

Ringtones Vs. The Music Industry

Ringtones find their humble beginnings in a practical place. Designed initially as a simple way to indicate an incoming call, in the same way that a household land line might, cell phone ringtones have, however, surpassed their domestic counterparts in variety, quality and in the amount of heated media coverage they have incited. Courting opinion of many colors from a wide base of social and business sectors, there is perhaps no group with more to say about these cell phone tunes than the original source of many of them: namely, the music industry.

Ringtones, in their original incarnation, were comprised of simple ditties based upon the traditional ringing sound that we associate with the now, perhaps, old fashioned domestic phone. As technology advanced and the audio capability of cell phones improved, ringtones seemed the ideal way to personalize any individual phone, and a new breed of tones and tunes proliferated, more sophisticated than before. It is with the advent of polyphonic ringtones that phones began to ring to the tune of the latest chart hit, and that an entire industry grew up around providing cell phone users with ringtone versions of this cutting edge music.

It was with the further development of the audio quality of cell phones that the line between ringtone and legitimate music became blurred, much to the dismay of many in the music industry. Many critics despaired when the infamous 'crazy frog' tune became a worldwide chart hit, lamenting the impact of this artist-less tune upon the esteem in which the industry as a whole was held. Others, however rightly or wrongly, pointed out that this same industry has long been subject to artist and song combinations of dubious merit with the furthering of such engineered acts as The Archies and Milli Vanilli.

Others fear that the availability of music in ringtone format will undermine the music industry financially, as consumers will cease their purchase of CDs in favor of obtaining their favorite tunes as ringtone downloads. Others still point back to similar arguments that were made upon the advent of the MP3, and how, despite the calamitous fears of many, the music industry thrives on.

It would seem that the best way forward is for the worlds of music and ringtones to exist side by side. Though they tout the same wares, they employ different mediums, and as long as the two purposes remain – the use of music for pleasure and to alert a cell phone user to an incoming call – it seems to matter only insignificantly if their paths cross slightly every now and then.

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