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## When Pigs Fly: The Death of Oink, the Birth of Dissent, and a Brief History of Record Industry Suicide.



[Currently Listening To: *Music I Didn't Pay For*]

For quite a long time I've been intending to post some sort of commentary on the music industry - piracy, distribution, morality, those types of things. I've thought about it many times, but never gone through with it, because the issue is such a broad, messy one - such a difficult thing to address fairly and compactly. I knew it would result in a rambly, unfocused commentary, and my exact opinion has teetered back and forth quite a bit over the years anyway. But on Monday, when I woke up to the news that [Oink](#), the world famous torrent site and mecca for music-lovers everywhere, had been shut down by international police and various anti-piracy groups, I knew it was finally time to try and organize my thoughts on this huge, sticky, important issue.

For the past eight years, I've worked on and off with major record labels as a designer ("Major" is an important distinction here, because major labels are an entirely different beast than many indie labels - they're the ones with the power, and they are the ones driving the industry-wide push against piracy). It was 1999 when I got my first taste of the inner-workings of a major record label - I was a young college student, and the inside of a New York label office seemed so vast and exciting. Dozens of worker bees hummed away at their desks on phones and computers. Music posters and stacks of CDs littered every surface. Everyone seemed to have an assistant, and the assistants had assistants, and you couldn't help but wonder "what the hell do *all* these people *do*?" I tagged along on \$1500 artist dinners paid for by the labels. Massive bar tabs were regularly signed away by record label employees with company cards. You got used to people billing as many expenses back to the record company as they could. I met the type of jive, middle-aged, blazer-wearing, coke-snorting, cartoon character label bigwigs who you'd think were too cliché to exist outside the confines of *Spinal Tap*. It was all strange and exciting, but one thing that always resonated with me was the sheer volume of money that seemed to be spent without any great deal of concern. Whether it was

excessive production budgets or "business lunches" that had nothing to do with business, one of my first reactions to it all was, "so *this* is why CDs cost \$18..." An industry of excess. But that's kind of what you expected from the music business, right? It's where rock stars are made. It's where you get stretch limos with hot tubs in the back, where you get private jets and cocaine parties. Growing up in the '80's, with pop royalty and hair metal bands, you were kind of led to think, of *course* record labels blow money left and right - there's just *so much* of it to go around! Well, you know what they say: The bigger they are...

In those days, "piracy" was barely even a word in the music world. My friends and I traded MP3s in college over the local network, but they were scattered and low-quality. It felt like a novelty - like a digital version of duping a cassette tape - hardly a *replacement* for CDs. CDs sounded good and you could bring them with you in your DiscMan, and the only digital music you could get was as good as your friends' CD collections, anyway. It never occurred to any of us that digital files were the future. But as it turned out, lots of kids, in lots of colleges around the world, had the same idea of sharing MP3 files over their local networks, and eventually, someone paid attention to that idea and made Napster. Suddenly, it was like all those college networks were tied together, and you could find all this cool stuff online. It was easier and more efficient than record stores, it was powered by music fans, and, well, it was free. Suddenly you didn't have to pay 15 to 18 bucks for an album and *hope* it was good, you could download some tracks off the internet and check it out first. But you still always bought the CD if you liked it - I mean, who wants all their music to be on the *computer*? I sure didn't. But increasingly, more and more people did. For college kids, Napster was a Godsend, because you can all but guarantee two things about most college kids: They love music, and they're dirt poor. So it grew, and it grew, and it started to grow into the mainstream, and that's when the labels woke up and realized something important was happening. At that point they could have seen it as either a threat or an opportunity, and they, without hesitation, determined it to be a threat. It was a threat because essentially someone had come up with a better, *free* distribution method for the labels' product. To be fair, you can imagine how confusing this must have been for them - is there even a historical precedent for an industry's products suddenly being able to replicate and distribute on their own, without cost?

