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EMI and Apple drop copyright protection

But expecting customers to pay more for the tracks

by Stuart Miles published on 2 April 2007

As predicted this morning, EMI has announced that it will offer copyright protection free music on Apple's iTunes music store.

The announcement which was jointly made by EMI and Apple at EMI's London headquarters means that customers will be able to buy tracks from the store and copy them freely to other devices.

However customers will have to pay extra for the privilege. Apple's iTunes Store, which will be the first online music store to sell EMI's new downloads will offer the new DRM (Digital Rights Management) tracks for 20p more in the UK than tracks that carry the copyright protection.

Eric Nicoli, CEO of EMI Group, said, "Our goal is to give consumers the best possible digital music experience. By providing DRM-free downloads, we aim to address the lack of interoperability, which is frustrating for many music fans. We believe that offering consumers the opportunity to buy higher quality tracks and listen to them on the device or platform of their choice will boost sales of digital music".

"Selling digital music DRM-free is the right step forward for the music industry", said Steve Jobs, Apple's CEO. "EMI has been a great partner for iTunes and is once again leading the industry as the first major music company to offer its entire digital catalogue DRM-free."

Apple has announced that iTunes will make individual AAC format tracks available from EMI artists at twice the sound quality of existing downloads, with their DRM removed, at a price of \$1.29/£1.29/£0.99.



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iTunes users will still be able to buy the standard quality tracks for \$0.99/£0.99/£0.79 for standard sound quality tracks with DRM still applied.

Complete albums from EMI Music artists purchased on the iTunes Store will automatically be sold at the higher sound quality and DRM-free, with no change in the price.

Consumers who have already purchased standard tracks or albums with DRM will be able to upgrade their digital music for \$0.30/£0.30/£0.20 per track.

All EMI music videos will also be available on the iTunes Store DRM-free with no change in price.

EMI's move follows a series of experiments it conducted recently. Norah Jones's "Thinking About You", Relient K's "Must've Done Something Right", and Lily Allen's "Littlest Things" were all made available for sale in the MP3 format in trials held at the end of last year.

EMI has as yet to announce whether it will be offering the DRM-free tracks to other online download stores.

Nothing as yet has been mentioned as to whether The Beatles will be included in the offering.