Startup mSpot lets you stream your music over Web

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Ed Ho of mSpot listens to Beatles music from the album, "Abbey Road," using the new music service from his phone in Palo Alto, Calif., Monday, June 28, 2010. The new music service launching Monday lets you listen to your music collection from any computer or Android phone over the Web. MSpot's service stores your music on its computers and lets you access it remotely through a Web browser. (AP Photo/Paul Sakuma)

(AP) -- A music service launched Monday lets you listen to your collection of tunes from any computer or Android phone over the Internet.

MSpot's service stores your music on its computers and lets users access it remotely through a Web browser. It makes use of a concept known as "cloud computing," following music subscription services such as Rhapsody and Thumbplay. But unlike those, which offer access to huge

collections of songs for a monthly fee, mSpot users play music they already own.

MSpot, which until Monday was available to a closed group of "beta" testers, is free for 2 gigabytes of music, or about 1,600 songs. It charges between $3 and $14 per month for up to 100 gigabytes of extra storage.

To use mSpot, you first install an application for your computer (PC or Mac), which then lets you pick what songs you want to upload to the company's servers. This can be music you bought on iTunes, songs you've downloaded elsewhere, or your CD collection if you've ripped it and loaded it on your computer.

Once your music is in the mSpot "cloud," you can log in to your account through a Web browser to listen at work or on your mobile phone while out and about.

The service detects cellular networks, which the company says helps make sure that your tunes don't get interrupted by spotty coverage. An "airplane mode" allows you to play songs you've preselected when you don't have Internet access.

For now, mSpot works on smart phones only if they run Google's Android software. The company says it plans to launch soon on other phones, including the iPhone.

Music streaming services like mSpot have the potential to run afoul of the licenses that recording companies enable for downloads because the services could technically open a new way for people to share their music with others. But mSpot CEO Daren Tsui says the company has done "everything possible" to make sure people use mSpot to listen only to their own music. Users can only upload music from one computer and listen only from one mobile phone. There is no simultaneous streaming

to different devices.

"We feel that it is the consumer's right to stream music that they already own to their own mobiles," Tsui said. "We're just making the process easier."

The Recording Industry Association of America calls cloud-based music services "an exciting development in the marketplace."

"Our companies look forward to working with these services on licenses that ensure labels and artists are compensated for the music cloud-based services are monetizing," said Steven M. Marks, executive vice president and general counsel of the RIAA.

Soon, mSpot may have some formidable competitors. Google Inc. is building its own music-streaming technology into Android phones. And Apple Inc. bought Lala.com, a service similar to mSpot, in late 2009. It shut down the site in May, which analysts say was likely in preparation for launching a service that lets iTunes users access music from Web browsers and Apple devices.

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