For quite a while - long after most tech-savvy music lovers - I resisted the idea of stealing music. Of *course* I would download MP3s - I downloaded a *lot* of stuff - but I would always make sure to buy the physical CD if it was something I liked. I knew a lot of musicians, a lot of them bewildered at what was happening to the industry they used to understand. People were downloading their music en masse, gorging on this new frontier like pigs at a trough - and worst of all, they felt *entitled* to do so. It was like it was okay simply because the technology existed that made it possible. But it *wasn't* okay - I mean, let's face it, no matter how you rationalized it, it *was* stealing, and because the technology existed to hotwire a car didn't make *that* okay, either. The artists lost control of distribution: They couldn't present albums the way they wanted to, in a package with nice artwork. They couldn't reveal it the way they wanted to, because music pirates got the albums online well before the actual release date. Control had been taken away from everyone who used to have it. It was a scary time in unfamiliar territory, where suddenly music fans became enemies to the artists and companies they had supported for years. It led to laughable hyperbole from bands like Metallica, instantly the poster-children of cry-baby rich rock stars, and the beginning of the image problem the industry has faced in its handling of the piracy issue. But still, at the time, I understood where they were coming from. Most musicians weren't rich like Metallica, and needed all the album sales they could get for both income and label support. Plus, it was their art, and they had created it - why shouldn't they be able to control how it's distributed, just because some snotty, acne-faced internet kids had found a way to cheat the system? And these entitled little internet brats, don't they realize that albums cost *money* to create, and to produce, and to promote? How is there going to be any new music if no one's paying for it?

On top of that, I couldn't get into the idea of an invisible music library that lives on my computer. Where's the artwork? Where's my *collection*? I want the booklet, the packaging... I want shelves and shelves of albums that I've spent years collecting, that I can pore over and impress my friends with... I want to flip through the pages, and hold the CD in my hand... Being a kid who got into music well past the days of vinyl, CDs were all I had, and they still felt important to me.

It's all changed.

In a few short years, the aggressive push of technology combined with the arrogant response from the record industry has rapidly worn away all of my noble intentions of clinging to the old system, and has now pushed me into full-on dissent. I find myself fully immersed in digital music, almost never buying CDs, and fully against the methods of the major record labels and the RIAA. And I think it would do the music industry a lot of good to pay attention to why - because I'm just one of millions, and there will be millions more in the years to come. And it could have happened very, very differently.

As the years have passed, and technology has made digital files the most convenient, efficient, and attractive method of listening to music for many people, the rules and cultural perceptions regarding music have changed drastically. We live in the iPod generation - where a "collection" of clunky CDs feels archaic - where the uniqueness of your music collection is limited only by how eclectic your taste is. Where it's embraced and expected that if you like an album, you send it to your friend to listen to. Whether [this guy](#) likes it or

not, iPods have become synonymous with music - and if I filled my shiny new 160gb iPod up legally, buying each track online at the 99 cents price that the industry has determined, it would cost me about \$32,226. How does *that* make sense? It's the ugly truth the record industry wants to ignore as they struggle to find ways to get people to pay for music in a culture that has already embraced the idea of music being something you collect in large volumes, and trade freely with your friends.

*Already* is the key word, because it didn't have to be this way, and that's become the main source of my utter lack of sympathy for the dying record industry: They had a chance to move forward, to evolve with technology and address the changing needs of consumers - and they *didn't*. Instead, they panicked - they showed their hand as power-hungry dinosaurs, and they started to demonize their own customers, the people whose love of music had given them massive profits for decades. They used their unfair record contracts - the ones that allowed them to own all the music - and went after [children](#), [grandparents](#), [single moms](#), even [deceased great grandmothers](#) - alongside many other common people who did nothing more than download some songs and leave them in a shared folder - something that has become the cultural norm to the iPod generation. Joining together in what has been referred to as an [illegal cartel](#) and using the RIAA as their attack dogs, the record labels have spent billions of dollars attempting to scare people away from downloading music. And it's simply not working. The pirating community continues to out-smart and out-innovate the dated methods of the record companies, and CD sales continue to plummet while exchange of digital music on the internet continues to skyrocket. Why? Because freely-available music in large quantities *is* the new cultural norm, and the industry has given consumers no fair alternative. They didn't jump in when the new technologies were emerging and think, "how can we capitalize on this to ensure that we're able to stay afloat while providing the customer what they've come to expect?" They didn't band together and create a flat monthly fee for downloading all the music you want. They didn't respond by drastically lowering the prices of CDs (which have been ludicrously overpriced since day one, and actually *increased* in price during the '90's), or by offering low-cost DRM-free legal MP3 purchases. Their entry into the digital marketplace was too little too late - a precedent of free, high-quality, DRM-free music had already been set.

