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"We can see that the more free downloads we share, the more albums, concerts and merchandise we sell"

We recently published [an article \(/en/en-profundidad/ways-selling-and-buying-music-uhrlaut-case\)](#) about [Uhr laut Records \(http://www.uhrlaut.com/\)](http://www.uhrlaut.com/)' business model, which combines free (and legal) downloads with selling albums in records shops. We had the chance of talking to Christian Villum, co-founder of [Uhr laut Records \(http://www.uhrlaut.com/\)](http://www.uhrlaut.com/). He offers us a wider vision of the new ways of working in the music business.

The million-dollar-question is... does it work? Is it viable, for musicians and the label itself, a record business based on Creative Commons licenses?

Yes, we are very happy with how it works. To give readers a quick re-cep: Our business model is to offer free mp3-downloads of all our releases (full-length, high-quality), released under Creative Commons non-commercial license (BY-NC-SA) while also producing physical copies (mostly vinyls) that are distributed in stores (and which we encourage buyers to freely copy as well). This might seem counter-productive, but in practice we can see that the more free downloads we share, the more albums, concerts and merchandise we sell. There is a clear correlation. On top of that are sync-deals and other opportunities stemming from having our music flowing freely in the Internet tubes, stuff we would never be able to seek out through traditional means. We are a small label and have chosen to not use any budget on marketing; instead we use the Internet to build a global community of music enthusiasts that like our style of music, and whom we connect to the artists and the label through music sharing. Our connection is made via music love and mutual respect, not marketing schemes. Also, we don't have to worry about territories: Through continued sharing our music reaches people curious to join our music tribe, no matter if they're in Japan, Bangladesh or Germany.

We see this as a much more sustainable label model in the age of the Internet. Using resources to limit the copiability of a digital file makes no sense, and we see music sharing as a natural thing. Music business models should build on that, not an army of lawyers. We love Internet culture and, among other, distribute our music through The Pirate Bay, which is a wonderful tool. Why try to limit people that will recommend your music to a friend? There is no better better marketing than a recommendation from a friend. We're grateful when people share our music and see them as our ambassadors. A free download is not a lost sale in this day and age, it's an opportunity to potentially connect.

In other words, we can only recommend labels and artists to experiment with sharing economies. It has taken us around the world touring and it's been such a great ride. Let go of your inner control freak and embrace the Internet!

How did you get the idea?

A friend told me and my founding partner Sune Petersen about Creative Commons back in 2006-2007 and we immediately became incredibly intrigued. There was so much negativity in the music business over the Internet and its marvelous new technologies and I was personally quite annoyed by the short-sightedness and ego-centrism that was prevalent in the music business in general and inside the major labels in particular. The Internet was seen as a threat, because they were so stuck in their own ways. Creative Commons was a breath of fresh air, and finally saw the Internet as what it is: The greatest gift any creative content producer could ever imagine and a telephone by which you can reach millions of people if you use it right. So we dove wholeheartedly in and decided to go totally upstream by screaming to the world "Please Copy This Record to All of Your Friends!" We even printed it on the back of the records and that made headline news in many countries.

This was in total opposition to common practice at the time where 99 out of 100 records had warnings against piracy printed on them, and it was a great feeling to have a fully Internet-positive vibe surrounding our activities when we launched the label.

Obviously none of this would have worked if our roster of artists, headed by Tone (<http://www.tonefromdenmark.dk/>) back then, wasn't down with the idea. So a huge part of the credit should go to them - Tone (<http://www.tonefromdenmark.dk/>), Kiloton (<http://kiloton.dk/>), Monolog (<http://monolog.flavors.me>), Periskop (<http://periskop.cc/>) and the future ones - for being true visionaries too and being willing to try out new frontiers for their art. They are pioneers and with their albums have made beautiful mile stones in music history that I hope they continue to get lots of praise for as time goes by.

Do you think the conditions (legal, economical, cultural...) in Denmark are more favourable to this model than in other countries?

Not particularly, except for the fact that the Danish collecting society, KODA (<http://www.koda.dk/eng/home/>), is one of the few collecting societies in the world who has agreed to run a pilot that allows it's members to use non-commercial Creative Commons licenses (the collecting societies of Netherlands and France are the others). This means that members can share their music freely for non-commercial purposes, while still collecting for radio-airplay and other commercial use. This is what we took advantage of by trying it out in practice back in 2008 and onwards. In fact, our first release using this opportunity hit the record stores 2 days after the launch of pilot :) We even received a threatening letter from the Danish performing arts society, because they hadn't yet heard about the pilot. That email was a pleasure to respond to ;)

I should also mention that in Denmark there are some very fine funding schemes, where bands and small labels can apply to receive publicly funded artists grants. Obviously that helps a lot as well although it's a hard competition to get them.

