

Everyone is probably aware, on some level, of the controversy surrounding illegal downloading of music.

Here's a blog written by my friend, Anthony Smith, regarding his thoughts on illegal downloading. Anthony is a songwriter in Nashville, and has been intricately involved in the music industry for many years. It's long, but I ask you to please take the time to read it. It's important.

"Free" (by Anthony Smith)

How do illegal downloads affect the music business? It seems I keep getting asked that same ole question over and over again, Ok here it goes.

First (the cause) Today's generation came along at a time when downloading was still in its infancy and no one seriously ever thought song theft would become such a problem. Kids left alone ungoverned in front of their computers quickly realized the ease and convenience of downloading never understanding the ramifications, after a while "free" becomes routine and easily justified and eventually.....it simply becomes part of life and behold the new "free" culture is born.

If you'd been getting apples from the apple tree in your neighbor's orchard since you were two years old then suddenly someone tells you that taking those apples was stealing, you'd be like.... Why that's absurd! You'd passionately say, I know for a fact those apples are "free" I've been getting them "free" my whole life, they've got to be "free" heck my neighbor has thousands of them!Hmmm. While it's true that one neighbor taking an apple from time to time is most likely harmless, imagine the entire community taking apples, the orchard couldn't support itself then we would have how many apples? That's right, eventually zero, oh, unless of course you want lesser quality apples shipped in that aren't as fresh. Get the picture?

This generation isn't full of bad kids, it's only human nature to want the best deal on something and the easiest access to it. "Free" is tempting to everyone no matter how wrong it might sometimes be. I mean, how could something that doesn't seem tangible like music cost anything? Right?

Now (the effect) First, I want you to list your top twenty five songs of all time, just bear with me..... Now, unless you are out on the very furthest fringes of society, odds are that those very songs you love so much were created by songwriters who have been honing their skills since birth

practically, logging in more hours learning their respected craft than a nuclear physicist.

Think I'm joking? You can learn to make an atomic bomb with some degree of skill at a number of colleges (Good luck finding good plutonium these days!) But you can't learn to paint the equivalent of a Sistine Chapel or learn to compose music that rivals Beethoven's 5th Symphony or even a modern hit song with out first having a God given gift to start with.

Then comes the paying your dues part, yeah lets talk about that for a second. Statistically in Nashville alone, for every successful songwriter ("successful" meaning a minimum income of 100k for 5 years or more), there are 25,000 unsuccessful writers, meaning many of those 25,000 people have risked it all, sold everything they had just to get the chance to make a living as a songwriter... only to fail.

You don't believe all that crap? Go down to Lower Broadway on any Friday night and ask around, you will most likely get more hard luck stories than you bargained for, all real, all genuine..... BTW if they happen to be standing on the sidewalk playin' a song with their guitar case open, be a pal and throw in a couple of bucks..... after that, if you still think music or any art for that matter should be "free", well all I can do is say is God bless ya' anyway and take one last shot of showing you the light.

Now follow me closely! If song writers don't get paid, there are no songs, no songs means no concert tours, no concert tours means no artist, no artist means no records, no records means no record labels or publishers, no songs means no musicians, which means no music stores, which means all sound companies, lighting companies, CD player, stereo, mp3 player, guitar, bass, drum, piano, keyboard, wind instrument, brass instrument, amplifiers, accessories, etc etc and tour bus manufacturers and their hundreds of thousands of employees would just be out of luck and out of a job. No more movie or TV theme songs, that means no more Monday Night Football song! And the movie Jaws without it's bass cello goin nah nah nah nah nah nah nah nah, isn't that scary! No more marching bands in the parade, no more wedding songs. At this point I bet your missin' the ole jukebox, even elevator music should be sounding good about now wait hang on..... shhhhhh, I sense you turning the corner on this subject, Hey, mama said twas a gift I had. Im just having some fun with ya'

But please remember this..... It All Starts With A Song!

AnthonySmith