

FEATURES

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Daniel Ek, left, and Martin Lorentzon, the founders of Spotify, and Netflix, below, which offers video on demand, are leading the vanguard of streaming services that observers believe will overtake illegal file sharing.

Like many teenagers, Josh Wilson, the 13-year-old son of the New York venture capitalist Fred Wilson, has on occasion visited the Internet's peer-to-peer file-sharing services to download music and television shows.

But recently, as Wilson recounted last week on his popular blog, A VC, Josh has started streaming television shows from Netflix under the family's US\$24-a-month subscription plan and listening to licensed, ad-supported music videos from YouTube on his iPhone. Asked by his father why he was not using file-sharing services like BitTorrent to download shows like *Friday Night Lights*, Josh replied, "BitTorrent takes too long."

The answer neatly encapsulates the remaining hope of beleaguered media executives everywhere, especially those in the rapidly deteriorating music business. After a decade of rampant digital piracy that has helped to gut album sales, a raft of new streaming music sites is making the experience of legally finding and listening to music just as seductive as downloading it free.

Many music industry observers now believe that there is a fundamental shift under way: from illegal downloads to licensed streaming services like MySpace Music, imeem and Spotify, where users can play any song, anytime and — coming soon — on any device. These sites are free, supported by ads, and with an expanding catalog of songs, they are finally ready to overshadow the more cumbersome, unauthorized services that can be hard for newcomers to navigate.

"We have been on this endless hunt for a decade trying to accumulate both our all-time favorites and the new hits," said Bob Lefsetz, author of the *Lefsetz Letter*, a music industry newsletter, who believes that the future hope of the music industry lies in charging people monthly subscriptions for access to streaming sites on the Web and their phones. "Why are you going to steal if all of a sudden you can check it out quickly on a streaming service?"

Two recent studies of online behavior back this optimistic view. In June, two British research agencies, MusicAlly and The Leading Question, generated a wave of headlines in the tech press after reporting that the percentage of 14- to 18-year-olds using file-sharing services at least once a month dropped to 26 percent in January of this year from 42 percent in December 2007.

Similarly, a survey by the NPD Group in the US this spring found that teenagers aged 13 to 17 illegally downloaded 6 percent fewer tracks in 2008 than in 2007, while more than half said they were now listening to legal online radio services like Pandora, up from 34 percent the year before.

There are some good reasons to keep a salt-shaker handy here — some teenagers may not be honest about downloading, for example. But there are also some indis-

Streaming services may soothe the music industry

Can the likes of MySpace Music, imeem and Spotify entice people away from downloading illegally?

BY BRAD STONE
NY TIMES NEWS SERVICE, NEW YORK



putably positive factors at work. The streaming music services are providing not only an authorized but also in some cases a superior alternative, and may be the first obvious stop for a generation that is too young to remember when the original Napster revolutionized the music industry.

MySpace Music, introduced in September, now makes millions of songs available for free, accompanied by ads and links to buy concert tickets and merchandise. Nielsen recently reported that the number of visitors to the site grew to 12.1 million in June, from 4.2 million in September.

YouTube also streams millions of songs under agreements with three of the four major music labels in the form of music videos — Warner Music is a holdout — and is increasingly available free from mobile phones like the iPhone. In the weeks after Michael Jackson's death, for example, 12 million people played his *Thriller* video from pages on the site with display ads and links to buy the songs.

But perhaps the most-discussed licensed service is Spotify, a two-year-old Swedish start-up that has amassed 6 million users in Europe — and a few hundred lucky media and music industry insiders in the US who have been given early access.

Spotify users download a software program to their computers that allows them to quickly search for a piece of music and play it instantly. Spotify's innovation is subtle, embedded in its intuitive user interface and efficient design. Anyone familiar with iTunes can figure out how to navigate Spotify's 5.5 million songs and add them to playlists.

The free version comes with ads, or users can upgrade to a premium version for US\$14 monthly. Daniel Ek, a co-founder, was in New York this month, talking to the American music labels and preparing to introduce the service here later this year.

"Piracy is essentially the consumer's wish to have everything on demand. It's not like people want to necessarily have it for free," Ek said. The problem is that there have not been commercial services "that allowed people to discover new music and easily share music with friends."