There seem to be a lot of reasons why the record companies blew it. One is that they're really not very smart. They know how to do one thing, which is sell records in a traditional retail environment. From personal experience I can tell you that the big labels are beyond clueless in the digital world - their ideas are out-dated, their methods make no sense, and every decision is hampered by miles and miles of legal tape, copyright restrictions, and corporate interests. Trying to innovate with a major label is like trying to teach your Grandmother how to play Halo 3: frustrating and ultimately futile. The easiest example of this is how much of a fight it's been to get record companies to sell MP3s DRM-free. You're trying to explain a new technology to an old guy who made his fortune in the hair metal days. You're trying to tell him that when someone buys a CD, it has no DRM - people can encode it into their computer as DRM-free MP3s within seconds, and send it to all their friends. So why insult the consumer by making them pay the same price for copy-protected MP3s? It doesn't make any sense! It just frustrates people and *drives* them to piracy! They don't get it: "It's an MP3, you have to protect it or they'll copy it." But they can do the same thing with the CDs you already sell!! Legal tape and lots of corporate bullshit. If these people weren't the ones who owned the music, it'd all be over already, and we'd be enjoying the *real* future of music. Because like with any new industry, it's not the people from the previous generation who are going to step in and be the innovators. It's a new batch.

Newspapers are a good example: It used to be that people read newspapers to get the news. That was the distribution method, and newspaper companies controlled it. You paid for a newspaper, and you got your news, that's how it worked. Until the internet came along, and a new generation of innovative people created websites, and suddenly *anyone* could distribute information, and they could distribute it faster, better, more efficiently, and for *free*. Obviously this hurt the newspaper industry, but there was nothing they could do about it, because they didn't own the information itself - only the distribution method. Their only choice was to innovate and find ways to compete in a new marketplace. And you know what? Now I can get live, up-to-the-minute news for free, on thousands of different sources across the internet - and *The New York Times* still exists. Free market capitalism at its finest. It's not a perfect example, but it is a part of how the internet is changing every form of traditional media. It happened with newspapers, it's happening now with music, and TV and cell phones are next on the chopping block. In all cases technology demands that change *will* happen, it's just a matter of who will find ways to take advantage of it, and who won't.

Unlike newspapers, record companies own the distribution *and* the product being distributed, so you can't just start your own website where you give out music that they own - and that's what this is all about: *distribution*. Lots of pro-piracy types argue that music can be free because people will always love music, and they'll pay for concert tickets, and merchandise, and the marketplace will shift and artists will survive. Well, yes, that might be an option for some artists, but that does *nothing* to help the record labels, because they don't make any money off of merchandise, or concert tickets. *Distribution* and *ownership* are what they control, and those are the two things piracy threatens. The few major labels left are parts of giant media conglomerations - owned by huge parent companies for whom artists and albums are just numbers on a piece of paper. It's why record companies shove disposable pop crap down your throat instead of nurturing career artists: because they have CEOs and shareholders to answer to, and those people don't give a shit if a really

great band has the *potential* to get really successful, if given the right support over the next decade. They see that Gwen Stefani's latest musical turd sold millions, because parents of twelve year old girls still buy music for their kids, and the parent company demands more easy-money pop garbage that will be forgotten about next month. The only thing that matters to these corporations is profit - period. Music isn't thought of as an art form, as it was in the earlier days of the industry where labels were started by music-lovers - it's a product, pure and simple. And many of these corporations also own the manufacturing plants that create the CDs, so they make money on all sides - and lose money even from *legal* MP3s.

