



# LET OUR PEOPLE SHARE

BY EDDIE SCHWARTZ

***As you read this, millions of songs are being file-shared. It's been going on 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, for most of the last decade. It's a wonderful thing. This should be a perfectly legal activity. With one proviso.***

Ten million songs at any given moment are being shared. Despite years of lawsuits and other repressive measures against "pirates," there is no end in sight.

While iTunes may sell a billion or so tunes this year, something like 40 billion songs will find their way across *Limewire*, *transmission* and other similar P2P networks, as well as being emailed and instant-messaged. Over 95% of the music people acquire over the Internet is transmitted by way of file-sharing. That's a ratio of 40:1 "illegal" file-shares over "legal" downloads.

And the people who write, perform and produce songs for a living won't be receiving a red cent for all that wonderful music being enjoyed by so many millions of people. As one of those creators of music, what do I think of all this? It's almost all good. And, with one small condition, it certainly should be a perfectly legal activity.

First of all, I don't call people who share music "pirates" or "criminals." I call them our "audience" and our "fans." I *like* file-sharing. Here's why.

Music file-sharing is the freest, greenest, largest global distribution system for music of all kinds that has ever been invented in the history of the world. Nothing

has ever delivered more music to more people in a more efficient and environmentally friendly manner.

Also, it's a completely open system. Any artist can share their work and thereby offer it to the world. For the aspiring artist and songwriter it is a free, worldwide distribution system. No gatekeepers required. For the music fan, what's *not* to like about being able to access the world's entire repertoire of music (something approaching

apart through neglect and age. But the fans preserve and share the music they love. And so it survives for new generations to share and enjoy.

So, what's missing? **A few dollars a month. A licence fee of \$4 or \$5 could be bundled into monthly Internet access fees. People who don't file-share could opt out.** The money would go into a pool and a pro rata distribution made to the artists, songwriters and rights holders whose songs are being shared. Canada's world-respected performance rights society, SOCAN, has been licensing broadcasters and making distributions using similar methodology for decades. **SOCAN (as well as other already existing collectives) could collect and distribute this new source of desperately needed revenue for creators.**

If every Canadian household that engages in music-sharing paid that small licence fee, something wonderful would happen – music creators could once again make a living.

And that's the problem now. The vast majority of songwriters and artists are not rock stars and, sadly, don't make anything remotely close to a living. This is particularly true of the new generation of music creators coming up. Because CD sales have fallen off a cliff, record labels have no money to sign and develop new artists. By licensing music file-sharing, the collapse of the music industry would give way to a musical renaissance, and artists and songwriters could spend their days writing and producing more great Canadian music to share with the world. For more information, I urge you to visit [musicfilesharing.ca](http://musicfilesharing.ca).

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100 million unique songs)? Every song you can think of, and many millions you can't, are available for download. iTunes, by contrast, offers less than 10 million songs.

In addition, music-sharing networks are the greatest living repository of music in the world. Record labels go bankrupt, warehouses full of tapes burn down, master recordings are thrown away or just fall

***Eddie Schwartz is the President of the S.A.C.***