Even if people are abandoning free downloads for ad-supported services like Spotify, the industry will keep facing larger existential questions. Companies like MySpace Music, Pandora and even YouTube — though thick with ads and links to paid downloads — cannot yet (if ever) replace depleted revenue from physical CD sales.

They might even be exacerbating the problem. "The big question is, are we not just fighting piracy, but also taking away the industry's most lucrative customers, the ones that were buying 30 or 40 CDs a year?" Ek asks. "If so, the music industry is in worse shape than it was before."

Lefsetz believes that the answer is for the music industry to nourish the streaming sites and then push users toward subscribing to them for a monthly fee. "The key is to just get US\$10 from everybody," he said.

That, he said, might finally vanquish the demons of music piracy. Lefsetz uses himself as an example of this salvaged future. He used to turn to file-sharing sites to quickly sample new music he wanted to write about. Now he just streams songs free from Spotify.

[THE WEEKENDER]



Placebo: the real thing.

PHOTO: ALITA RICKARDS

Music Terminals festival takes off in Taoyuan

BY ALITA RICKARDS
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

Straight Music House's (直的音乐会) Music Terminals festival at Taoyuan County Stadium (桃园县立体育场) started off as a relaxed sunny afternoon on Saturday with people mingling and wandering around the spacious grounds. While some lounged on the grass drinking draft beer, others followed Tricky around as he took photos and was occasionally asked to pose for pictures with fans and sign autographs.

New Pants (新裤子) attracted its audience from across the stadium, with front man Peng Lei (彭磊) dressed in a grey military uniform, executing Devo-like moves on stage. Their sound is reminiscent of a dark Pet Shop Boys with elements of the Talking Heads thrown in for good measure. His erect posture, campy hand-clapping and mock-official gesturing captivated the crowd.

Fronted! charmed listeners with very chilled-out, laid-back music. Vocalist Angie Hart's slightly quirky, warm style of singing is well suited to a sunny day. The band exuded a kind of goofy charm, though guitarist Simon Austin's attempts at banter — "This song is better after a few pills" — went over the crowd's head.

Liz Durrett's soulful, smoky vocals and mournful, dignified facial expressions on one stage were at odds with the sound drifting over from the another stage: that of the Clippers' (夹子电动大乐团) KTV influenced kitsch-pop. Their psychedelic videos playing on the big screen looked like they were made using state-of-the-art technology from the 1960s.

Durrett's sound brings to mind Cat Power, but without the self-indulgent spaced-out rambling that ruins the latter's live performances. Durrett is focused and though immobile, is suffused with a quiet intensity.

Saturday's highlight was headliner Placebo. It was eerie to see so many people gather and stand in front of an empty stage while the stages on either side had live bands playing to a smattering of people. The alternative rock group rewarded the audience's patience with a fantastic show. The crowd's raised hands glowed in the red stage lights as fans sang along. Front man and singer/guitarist Brian Molko is beautifully androgynous, with smeared black eyeliner and a somewhat coy stage presence, while the band's new drummer, Steve Forrest, bared his tattooed upper torso and whipped his surfer-boy mop of blond hair around.

The audience went wild, especially the girls.

All change

From *Wednesday*, the Features Section will sport a new look. The pastel shades are going and in their place will be bold, bright colors that present content in a more approachable format. We're rearranging the daily sections to form a more logical sequence, with art stories and art exhibition listings, for example, being published together on Wednesdays. The CD, technology, book and DVD reviews will run on Sundays rather than Wednesdays. There will be new puzzles and new cartoons. If you have any comments or queries, either send an e-mail to [features\[at\]taipeitimes.com](mailto:features[at]taipeitimes.com) or find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/taipeitimes and leave a message.

PIANET POP

Michael Jackson's doctor is more than US\$770,000 in debt and his luxury resort home in Las Vegas faces foreclosure, court documents filed in Nevada have revealed.

Conrad Murray — whose home and office in Nevada were raided by authorities on Tuesday — began working for Jackson in May, after creditors went to court to recoup more than US\$363,000 he owed for office equipment.

He also had been ordered to pay US\$71,000 in overdue student loans, documents revealed. The doctor also faces likely foreclosure on his home in a gated community in Las Vegas after missing over US\$100,000 in mortgage payments.

The mountain of debts could explain why Murray abandoned his own practice in Las Vegas to accept a US\$150,000 a month job as Jackson's personal doctor ahead of the singer's 50-date comeback concert series in London.