At the top of all this is the rigged, outdated, and unfair structure of current intellectual property laws, all of them in need of massive reform in the wake of the digital era. These laws allow the labels to maintain their stranglehold on music copyrights, and they allow the RIAA to sue the pants off of any file-sharing grandmother they please. Since the labels are owned by giant corporations with a great deal of money, power, and political influence, the RIAA is able to lobby politicians and government agencies to manipulate copyright laws for their benefit. The result is absurdly disproportionate fines, and laws that in some cases make file sharing a heftier charge than armed robbery. This is yet another case of private, corporate interests using political influence to turn laws in the opposite direction of the changing values of the people. Or, as this [very smart assessment](#) from a record executive described it: "a clear case of a multinational conglomerate using its political muscle to the disadvantage of everyone but itself." But shady political maneuvers and scare tactics are all the RIAA and other anti-piracy groups have left, because people who download music illegally now number in the *hundreds of millions*, and they can't sue *everyone*. At this point they're just trying to hold up what's left of the dam before it bursts open. Their latest victim is Oink, a popular torrent site specializing in music.

If you're not familiar with Oink, here's a quick summary: Oink was was a free members-only site - to join it you had to be invited by a member. Members had access to an unprecedented community-driven database of music. Every album you could ever imagine was just one click away. Oink's extremely strict quality standards ensured that everything on the site was at pristine quality - 192kbps MP3 was their bare minimum, and they championed much higher quality MP3s as well as FLAC lossless downloads. They encouraged logs to verify that the music had been ripped from the CD without any errors. Transcodes - files encoded from other encoded files, resulting in lower quality - were strictly forbidden. You were always guaranteed higher quality music than iTunes or any other legal MP3 store. Oink's strict download/share ratio ensured that every album in their vast database was always well-seeded, resulting in downloads faster than anywhere else on the internet. A 100mb album would download in mere *seconds* on even an average broadband connection. Oink was known for getting pre-release albums before anyone else on the internet, often months before they hit retail - but they also had an extensive catalogue of music dating back decades, fueled by music lovers who took pride in uploading rare gems from their collection that other users were seeking out. If there was an album you couldn't find on Oink, you only had to post a request for it, and wait for someone who had it to fill your request. Even if the request was extremely rare, Oink's vast network of hundreds of thousands of music-lovers eager to contribute to the site usually ensured you wouldn't have to wait long.

In this sense, Oink was not only an absolute paradise for music fans, but it was unquestionably **the most complete and most efficient music distribution model the world has ever known**. I say that safely without exaggeration. It was like the world's largest music store, whose vastly superior selection and distribution was entirely stocked, supplied, organized, and expanded upon by its own consumers. If the music industry had found a way to capitalize on the power, devotion, and innovation of its own fans the way Oink did, it would be thriving right now instead of withering. If intellectual property laws didn't make Oink illegal, the site's creator would be the new Steve Jobs right now. He would have revolutionized music distribution. Instead, he's a criminal, simply for finding the best way to fill rising consumer demand. I would have gladly paid a large monthly fee for a legal service as good as Oink - but none existed, because the music industry could never set aside their own greed and corporate bullshit to make it happen.

Here's an interesting aside: The RIAA loves to complain about music pirates leaking albums onto the internet before they're released in stores - painting the leakers as vicious pirates dead set on attacking their enemy, the music industry. But you know where music leaks from? From the fucking *source*, of course - the labels! At this point, most bands know that once their finished album is sent off to the label, the risk of it turning up online begins, because the labels are full of low-level workers who happen to be music fans who can't wait to share the band's new album with their friends. If the album manages to not leak directly from the label, it is *guaranteed* to leak once it heads off to manufacturing. Someone at the manufacturing plant is always happy to sneak off with a copy, and before long, it turns up online. Why? Because people love music, and they can't *wait* to hear their favorite band's new album! It's not about profit, and it's not about maliciousness. So record industry, maybe if you could protect your own assets a little better, shit wouldn't leak - don't blame the fans who flock to the leaked material online, blame the people who leak it out of *your* manufacturing plants in the first place! But assuming that's a hole too difficult to plug, it begs the question, "why don't labels adapt to the changing nature of distribution by selling new albums online as soon as they're finished, before they have a chance to leak, and release the physical CDs a couple months later?" Well, for one, labels are still obsessed with Billboard chart numbers - they're obsessed with determining the market value of their product by how well it fares in its opening week. Selling it online before the big retail debut, before they've had months to properly market the product to ensure success, would mess up those numbers (nevermind that those numbers mean

