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I am sometimes accused of Luddism, less perhaps for preferring vinyl over CD than my scepticism about computer audio in general (he says, just as his server starts working again!). However, it seems that I'm by no means alone, as others too are finding that the computer is not necessarily the all-singing-and-dancing godsend that was originally assumed. I was chatting to a contributor who shared my suspicions and had stopped trying to use his NAS drive. And I recall another contributor, returning from holiday, had to restart his server some 20 times before it began working.

“But a CD player is essentially a computer” is sometimes heard (though in truth it's really only a dedicated microprocessor). However, because it's a fixed standalone unit it doesn't connect to the internet, and therefore doesn't keep downloading software updates, which seems to be the curse that plagues all computers these days.

Granted it's not very convenient to have hundreds of silver discs, all with those horrid jewel cases, just hanging around and getting in the way. It's so much handier to store everything on a NAS drive. That's certainly true, but for me the core problem appears to be to do with timescales. Some of my favourite albums are 50 years old, which is long before personal computers came on the scene. And a few of my favourite CDs even go back to the days of floppy discs, long before the internet allowed the people developing computer software to go off at half cock on the basis that it can always be fixed and downloaded later. On the music side it's difficult to decide who is responsible: customer demand spurs the music industry into creating new standards and formats, internet streaming services react, and hardware makers are required to keep up.

In the days when vinyl and CD were developed, it was important to get things right 'first time' as there was little or no chance of changing things later. (The evidence is seen in numerous failures that also occurred!) Attitudes seem to have changed today. I've recently endured two spells of 'no internet', each lasting a week. While it was interesting to realise just how internet-dependent we've become, one of the Openreach guys who came and fixed the system told me that the 'fault' had been due to a software change that had stripped off my ID. He added that it was quite normal to start using software when it was just 80% finished, as it could always be updated after any bugs had revealed themselves.

Those internet incidents might not be strictly relevant to computer audio, but they do represent a similar attitude. I shall therefore carry on using my server as long as it continues working because it's so incredibly convenient, but I won't lose any sleep if it stops working again. And I'll keep my CD player well warmed up just in case.....

Paul Messenger
Editor