

# Amazon puts music in the 'cloud' (Update)

March 29 2011, by Chris Lefkow

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Beating Apple and Google to the punch, Amazon unveiled a service on Tuesday that allows users to store their digital music online and play it on a computer or an Android device.

With Cloud Drive and Cloud Player, users can upload digital music, photos, videos and documents to Amazon servers and access the files through Web browsers or phones and tablet computers running Google's Android software.

Music bought from Amazon.com or Apple's iTunes or from a personal collection is held in a digital "music locker" on the Internet and can be accessed from computers running Internet Explorer, Firefox, Safari or Chrome Web browsers.

The Seattle, Washington-based Amazon said Cloud Drive gives five gigabytes of free online storage to Amazon account holders and a free upgrade to 20GB with the purchase of an MP3 album. Users can also purchase 20GB for \$20 a year.

Apple and Google are also reportedly working on similar Internet "cloud" storage solutions for digital music but have not announced any plans yet.

Apple purchased an online music site called Lala.com in December 2009 which hosted digital music collections on the Web.

And Billboard.com reported in September that Google is courting record

labels for a service that would let people store music on the Internet for streaming to Web-connected devices.

Forrester analyst Mark Mulligan said in a blog post that Amazon's move is "part of building a long-term music revenue relationship with its customers."

"They've lost most of the digital spend of their CD buyers to iTunes and whilst they've been aggressive and innovative with their download store it isn't close to toppling Apple's iTunes supremacy," Mulligan said.

"This lack of a broader music ecosystem has weakened their ability to drive success of their MP3 store," he added. "A locker service is effectively an alternative way to build an ecosystem that ties customers in."

Mulligan also noted that "music locker" services have been embroiled in rights controversies and cited the example of MP3tunes which is facing a legal battle with the EMI record label.

According to The Wall Street Journal, Amazon has "yet to secure content licenses from at least some major record labels and movie studios."

A spokeswoman for Sony Music Entertainment told the newspaper the company is "disappointed that the locker service that Amazon is proposing is unlicensed by Sony Music."

Bill Carr, Amazon's vice president of movies and music, described the new services as a "leap forward in the digital experience" that "eliminates the need for constant software updates as well as the use of thumb drives and cables to move and manage music."

"Our customers have told us they don't want to download music to their work computers or phones because they find it hard to move music around to different devices," Carr said.

"Now, whether at work, home or on the go, customers can buy music from Amazon MP3, store it in the cloud and play it anywhere," he said.

Amazon shares gained 3.11 percent on Wall Street on Tuesday to close at \$174.62.

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