminent as predicted****

Most UK music fans are still happier buying a CD than downloading, according to the latest research by The Leading Question, the specialist media and technology research agency, in conjunction with Music Ally. Even teens, often cited as leading the exodus towards digital music, say they still prefer CDs.

The Leading Question spoke to over 1000 music fans as part of their annual Speakerbox survey into the state of music consumption in the UK. Despite the growth of digital download sales, the research showed:

- 73% of music fans are still happy buying CDs rather than downloading
- 66% of 14-18 year olds prefer CDs
- 59% of all music fans still listen to CDs every day
- CD burning is top of all sharing activities (23%), above bluetoothing (18%), filesharing single tracks (17%) and filesharing albums (13%)

When it comes to music albums, fans still value a physical CD much more than digital downloads. With a bedrock of sales from online stores and supermarkets (these channels represented 46% of all UK CD sales in 2008), even the demise of the specialist high street music store need not spell the end of the CD just yet. For less tech savvy music fans their first experience of digital music often starts when they put a CD in their computer.

“Digital is still the future but rumours of the death of the CD are premature. The continued popularity of the CD should be looked upon as an opportunity. We believe that labels and online stores could and should be doing more to build on music fans’ familiarity with CDs to provide them with additional digital content and to use the CD as a bridge into the digital world,” argues The Leading Question CEO Tim Walker. “Music fans have spoken and digital is evidently not the clear cut replacement to the physical CD.”

The Leading Question research shows that even the most digitally advanced music fans continue to buy CDs, with little evidence to show that digital music consumption is simply replacing physical consumption.

- Those who are paying for a digital music subscription service (such as Napster or Musicstation) spend more on CDs each month than most music fans (£16.87 per month compared to £11.37).
- Music streamers (ie those who listen to streamed music on their computers every day) also spend more on CDs (£12.17 a month) and downloads (£7.02 per month compared with a survey average of £3.81) than most music fans.

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“While we fully expect that digital will eventually replace most physical consumption, this is not a clear cut replacement cycle like the change from vinyl to CD. It’s particularly encouraging that those who are listening to streamed music on their computers are actually buying more music on both CDs and downloads than the average music fan. This suggests that digital can and is being used as a way of sampling new music which users may then go on to purchase,” adds Music Ally CEO Paul Brindley.

Notes for Editors

The Leading Question/Music Ally Speakerbox survey is the biggest face to face survey of UK music fans. The syndicated, proprietary project involves 1,000 face to face interviews with music fans aged 14-64 and a series of in depth focus groups which took place throughout the UK. The survey base excludes non broadband users and those with no mobile phones. Clients include Universal Music, Tesco, Orange and BBC. For more information, see www.TheLeadingQuestion.com and www.MusicAlly.com.

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