

The Cloud vs. The Paradise of Infinite Storage (Or, When Infinities Collide)

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Mostly under the radar, two irresistible computer technology trend lines are about to collide. And, as usual, the fate of music, artists and intellectual property is on the line.

On the one hand, **Cloud Computing**: Most famously an initiative of Google, it's designed to migrate user's applications, processes and content off local device storage and up to remote storage on the "cloud" of the Internet. Under this scenario for the next regularly scheduled Internet gold rush, hard drives become cloud drives, software becomes cloudware, music would have "no need" to reside locally on anyone's computational gadget and personal computers would have "no earthly need" to be as autonomously powerful as they've now become. After all, in the vastness of this indispensable (Meta) Internet, upon which everyone would become *completely dependent*, all that used to be local and private will be subsumed. Autonomy--and Anonymity--would be replaced by Terminality. Just like it was in the 70s and 80s before computers were grown insanely powerful enough to be autonomous. For the purposes of suppressing, through tracking and interdiction, any "illicit" traffic in music objects, this is the most powerful structure yet conceived.

And on the other, **The Paradise of Infinite Storage**: An initiative of no one in particular but the inevitable consequence of anarchically ingenious gear heads gone wild. What happens when the entire history of recorded music can be contained on a device the size of a guitar pick? And if that content is shared between users on private networks, where does that leave intellectual property? For some, this may sound like a sci-fi nightmare. But for me, it's both a provocative conversation-starter and a soon-to-be reality. With the cost and physical size of storage quickly crashing to nearly zero, what does this mean for the ongoing attempts to monetize digital music? Computers have now grown so powerful and storage so vast, they have achieved virtual autonomy. On their own, these machines can store and retrieve all the music ever recorded in the history of the world. And once they've done that once, they won't need the Internet anymore. Decoupled from the Internet and, coupling only with themselves, they can reproduce infinite music libraries like serial rabbits or private network interchange bunnies. Thanks to the marvels of perfect copies, one such digital infinite music library equals infinite digital music libraries. Now that these machines have become autonomous, somebody wants to stop the cycle and move everything to the Cloud. Good luck.