


WATCH OUT! THAT AUDIO CD YOU BOUGHT MAY BE CORRUPT!

Corrupt audio discs (also known as “copy controlled CDs” or “copy protected CDs”):

- look just like normal audio CDs
- are sold in the shops alongside normal CDs
- might be labelled something like: “Will not play on PC/Mac”
- might be labelled with a strange IFPI logo: 
- or might have no label at all

These audio discs have been intentionally corrupted by the record companies to make it harder for people to get them to play correctly on computers. The record companies are doing this to try to reduce MP3 file-sharing and CD counterfeiting.

However, these corrupt CDs can have problems playing on:

- car CD players
- game consoles (PlayStation 2, X-BOX, etc)
- DVD players
- portable CD players
- digital home cinema systems
- audiophile players
- even some ‘normal’ CD players

On computers, they can:

- simply refuse to play
- lock up your machine, forcing a reboot
- run a special player app, exchanging the CD audio for poor quality compressed audio files
- cause your drive to make alarming grinding noises until you force it to stop
- or in extreme cases: refuse to eject, stop your machine from working entirely, and require you to take your machine to a dealer to get it working again [1]

Common forms of CD corruption:

- reduce the scratch-resistance of the disc, making its average lifespan shorter [2]
- make the quality of the sound degrade quicker as the disc gets older [3]
- can cause early failure for older CD players [4]

As you can see, the cost and inconvenience for the consumer is huge. But is the “copy control” doing its job? Actually, it isn’t:

- Even with the most complex corruptions devised, there are always some computer CD-ROM drive models that have been found to copy the disc perfectly (perhaps 40%-50% of them)

- All that a professional counterfeiter would have to do is to try a disc in a number of different PCs until one of them worked
- Even if that fails, a “copy controlled” CD could still be copied using normal phono leads from the back of a CD player

So, what is this so-called “copy control” really achieving? “Nothing” is the short answer:

- It is certainly not stopping people copying CDs
- It is causing significant consumer dissatisfaction, and very obvious bad feeling towards the record industry
- Very many honest paying customers are left with duff CDs that won’t play in their company car/audiophile player/portable/etc, or that fail to work when they upgrade to a new player
- Honest law-abiding people are being forced to learn how to copy CDs or download MP3s in order to create uncorrupted CDs that will actually work in their equipment

Currently, many people are unaware of the issue and perhaps don’t understand why their CDs aren’t working, but I think we can do something about that. IF YOU WANT THIS SITUATION TO CHANGE, PLEASE STAND UP AND BE COUNTED. You can make a difference, and we have some suggestions for how you can help on our website:

<http://ukcdr.org/issues/cd/quick/>

For instance, you could help spread the word by putting a link button on your web-site, or you could contact online retailers or consumer organisations. We are pushing for online retailers to provide full warnings about CDs that are corrupted *before* you make a purchase, which most of them currently completely fail to do:

<http://ukcdr.org/issues/cd/retail/>

The sooner we put an end to this nonsense, the better, and with your help it will be sooner than without it.

– *The Campaign for Digital Rights*

[1] [2] [3] [4]: For a more detailed explanation of these points, and further background information, please visit our web-site: <http://ukcdr.org/issues/cd/quick/>

JUST SAY ‘NO!’ TO ‘COPY CONTROLLED’ AUDIO CDS