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COMMENT: Nokia Comes With Music is not "fatally flawed"

Could see music lovers saving £1000 a year

by Amy-Mae Elliott published on 3 October 2008

Nokia's just-launched "Comes With Music" service has been slammed as "fatally flawed" by 7digital's CEO Ben Drury, but I think he - and others who have criticised the service - have got it wrong.

The service gives owners of certain handsets unlimited access to millions of tracks from the big four record labels, as well as a fair few independents, and lets users keep all downloaded tracks after a year.

I think it's frankly a bargain ... if you see the service for what it is, rather than what it isn't. Although angled by the media as Nokia's big competitor to iTunes, I don't believe this is the case.

Nokia is certainly treading on Apple's toes, but their offering is very limited - at the moment just a fantastic add-on feature to three mobile phones aimed at music lovers.

The songs you download to your PC via Comes With Music, and then sideload onto your Nokia handset, are yours for the life of those devices.

7digital's Drury argues that the average life for such a device is 2 years, which sounds about right for a phone, although I would imagine it's a little longer for a PC.

As Drury points out, the tracks can't be transferred to, or played on, any other devices because of their WMA format and the built-in DRM, but then you're not paying between 79 and 99 pence per track - you're paying £130 for a year's worth of downloads (potentially tens of thousands), that you can keep - and that price includes the hardware too.



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A recent survey by market researcher TNS Technology revealed that people aged 16 to 64, when asked how many tracks they would download a month, said 64, with 16-24-year-olds wanting almost twice that number.

If you take that 64 track average and times it by 79p - the current price of the average download on iTunes - it works out at £50.56. Times that by 12 - for the year's service - and you get a staggering £606.72.

To me, this demonstrates that Nokia's new service - at £130 for the 5310 XpressMusic - is good value for money for those who are interested in regularly downloading music, more so for that 16-24-year-old age group who could "save" over £1000 per year.

Drury's comment, although no doubt heartfelt, likely takes into account one of the survey's other findings - that 47% would buy fewer digital downloads from online stores.

Interestingly for an industry that claims to be near-crippled by piracy, 38% said a service like Comes With Music would reduce their use of illegal file-sharing sites.

I feel that the Comes With Music service is an interesting offering and priced correctly for what it is, a viable unlimited music download feature as a real bonus add-on for Nokia handsets, not a standalone music service.