

>> Netlabels will never gain as much relevance and esteem as traditional record labels. Free music will never catch an audience commercial music is able to reach. <<

It's funny; the web has created infinite channels of expression, never before has distributing music been so simple and cheap, and yet in 2011 the underground feels more underground than ever. Maybe those very circumstances, the ready possibilities to produce, publish, promote, and also to consume music so easily

it's the most natural thing to do. I've wasted almost a third of my life trying to earn recognition through our independent online label Upitup ("Up it up!"), I've seen some of my favorite music getting released for free; and yet today most people still don't give a shit about netaudio. Back in the

is hit "save" on your laptop and upload to the cloud or the tube. In other words, not having to know people brings the risk of not being known by them back. Not having to work your ass off for the publishing of music brings the risk of laziness when it comes to promoting it.

Yeah you've been reading all about Creative Commons and there's plenty of radio shows and TV features dedicated to "free" music, but I think that's all baloney. For example, most netlabels don't have the co-jones to really free their music, they release under a default CC "Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0" license, which prohibits the use of your work for commercial purposes. What could happen better than some yogurt commercial using your tune? They'll never pay you to use it; if they have a budget they'll get Gonzales' new single "Hinein ins Weekend-Feeling". They won't pay money for someone they can't show off with in the end (you). I might be wrong but the most common YouTube comment (besides all the haters) seems to be "hey what's the song called at 1:35?"—imagine that track was yours.

Plus, the Creative Commons licenses are based on the same concept as copyright, they only give you the option to override certain restrictions of it. You can choose whether to allow people to share or remix or use your music (or any other content) for commercial purposes, while still maintaining the Intellectual Property rights over it. But if netlabels were consequent they wouldn't care about "Intellectual Property" and its clear definition of authorship. It's called the Internet: any twelve year-old re-blogs articles, "illegally" downloads music, or remixes YouTube videos—treating them as part of the Public Domain, available for anybody to do anything with it. Like a tree in the landscape, you can look

Of course free home computer music already existed before netlabels, purely organized in archives; also, there were tracker labels releasing their MOD files for free—but similar story, both required their audience overcoming certain obstacles like having to find a plug-in to play

MOD files or even knowing about all this, which again lead to an advanced involvement.... Thanks to the Internet, the P2P file sharing and Open Source scenes later managed to develop loyal communities since they are built upon a culture of sharing, devotion, and collective participation. In contrast, the netaudio scene—if there ever was one—hasn't really established any kind of cultural movement or common ideology to this day, simply because it never needed to.

IF A NETLABEL RELEASES A FREE MP3 AND NO ONE CARES TO HEAR IT, DOES IT REALLY RELEASE IT?

are what made netlabels so insignificant, so standard? When we started putting our music online for free download in early 2003, it almost felt like doing something which wasn't legal. Not illegal, some other kind of opposite. Back then, long before free web 2.0 services like YouTube and Soundcloud and Facebook grew popular (and unpopular again in case of Myspace), giving away something for free could almost be considered a political act. The landscape of the web consisted mostly of commercial services and paid content, and so even though our music was super amateur and mostly lo-fi (not to say shitty) we had a higher reputation than today. What we did was special back then; today

1980s and '90s, independent record (and cassette, and CDR) labels may have had a more tedious task publishing and distributing their music, but they were part of a movement or at least a spirited scene that consisted of likeminded enthusiasts, of collectors, fans and followers. Networking was more difficult without the social web and its "like" buttons and re-tweets, but at the same time it was more essential for the logistics of producing and distributing records, the forming or being part of a scene crucial. You had to know somebody with a recording studio, you had to find out where other artists produced their vinyls, you had to get in touch with a distributor. Nowadays, all you gotta do

BORN TO FAIL

A Sunday rant by Tracky Birthday of upitup.com



THIS IS **ROGLOK**. HE'S A REAL PEACH: HE BUILDS HIS OWN SYNTHESIZERS, WRITES BOOKS ABOUT THINGS LIKE DIGITAL VINTAGE OR INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY, AND MAKES GREAT ACID SOUND. HE JUST MOVED FROM LONDON TO SOMEWHERE IN GERMANY AND IS HOOKING UP HIS 303 INSIDE HIS NEW STUDIO AS YOU READ THIS...

[UPFREE 10](#), [UPFREE 25](#)



UPITUP'S FOUNDING FATHER LIVES AND WORKS IN ROME, ITALY. BESIDES BEING A VEGETARIAN ADDICTED TO GERMAN MAULTASCHEN (FAIL!) **PIERLO** PRODUCES ONE SOLID DANCE HIT AFTER THE OTHER, AND CALLS IT „NERDSTEP“. THE VIDEO GAME INDUSTRY SHOULD NAME AN END BOSS AFTER HIM BECAUSE IS SO TECH-SAVVY.

