

DID YOU KNOW THAT UNLABELLED "COPY-PROTECTED" CDS ARE NOW ON SALE IN THIS COUNTRY ?

It's true – the record companies have introduced them into the shops, secretly, and without warning labels. We've found several artists' CDs have been protected (for example, several of BMG's new releases), and we know there must be more. We can't buy every CD to test, and for this reason we're asking the public's help to track down these bad CDs. If you have access to a computer this is easy to do. See the step-by-step instructions on our pages at:

<http://uk.eurorights.org/issues/cd/>

So what's this "copy-protection" all about, then? Well, in brief:

- These so-called "copy-protected" CDs are being created by the record companies so that they won't play on computers or laptops, but they will play on most other machines.
- They are also designed to prevent people from making digital copies, either using a computer, or with a digital connection to a MiniDisk player.
- However, because it's technically difficult to create a CD that plays on one machine but not on another, these CDs also have problems with some other CD players (for example, we have found problems with DVD players, PS2 machines, car CD players, digital home cinema systems and some older CD players).
- These CDs are technically sub-standard – they do not meet the official standard definition of how an audio CD should be made.
- Some of these CDs actually corrupt the audio data by manipulating the error-correction codes on the disk. These codes are designed to help a CD player play correctly when there are scratches on the disk. Interfering with this mechanism makes CDs less resistant to scratches.

So what are our objections to what the record companies are doing ?

- Well, we object very strongly to the fact that these CDs are being released without any labelling. The least that the record companies should do is to make it clearly known that these CDs won't work on certain machines. We would also like them to indicate whether or not the audio signal and error correction codes have been tampered with, so that the customer can make an informed decision before buying.
- It seems nonsense that you might be caused to pay four times over for an album – one for your home system, another for your car system, another for your MiniDisk player, and another for your portable MP3 player. Stopping digital copies means that MiniDisk and MP3 players are now next to useless.
- In truth they are trying to stop copying of music on the internet, but anyone with some technical understanding would be able to make a copy of these CDs, so really this is just causing inconvenience for everyday people without actually stopping unauthorized copying.
- Thanks to the CD standard, even 18-year-old CDs still work on modern players. However, these new corrupt CDs don't even work properly in *today's* players. What guarantee does the consumer have that these CDs will work even 5 or 10 years from now, when they are not being made to a recognised standard?

At the moment, the public is still being lied to and misled by the record companies, and we think something should be done about this.

There are also other issues behind the copy-protection issue, such as the up-coming EUCD laws in Europe, and the DMCA and SSSCA laws in America. These laws are backed by the record and video companies, and we are concerned about the implications of what they are doing. For more information, see our web pages here:

<http://uk.eurorights.org/>

Many thanks for your help – *The Campaign for Digital Rights*