

CD Quality Music Downloads by Malcolm Steward

To many observers, especially those-digital-provides-the-answer-to-everything visionaries, the days of purchasing music on physical media are all but over. In the near future, they're eager to tell us, the Compact Disc will be little more than a memory and we'll all be buying our music by downloading it from vast repositories on the internet. The phrase "Yeah, right" springs instantly to mind, but I've become increasingly wary of making such remarks ever since my crystal ball went dark and hazy - although it wasn't too far off the mark in its glum predictions for the meteoric disappearance off the radar of SACD and DVD-Audio.

This music-by-download vision is presently a dream - although it will remain as such for those without sufficiently fast internet connections and appropriate hardware in their homes, such as cash-strapped baby-boomers turned pensioners living in rural areas for whom the cost and accessibility of such luxuries might be less vital to their lives than, say, food and drink.

That having been said, however, we have already seen moves in the direction of direct delivery of music with the popularity of sites selling songs in MP3 format and the ubiquity of devices such as the iPod. Only yesterday I travelled to London by train and witnessed the disturbing sight of a young lady apparently having convulsions in the seat opposite me, only to discover that she was merely 'dancing' with her eyes closed while enjoying music through headphones that were concealed beneath her hair. A quick look at the rest of the people in the compartment revealed that she was not alone in this respect: several other travellers were sitting trance-like with a headphone lead disappearing into their pockets or handbags, while their slack jawed mouths silently mimed whatever they were listening to. (continues)