absolutely *nothing* anymore). Additionally, selling an album online before it hits stores makes retail outlets (who are also suffering in all this) angry, and retail outlets have far more power than they should. For example, if a record company releases an album online but Wal-Mart won't have the CD in their stores for another two months (because it needs to be manufactured), Wal-Mart gets mad. Who cares if Wal-Mart gets mad, you ask? Well, record companies do, because Wal-Mart is, both mysteriously and tragically, the largest music retailer in the world. That means they have power, and they can say "if you sell Britney Spears' album online before we can sell it in our stores, we lose money. So if you do that, we're not going to stock her album at all, and then you'll lose a LOT of money." That kind of greedy business bullshit happens all the time in the record industry, and the consistent result is a worse experience for consumers and music lovers.

Which is why Oink was so great - take away all the rules and legal ties, all the ownership and profit margins, and naturally, the result is something purely for, by, and in service of the music fan. And it actually *helps* musicians - file-sharing is ["the greatest marketing tool ever to come along for the music industry."](#) One of Oink's best features was how it allowed users to connect similar artists, and to see what people who liked a certain band also liked. Similar to Amazon's recommendation system, it was possible to spend hours discovering new bands on Oink, and that's what many of its users did. Through sites like Oink, the amount and variety of music I listen to has skyrocketed, opening me up to hundreds of artists I never would have experienced otherwise. I'm now fans of their music, and I may not have bought their CDs, but **I would have never bought their CD anyway, because I would have never heard of them!** And now that I have heard of them, I go to their concerts, and I talk them up to my friends, and give my friends the music to listen to for themselves, so they can go to the concerts, and tell their friends, and so on. Oink was a network of music lovers sharing and discovering music. And yes, it was all technically illegal, and destined to get shut down, I suppose. But it's not so much that they shut Oink down that boils my blood, it's the fucking bullshit [propaganda](#) they put out there. If the industry tried to have *some* kind of compassion - if they said, "we understand that these are just music fans trying to listen to as much music as they can, but we have to protect our assets, and we're working on an industry-wide solution to accommodate the changing needs of music fans"... Well, it's too late for that, but it would be encouraging. Instead, they make it sound like they busted a Columbian drug cartel or something. They describe it as a highly-organized piracy ring. Like Oink users were distributing kiddie porn or some shit. The press release says: "This was not a case of friends sharing music for pleasure." Wh - *what??* That's EXACTLY what it was! No one made any money on that site - there were no ads, no registration fees. The only currency was ratio - the amount you shared with other users - a brilliant way of turning "free" into a sort of booming mini-economy. The anti-piracy groups have tried to spin the notion that you had to pay a fee to join Oink, which is NOT true - donations were voluntary, and went to support the hosting and maintenance of the site. If the donations spilled into profit for the guy who ran the site, well he damn well deserved it - he created something truly remarkable.

So the next question is, what now?

For the major labels, it's over. [It's fucking over.](#) You're going to burn to the fucking ground, and we're all going to dance around the fire. And *it's your own fault.* Surely, somewhere deep inside, you had to know this day was coming, right? Your very industry is founded on an unfair business model of *owning* art you didn't create in exchange for the services you provide. It's rigged so that you win every time - even if the artist does well, you do ten times better. It was able to exist because you controlled the distribution, but now that's back in the hands of the people, and you let the ball drop when you could have evolved.

None of this is to say that there's no way for artists to make money anymore, or even that it's the end of record labels. It's just the end of record labels *as we know them.* A lot of people point to the Radiohead model as the future, but Radiohead is only dipping its toe into the future to test the waters. What at first seemed like a rainbow-colored revolution has now been openly revealed as [a marketing gimmick](#): Radiohead was "experimenting," releasing a low-quality MP3 version of an album only to punish the fans who paid for it by later releasing a full-quality CD version *with extra tracks.* According to [Radiohead's manager](#): "*If we didn't believe that when people hear the music they will want to buy the CD then we wouldn't do what we are doing.*" Ouch. Radiohead was moving in the right direction, but if they really want to start a revolution, they need to place the "pay-what-you-want" digital album on the same content and quality level as the "pay-what-we-want" physical album.