[UPFREE 14](#), [UPFREE 19](#), [UPFREE 36](#)

at it, take a photo of it, sit under it, without having to ask permission or attributing to the guy who planted it. Digital files are no scarce commodity, they are easily accessible and copied and transformed infinitively within the participatory culture of the Internet. So does anybody know the name of the user who first posted an image to the FAIL blog? Does anyone care who started "play him off, keyboard cat", and if he allows you to remix? Can you be considered the author when you follow some meme trend and create your own Kanye West joke image and upload it somewhere? The truth hurts, but Intellectual Property doesn't exist on the Internet. It's about how you get to the content and what you can do with it, not what its creator allows you to do with it. It's the realty not the royalties, baby!

NETLABELS ARE LIKE HOOKERS, ONLY CHEAPER. The main difference between a bought track and a giveaway track is its aura. The netaudio track is "free", as in "without value", as in "worthless". It might feel like a flyer to a party or a promotional gift such as a pencil, and is probably presented within an environment where lots of amateur content can be found. Gifts can be the nicest thing in the world, but when they are impersonal (not given specially to you) and when you don't know the donor they suddenly turn fishy. All in all, it is like a "free hookers" sign, not so attractive unless you're broke and very, very bored. The leading music magazines won't bother to write much about free music.

While on the other side you pay for the commercial track on the iTunes Store or Beatport, actually deciding

both mp3s one feels virtual and abundant while the other appears more real and valuable, almost scarce. Let's not even talk about music you bought on vinyl... That, boys and girls, is aura. It's the nature of online distribution and our perception that destine netlabels to fail hopelessly trying to become popular on a large scale. On the other hand, isn't that exactly what they intend: being the underdog? Yeah maybe The Beatles would have never become as popular if they had been released on a netlabel but you could also argue a netlabel wouldn't release the same music as before if it was to suddenly become uber-famous. And I think it's important for our music culture to also publish "unpopular" tracks, to break listening habits and to broaden our musical horizon. Amateur culture isn't about success, it's about freedom!

that you really want that track. It's likely to be louder than the free track (or at least properly leveled), has decent artwork and that little © logo. It seems official, it might even be promoted on the iTunes store or in your favorite record shop. You can find real reviews about it in real magazines. It's absurd; even though they're

More importantly, it's not about the individual, it's about the variety of content. So while the individual netlabel might remain without glory it's the total sum of netaudio that influences our culture. MY FRIEND DRAGAN ONCE TOLD ME THAT 100 YEARS FROM NOW NOBODY WILL REMEMBER **LADY GAGA** BECAUSE SHE (OR HER LABEL) MADE YOUTUBE TAKE DOWN ALL HER MUSIC. AT MOST, PEOPLE MAY ONLY FIND PARODIES OF HER. What survives in the end, however, is the stuff that can be found most; as for example ancient Sumerian inscriptions that were cut in clay, because clay was widely used for everything. The stuff that was cut into gold was later melted down by somebody for a new crown. Most online labels might be of worthless clay today, but the future may care more about them than about today's superstars. They are part of today's digital folklore.

So instead of trying to compare to traditional labels, a netlabel should make use of its advantages like its dedication or its freedom. Missing aura? Pah! Why not make a website for each individual release? Why maintain formats like the album or one single cover artwork for multiple tracks? Screw standards and RSS feeds and Soundcloud players and slickness, show me how free you really are! Fail with passion. Do everything commercial labels can't do. It doesn't always have



DRAGAN ESPENSCHIED, FOUNDING MEMBER OF THE FOLK DUO BODENSTÄNDIG 2000. COMPOSES MUSIC FOR SOUND CHIPS FOUND IN VINTAGE COMPUTERS. LIKE THE COMMODORE VIC20 OR THE ATARI ST. HIS COMPOSITIONS ARE TRULY POETIC, AND EVEN IF MOST OF THEM ARE ONLY 8-BIT YOUR HEART GETS WARMED QUAD CORE.

[UPFREE 37](#)

to be crazy, like, replying to emails might already be a start. (Try getting a response from Daft Punk or even Dam-Funk... Ha!) And instead of spending their time finding ways around copyright with Creative Commons those smart lawyers should search for a way to finally abolish copyright per se (and how it automatically sticks to your creations like a piece of gum on your seat). At the end of the day releasing your music for free is something beneficial, like giving a dollar to a bum. You know you won't abolish poverty, but you make a dude happy. That's why after 8 years I'll keep releasing my music for free on the web, and it doesn't matter whether we ever become really popular. Hey but since you've already read through all this crap you might as well check us out :) -> <http://www.upitup.com/>