

The Kojo Nnamdi Show

WAMU 88.5
AMERICAN UNIVERSITY RADIO

wamu.org

On Now:
U2, Apple And The Value Of Music In The Digital Era

September 23, 2014

Millions of smartphone users were surprised to learn this month that the rock band U2 had not only made a new album available to them for free, but that it was already loaded into their iPhones. Join Kojo for a Tech Tuesday conversation about the intersection of technology and music.

Your support helps make
The Kojo Nnamdi Show possible.

[DONATE NOW](#)

03:59 / 52:35

Windows Media

WAMU Kojo Namdi show called Tech Tuesday today with:

Chris Richards: Pop music critic of Washington Post

- He takes the stance that the downloaded U2 album "Songs of Innocence" in conjunction with the iPhone 6 rollout was tantamount to receiving an Ikea catalogue or rather a dystopian junk mail. Without consent the Apple act seems gross. U2 called it privileged whining. In answer to what he thought the problem was, "Passive participation was tallied as active participation. We don't have a choice (of whether you wanted it or not).
- "Your lack of a vote counts as a vote just by using iTunes you are complicit in this agreement," Chris says.
- Radio Head did this in 2007 when it made its "Rainbows" album available for download. They asked the downloaders to pay what they wanted to.
- What is music worth? Is the huge underlying question.

Hiveware Response: there are a number of implicit issues in these people's discussions that did not surface in the conversation:

- **Storage size is an issue:** Richard's "we don't have a choice" is the lazy thinking man's verbal shorthand for, the observer (receiver of the album) wasn't given a choice as to whether the album was pushed to his device or not. This implies that the size of receiving storage device is an issue for large objects. Everyone assumes an album is a large object so it wasn't discussed as an issue. Everyone today also receives items on their devices every day.

- Push technology vs client/server: U2's album was pushed onto the devices synchronously (ie, when the pusher decided to do it, that is, synchronous with the iPhone 6 event) without obtaining the user's consent. There are several comments here. Users already allow 100s and 1000s of pieces of information to be pushed onto their devices today under the heading of advertising. The user is paying for the storage on his device. He usually doesn't like it, but he can't stop it, so he resignedly accepts it. Pulling today is most famously called browsing. More and more people are getting upset at pushed content that "he didn't ask for" like popups, screen hijacking, etc. This practice could well end browsing as we know it. Hiveware operates using synchronous informed consent. Data changes are pushed to the subscribing users when the creator creates them. Ownership is secured because the author and the subscriber have a relationship. That relationship describes what is being sent and how much ownership is being transferred and copy time. For example, if Apple, instead of assuming that U2 was "one of the most successful music franchises in history", had let users download the album upon request, they wouldn't have run into trouble.

Since Hiveware doesn't use server storage but instead uses the combined storage of its users, it knows ahead of time how much storage it has for a particular user and weighs that against the storage needed to maintain access to ones possessions. For the U2 album that would translate into almost no data at all transferred other than the built-in privileges he has to download the album (and or sell/give his or a copy of it to someone else, etc) and a thumbnail image of the cover. Netflix and streaming services have already solved this problem of partial downloads completely. It is the ownership questions that have not been addressed.

- **People won't pay anything if ownership is not asserted:** MySql did the same thing in the '90s which resulted in 3000 American companies downloading the software and using it without paying anything. The problem with the current model of giving away content leaves the users unaware of its value.

Casey Ray, VP of Education and Policy of the Future of Music Coalition

- America did achieve a single-payer U2 album.

Katherin Mayer, Editor at Large at Time Magazine

- Was asked to accompany U2 to the Apple iPhone 6 launch event in Cupertino.
- On some level U2 was experimenting with the delivery method. It was a "one-off piece of theater."
- "Songs of Experience" will be released October 13, 14th on a new platform they and Apple have been working.

Hiveware response:

- **Music content is not free:** U2 was probably paid a good bit of money for their album and their participation in the event. They were not suggesting that music content should be free.

- **Digital push and pull are undifferentiated in the minds of users:** certainly, there is no discrimination in today's users as to one method implying ownership and the other not. For example, sale of physical items is synchronous push with move privileges simple because the context involves physical detachable objects.