

THE 7:30 REPORT

DDA Technology to revolutionise the music industry

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The new digital album format called DDA is being called the future of music, able to store hundreds of tracks, lyrics, photos and liner notes usually found on an album sleeve. The technology allows for all these features to be stored on a pocket size USB memory stick. Northern Territory musician Geoffrey Gurrumul Yunupingu will be one of the first artists to release albums using this format in the New Year.

Transcript

HEATHER EWART, PRESENTER: It's been called the future of music - revolutionary digital music technology that has the potential to inject some commercial life into an ailing recorded music industry. The new digital album format, called DDA, can store hundreds of tracks plus all the lyrics, photos and liner notes usually found on a traditional album sleeve. All of it contained on a pocket size computer memory stick.

This year's music sensation from the Northern Territory, Geoffrey Gurrumul Yunupingu, is one of the first artists to embrace the new format with several high-profile Australian albums due for DDA release in the New Year. Tracee Hutchison reports.

TRACEE HUTCHISON, REPORTER: A little over 100 years ago, the gramophone created a musical revolution. For the first time, music could be recorded and replayed and it stayed that way for decades, until compact discs heralded a new era of music portability in the 1980s.

But now, it's computers and digital technology that's completely transforming the way music is delivered.

SCOTT MURPHY, DDA CREATOR: It is a memory stick that we buy from China - that's simply what it is. But then we upload it with our software, our patented software, plus the content from the artist.

TRACEE HUTCHISON: This latest development in music technology is called a DDA, an updatable USB memory stick that is album, video clip, artwork, photos and social network all wrapped up in one. And it's been created in Australia by Melbourne music industry veteran Scott Murphy.

SCOTT MURPHY: Most music obtainable by a download is fairly what I call faceless. It just comes as a file. This is different - it's an album package. So it's trying to re-create the album experience from the '50s to the '90s that we all kind of grew up with and loved.

TRACEE HUTCHISON: In recent years, talk of the death of the album has been fuelled by the proliferation of music file sharing and illegal downloads in particular.

But many in the industry believe the DDA has the potential to redress the balance.

RICHARD MALLET, AUSTRALIAN PERFORMING RIGHTS ASSOCIATION: I think back 18 months to two years ago, there was talk that the labels were gonna release on USB. And I think they did so to a certain extent in the US. I think maybe one or two releases occurred here in Australia. But I think it needed something else - not just another format. It needed another hook. And I think that the DDA may provide that hook.

TRACEE HUTCHISON: For artists like Lior, who'll release his latest album on DDA early in 2009, the format allows a greater connection with the people buying his music.

LIOR, MUSICIAN: I think things are changing, you know. Certainly illegal downloads have hurt artists, but I think the way to react to that is through building, you know, stronger relationships with your fans. And I think that's a good thing.

I think we're moving into an age where music is about sort of embracing a sense of community. And I think the days of just putting out a CD and throwing it out there and not knowing who's gonna buy it, you know, they're kinda coming to an end.

SCOTT MURPHY: There's no one answer for the woes of the record and music industry, because there's not one cause of the problem. It's not just illegal downloading - there's many causes for it. But, yes, this is one way that we can invigorate people to buy music again because for a great price, they get a much bigger experience.

TRACEE HUTCHISON: And if it means an increase in artists' royalties, then it's a welcome development according to the Australian Performing Rights Association.

RICHARD MALLETT: In these times, any new product that offers the chance to increase sales has gotta be viewed as a good thing. The challenge for the music industry is to find ways to monetise new products and new ideas and find ways to bring that money back to our members.

TRACEE HUTCHISON: The first two DDA releases, Sneaky Sound System and Geoffrey Gurrumul Yunupingu, are already on the market, retailing at the same price as a CD.

SCOTT MURPHY: It's gonna appeal to the people who are fans of music. So, say if you're a fan of Gurrumul, you saw him on the ARIAs and you think this guy's fantastic and you really want to know Gurrumul and have an ongoing experience, in-depth experience. Well this is the best way to do that.

It actually creates a bridge between the artists and the consumers. So the artists can then say, "OK, I've got 10,000 people who I know like my music 'cos they've all bought my DDA. And I can continue to communicate with them and I can continue to deliver them new content. So I could be taking photos on my live tour of America, and within minutes, upload them to my 10,000 fans back home."

TRACEE HUTCHISON: Far from signalling the death of recorded music, the DDA could actually be its saviour.

Is this the future of music?

SCOTT MURPHY: This is a part of the future of music, definitely. I think we're in an age of options. The digital age has brought so many options to people, especially in the type and content and range of music that you can access now.

LIOR: I think it's certainly one aspect of the future of music. It's - you know, in a funny kind of way, you know, this is a more sophisticated way of musicians going back to being court musicians, you know, where they have a community of people that support them and this helps do that.

TRACEE HUTCHISON: All of it made possible with home-grown Australian technology.

SCOTT MURPHY: It's a world first. It comes out of Melbourne. And another beauty about the digital age that we're in is that people anywhere in any pocket of the world can invent products for the digital age and for the internet. And yeah, this one's come out of Melbourne and we are taking it to England and America early next year.

HEATHER EWART: Tracee Hutchison reporting.

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