Ultimately, I don't know what the future model is going to be - I think all the current pieces of the puzzle will still be there, but they need to be re-ordered, and the rules need to be changed. Maybe record labels of the future exist to help front recording costs and promote artists, but they don't *own* the music. Maybe music is free, and musicians make their money from touring and merchandise, and if they need a label, the label takes a percentage of their tour and merch profits. Maybe all-digital record companies give bands all the tools they need to sell their music directly to their fans, taking a small percentage for their services. In any case, the artists own their own music.

I used to reject the wishy-washy "music should be free!" mantra of online music thieves. I knew too much about the intricacies and economics of it, of the rock-and-a-hard-place situation many artists were in with their labels. I thought there were plenty of new ways to sell music that would be fair to all parties involved. But I no longer believe that, because the squabbling, backwards, greedy,

ownership-obsessed major labels will never let it happen, and that's more clear to me now than ever. So maybe music has to be free. **Maybe taking the money out of music is the only way to get money back into it.** Maybe it's time to abandon the notion of the rock star - of music as a route to fame and fortune. The best music was always made by people who weren't in it for the money, anyway. Maybe smart, talented musicians will find ways to make a good living with or without CD sales. Maybe the record industry execs who made their fortunes off of unfair contracts and distribution monopolies should just walk away, confident that they milked a limited opportunity for all it was worth, and that it's time to find fortune somewhere else. Maybe in the hands of consumers, the music marketplace will expand in new and lucrative ways no one can even dream of yet. We won't know until music is free, and eventually it's going to be. Technological innovation destroys old industries, but it creates new ones. You can't fight it forever.

Until the walls finally come down, we're in what will inevitably be looked back on as a very awkward, chaotic period in music history - fans are being arrested for sharing the music they love, and many artists are left helpless, unable to experiment with new business models because they're locked into record contracts with backwards-thinking labels.

So what can you and I do to help usher in the brave new world? The beauty of Oink was how fans willingly and hyper-efficiently took on distribution roles that traditionally have cost labels millions of dollars. Music lovers have shown that they're much more willing to put time and effort into music than they are money. It's time to show artists that there's no limit to what an energized online fanbase can accomplish, and all they'll ever ask for in return is more music. And it's time to show the labels that they missed a *huge* opportunity by not embracing these opportunities when they had the chance.

**1. Stop buying music from major labels. Period.** The only way to force change is to hit the labels where it hurts - their profits. The major labels are like Terry Schiavo right now - they're on life support, drooling in a coma, while white-haired guys in suits try and change the laws to keep them alive. But any rational person can see that it's too late, and it's time to pull out the feeding tube. In this case, the feeding tube is your money. Find out which labels are members/supporters of the RIAA and similar copyright enforcement groups, and don't support them in any way. [The RIAA Radar](#) is a great tool to help you with this. Don't buy CDs, don't buy iTunes downloads, don't buy from Amazon, etc. Steal the music you want that's on the major labels. It's easy, and despite the RIAA's scare tactics, it can be done safely - especially if more and more people are doing it. Send letters to those labels, and to the RIAA, explaining very calmly and professionally that you will no longer be supporting their business, because of their bullish scare tactics towards music fans, and their inability to present a forward-thinking digital distribution solution. Tell them you believe their business model is outdated and the days of companies owning artists' music are over. Make it very clear that you will continue to support the artists directly in other ways, and make it VERY clear that your decision has come about as a direct result of the record company's actions and inactions regarding digital music.

**2. Support artists directly.** If a band you like is stuck on a major label, there are tons of ways you can support them without actually buying their CD. Tell everyone you know about them - start a fansite if you're really passionate. Go to their shows when they're in town, and buy t-shirts and other merchandise. Here's a little secret: Anything a band sells that does not have music on it is outside the reach of the record label, and monetarily supports the artist more than buying a CD ever would. T-shirts, posters, hats, keychains, stickers, etc. Send the band a letter telling them that you're no longer going to be purchasing their music, but you *will* be listening to it, and you will be spreading the word and supporting them in other ways. Tell them you've made this decision because you're trying to force change within the industry, and you no longer support record labels with RIAA affiliations who own the music of their artists.

