

Brazilian file sharing service shows U.S. laws have little effect

Despite the recording industry's well-publicized efforts to stop online music trading, it doesn't appear the practice will end anytime soon.

Now, with the appearance of a software program known as Comuna, Brazilians have a leg up on their foreign music-trading counterparts. Comuna, taken from "communism," is supported by Central MP3, one of the most popular music and MP3 related sites in Brazil.

Although Marxist ideology hasn't enjoyed much of a vogue in Brazil since the '70s, Comuna's author said it was an appropriate name. "For a program which intends to share files in such a communist environment as the Internet, the name's fine," said Mikhail Miguel (not his real name), a webmaster/programmer from Rio.

Comuna, which comes packaged with a likeness of Lenin on it, is a Gnutella-based application that is accessible only to Brazilian users.

Known to only a select few until recently, Comuna has been creating a buzz after reports about it surfaced in mainstream magazines.

"We're the Comuna's introducers," said Fábio Bruzamolín, one of Central MP3's creators and webmasters. "We showed it to the people."

According to Bruzamolín, Comuna has been advertised at Central MP3 for a long time, although he conceded that things didn't take off until the magazines began writing about it. But whoever gets the credit, the important thing is that Brazilians know about it.

"It's hard to find Brazilian music through Napster or Gnutella," Bruzamolín said. "We want to create an MP3-sharing community in Brazil, and I think Comuna will do the work."

Since Comuna was developed using Gnutella, it doesn't have a central server, making it almost impossible to track or close down.

Speed is a drawback, however. Since it's a unique network that has to host everyone, things run slower than modern online sensibilities are used to.

Both Bruzamolín and Mikhail take the high road when it comes to the subject of copyright infringement. "We're not doing anything wrong or illegal," Bruzamolín said. "Comuna is free and it's not hosted anywhere."

"If they intend to come after us, I guess they'd have to stop portals such as Yahoo from linking to MP3 files, stop ICQ from letting people trade MP3 files, and stop Internet Explorer from downloading files."

"If we start to think that Comuna is piracy, then any software allowed to download or upload can be considered as piracy, too."

As for politics, Mikhail believes that after winning the Cold War, Americans are promoting communism across the Internet without even knowing it.

"Technology is taking us to a scenario where the (capitalist) way of producing will be defeated and eventually replaced. We have the seed of a new role where there will be no market rules," Mikhail said.

That fits Brazil's recent embrace of neoliberalism, Mikhail declared. He argues that Comuna is symptomatic of a culture that values societal equality over the accumulation of personal wealth.

<http://centralmp3.sombrasil.com.br/>

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