Jackson died on June 25, and authorities are probing whether his death was a criminal act, with Murray the center of



Life in the material world turned Madonna on to religion.

PHOTO: REUTERS

investigators' attention.

Documents unsealed on Thursday showed that authorities searched Murray's property seeking evidence of manslaughter, unprofessional conduct, "prescribing or treating an addict" and excessive prescribing.

In a disclosure of a more spiritual nature, pop diva Madonna recounted to Israelis the long search that led her to the Jewish mystic religion Kabbalah, in an

article published on Friday by Israel's largest newspaper.

Madonna, who will be in Israel in September as part of her Sticky and Sweet tour, said she had traveled the world many times over, dined with state leaders and achieved a high level of success but still felt that something was missing from her life.

"I was raised a Catholic and my father was very religious, but none of my questions ever got answered," she wrote in the article that appeared in the *Yediot Aharonot* newspaper in English and Hebrew.

The Queen of Pop's spiritual search led her to practice yoga, study Buddhism, Taoism and read about the early Christians.

"I learned a lot and I was very inspired, but I still could not connect the dots and find a way to take this knowledge and apply it to my daily life.

"I was looking for an answer," the 50-year-old pop icon said.

She said her quest was over after she turned to the Kabbalah, an ancient Jewish mystic tradition.

In 2004, Madonna took the Hebrew name Esther but has not converted to Judaism.

British actor **Jude Law** is to be a father for the fourth time after being informed that a partner from a previous relationship is expecting, his publicists said in a statement on Wednesday.

The Oscar-nominated star of *The Talented Mr Ripley* already has three children with his ex-wife **Sadie Frost**. No information about the mother of his fourth child was released.

"Jude Law can confirm that, following a relationship last year, he has been advised that he is to be the father of a child due in the fall of this year," a statement said.

"Mr Law is no longer in a relationship with the individual concerned but he intends to be a fully supportive part of the child's life. This is an entirely private matter and no other statements will be made."

Law, 36, is currently single. He will next appear in director **Guy Ritchie's** *Sherlock Holmes*, in which he plays the Victorian

sleuth's trusty sidekick Dr Watson.

Joining Law is former world number one tennis player Boris Becker, who revealed on Saturday that he too is set to become a father for the fourth time.

"It's true, we're going to become parents," the three-time Wimbledon champion told the Germany daily *Bild*.

The 41-year-old Becker married his 33-year-old Dutch wife Lilly Kerssenberg in St Moritz, Switzerland, on June 12.

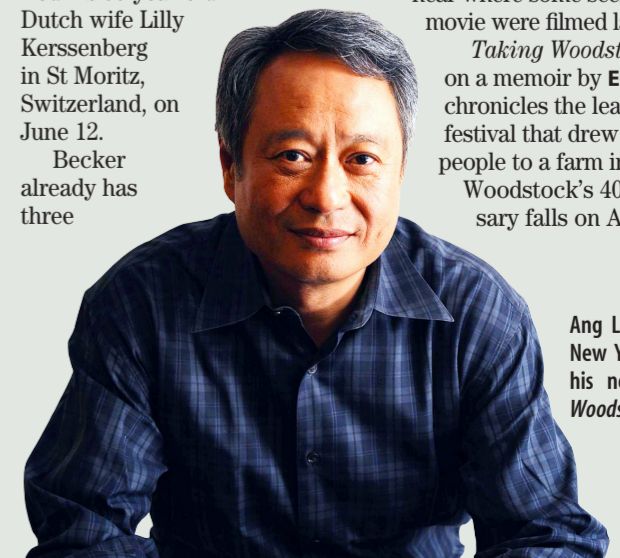
Becker already has three

children — two with his former wife **Barbara Feltus** and one with Russian model **Angela Ermakova**.

Ang Lee (李安) is in upstate New York for the first of several US screenings of his upcoming movie *Taking Woodstock*. Lee and screenwriter/producer **James Schamus** attended a benefit screening of the movie on Thursday night in rural Columbia County, near where some scenes for the movie were filmed last year.

Taking Woodstock is based on a memoir by **Elliot Tiber** and chronicles the lead-up to the festival that drew half a million people to a farm in the Catskills. Woodstock's 40th anniversary falls on Aug. 15.

— AGENCIES



Ang Lee attended the New York screening of his new film, *Taking Woodstock*.

PHOTO: EPA