

Amazon MP3 versus iTunes

A Comparison of Distribution Platforms

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Introduction and Process

This report will examine the benefits and drawbacks of releasing an independent music album on each of two distribution services: iTunes or Amazon MP3. iTunes is the industry leader while Amazon has more positive consumer feedback. The purpose of this report is to get an accurate idea of the qualities that each service has, and to decide definitively which service we will choose to release our album.

In order to compare the two services, we have downloaded the same album ("This is Me" by Linzer Dinzer) on both services to compare file size, download speed, and playability in various music software.

Comparison of Features

Software Name	Software Size	Audio Format	DRM	Playability?
iTunes	42 MB	256 kbps AAC	No	iTunes, VLC, QT
Amazon MP3 Downloader	1.5 MB	V0 MP3	No	Anything

File Sizes

Song Title	iTunes	Amazon
Stick To Me	6.6 MB	6.2 MB
Rejuvenate	8.4 MB	7.6 MB
Words	7.8 MB	7.3 MB
Shimmering Bliss	8.2 MB	5.9 MB
Harmony	8.0 MB	6.7 MB

Amazon MP3 has a clear lead in file sizes both in music files and proprietary download software.

It also has the edge in playability. The MP3 format is playable in VLC, Quicktime, Winamp, Windows Media Player, MusicMatch, and even iTunes. However, the AAC ".m4a" format is only playable in Apple proprietary software such as iTunes and Quicktime, and open source universal players like VLC.

Download Speed comparison

Song Title	Amazon	iTunes
Stick To Me	12 sec	8
Rejuvenate	15 sec	7
Words	9 sec	8
Shimmering Bliss	8 sec	9
Harmony	12 sec	9

Popularity

As of the end of Fiscal Year 2010, iTunes has **66.2%** market share. Amazon MP3's market share is **13.3%**, up from 11% at the end of Fiscal Year 2009. While Amazon is showing growth, this difference is too substantial for Amazon to be favored here.

While Amazon has the smaller file sizes, more widely compatible audio format, and lower prices, iTunes has the brand recognition, longevity, and ease of use that Amazon lacks.

Conclusion

As a consumer, one would benefit more from choosing Amazon MP3 due to pricing and a universal file format. However, as a music producer deciding a distribution platform, iTunes is the clear winner due to its far more widespread use. This album would benefit from a good deal more exposure to the general public if iTunes is used, and an independent music publisher needs the highest profits to ensure future label operations.