

By April 2007 Mihalescu, Apple News Editor

DRM-Free Music Is a Great Thing, But Norway Wants More

The September deadline still stands...

The announcement made by EMI and Apple yesterday is huge, and will have massive impact on the industry. While just a year ago, such a thing seemed very unlikely, if not impossible, the fact that it did happen shows that change is definitely in the air. The move, which was very well received by consumers everywhere was also welcomed by Scandinavian watchdog groups. "No matter how the digital music market develops, today will always stand out as a very important date, the day when two of the really big market players finally took responsibility that follows from the position and made an interoperable solution available to consumers," said Torgeir Waterhouse, senior advisor to the Norwegian Consumer Council, in an email. "I applaud their move, and encourage all the other contenders in the digital music business to make the same important move." While it may take some time for the other labels to follow suit, that will undoubtedly happen. As it stands, the higher quality, DRM free music from EMI is seen as a better product, and nobody wants to be left behind. At the very least, if they refuse to jump on the wagons, the labels will be seen as trying to hold out from the customer. But whether or not the other labels follow suit, and regardless of what a revolutionary move this is, Apple still has work to do in the EU. Waterhouse said that the decision between the two firms does not free Apple of its legal obligation to provide interoperable music, which the Norwegian government has demanded Apple do by the end of September. This month, the EU also spoke out. "It's important to note that this move does not take the heat off iTunes for the end of September deadline," Waterhouse added. "By the end of September they need to alter the terms of service and DRM used in the iTunes Music Store to provide a fair deal to the consumers who legally buy music. Still, this move by EMI and Apple today should serve as proof that it really is possible to fix the problems the industry has chosen to introduce with DRM."