If you like bands who are releasing music on open, non-RIAA indie labels, buy their albums! You'll support the band you like, and you'll support hard-working, passionate people at small, forward-thinking music labels. If you like bands who are completely independent and are releasing music on their own, support them as much as possible! Pay for their music, buy their merchandise, tell all your friends about them and help promote them online - prove that a network of passionate fans is the best promotion a band can ask for.

**3. Get the message out.** Get this message out to as many people as you can - spread the word on your blog or your MySpace, and more importantly, tell your friends at work, or your family members, people who might not be as tuned into the internet as you are. Teach them how to use torrents, show them where to go to get music for free. Show them how to support artists while starving the labels, and who they should and shouldn't be supporting.

**4. Get political.** The fast-track to ending all this nonsense is changing intellectual property laws. The RIAA lobbies politicians to manipulate copyright laws for their own interests, so voters need to lobby politicians for the *peoples'* interests. Contact your local representatives and senators. Tell them politely and articulately that you believe copyright laws no longer reflect the interests of the people, and you will not vote for them if they support the interests of the RIAA. Encourage them to draft legislation that helps change the outdated laws and disproportionate penalties the RIAA champions. Contact information for state representatives can be found

[here](#), and contact information for senators can be found [here](#). You can email them, but calling on the phone or writing them actual letters is always more effective.

Tonight, with Oink gone, I find myself wondering where I'll go now to discover new music. All the other options - *particularly* the legal ones - seem depressing by comparison. I wonder how long it will be before *everyone* can legally experience the type of music nirvana Oink users became accustomed to? I'm not too worried - something even better will rise out of Oink's ashes, and the RIAA will respond with more lawsuits, and the cycle will repeat itself over and over until the industry has finally bled itself to death. And then everything will be able to change, and it will be in the hands of musicians and fans and a new generation of entrepreneurs to decide how the *new* record business is going to work. Whether you agree with it or not, it's fact. It's inevitable - because the determination of fans to share music is much, much stronger than the determination of corporations to stop it.

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320 Comments:

[Chowderhawk](#) said...

Wow, what a rant. I'm glad that you talked about this subject and that you actually updated your blog. I think close to everybody hates the RIAA and the labels in general. The problem is that people don't want to do 'the wrong thing'. The RIAA just needs to sue someone every few months and people will keep thinking that they will be caught if they do it. It's going to be an interesting time for music fans...

[11:50 PM](#) \_

[RealLowVibe](#) said...

While I know you said you had avoided doing so due to the complicated nature of the whole situation, I thank you for sitting down and taking the time to write it out. It's an eloquent, spot-on summary of what I've been feeling. Definitely passing this along out into the world... And I can completely vouch for the points you've offered as ways to support bands without supporting RIAA-related majors. Whenever possible, buy merch and music directly from the bands themselves, as not only will you be avoiding supporting the clusterfuck that is the industry, you'll actually be directly helping the musicians in question, as many of the smaller bands depend on that merch money for things as simple but crucial as eating or paying for fuel to get to their next show. Again, many thanks!

[12:17 AM](#) \_

[Lance](#) said...

Exquisite. And done. You've articulated a philosophy and outlined the actions I have lived with and preformed for the last several years. And you've done it in a manner far better than I could ever hope to. There's not much else to say other than "you're right" and "it's time to take action." I never did have an account on Oink. I was never that lucky. But I can at least stay happy knowing that little sites like Demonoid still exist, for now.

[2:54 AM](#) \_

Brendan said...

Allmusic is a great way to learn about new bands. I spend hours on that site man. I feel the same way, although I like having a physical copy of the album (I'm like you in that I adore good album art and liner notes), it's just way too fucking expensive, and I find myself paying more for my music (example: My copy of "In The Court of The Crimson King" By King Crimson cost me 21 bucks Canadian, and yet a copy of Snoop Dogg's new album was a mere 8 bucks. Whiskey Foxtrot Tango?). I'd be out tens of thousands of dollars that I don't have if I bought every album I own. And luckily in Canada, the RIAA or similar groups can't sue individuals for sharing music online. Go Canada's socialist paradise.

[3:29 AM](#) \_