Do you know of other labels (in Denmark or other countries) which follow the same system of double releases (free download and buy in stores)?

Yes, I know of at least one: Father Figure Records (<http://fatherfigurerecords.com/>), which among other release music by the great Dad Rocks! Really talented bunch of people! However, I find it really strange that sharing culture among labels hasn't picked up more around the world. Seems like a no-brainer in this day and age.

How are you affected by streaming services (like Spotify) or distribution platforms like Bandcamp? Are they competition or a new opportunity?

Most definitely a new opportunity. We love them - as we love any new platform that succeeds in bringing a lot of music to a lot of people without charging a large overhead. We honestly don't really care about the platforms by themselves, but care about establishing connections between artists and music fans. That's also why, for instance, we've been using The Pirate Bay and other torrent sites at lot. We love great tools and new technologies!

Uhr laut Records has released five albums in five years. Is this limited production related to the fact that each work is so well presented (audio and video, for instance)? Or is it a conscious choice to be selective?

Well, Uhr laut Records is a side project for all of us, so we have a lot of other projects happening at the same time (art, technology, Internet stuff). This means that we put all our available energy and time in each release and dedicate a full year to produce, publish and promote each album. Each of these albums deserve that kind of attention and I would hate if I had to feel that things needed to be rushed just to meet a pipeline of releases.

Still, and I've been saying this for years, I would love to see a similar business model adopted by a label with more frequent releases. Would be fun and interesting to see it scaled up.

When searching for new music to release, do you look for the artists you're interested in, or do you receive requests from artists already interested in publishing under CC licenses? Is it a popular initiative among musicians?

It's mostly people that we meet and get to know through our music networks. This is not to say that we don't get a lot of demos, but it is rarely those that goes on to become releases. That is not to say that it's not possible, but likely just because we haven't received the right demo yet :) So if you're reading this don't feel discouraged to send us stuff.

***Small Arm of Sea* is the only album in your catalogue released on cd, and the rest are just in vinyl and mp3 format. Is the CD dead? Are we already living in the paradox of the vinyl-mp3 co-existence?**

In our world the CD is stone cold dead. I haven't touched one for years. Vinyl on the other hand keeps on growing and growing. Pressing plants are expanding and sales are rocketing. I think people love the combination of enjoying digital music online and on mobile, while diving deeper into certain artists and albums by getting the vinyl. It's two complementary products the way I see it. Next I believe we'll see the sunseting of the mp3-file as more and more people move onto streaming. Personally I stream more and more music and love platforms such as Soundcloud, Mixcloud and Spotify - while also growing my vinyl collection. I think that's becoming more and more common among music enthusiasts, also the newest generation which weren't around when vinyl was big up until the early 90s. That's encouraging, I think.

What are the future plans for Uhlaut Records?

We'll continue to release more good, challenging electronic music and keep playing around with formats, platforms and the Internet. We would also be up for seeking new experimental paths, moving into new areas and adjacent fields, so if anyone reading this has great ideas, just give us a shout.

If you are a label or an artist, let me say again: Let go of your inner control freak and embrace sharing culture!

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- We finish 2014 with this 'album of the month': Inverse by [@MarioBajardi \(http://twitter.com/MarioBajardi\)](#) <http://t.co/Kfyf3Gqv3N> (<http://t.co/Kfyf3Gqv3N>) vía [@lodemasesruido \(http://twitter.com/lodemasesruido\)](#) – 1 week 2 days ago
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Authors

[36 \(/en/autores/36\)](#) [Aes Dana \(/en/autores/aes-dana\)](#) [Boards of Canada \(/en/tomorrows-harvest\)](#) [Brian Eno \(/en/en-profundidad/77-million-paintings-ultimate-artwork\)](#) [Carbon Based Lifeforms \(/en/twentythree\)](#) [Clara de Asís \(/en/memoryscapes\)](#) [Cyborgdrive \(/en/winter-blaze\)](#) [Destino Plutón \(/en/accidentes-creativos\)](#) [Die Stadt \(/en/sessions\)](#) [Enigma \(/en/en-profundidad/enigma-not-french-band\)](#) [Halo \(/en/late-winter-tales\)](#) [Hecq \(/en/night-falls\)](#)

[Javier Leal \(/en/entrevista/someone-called-our-style-electro-optimistic-it-seemed-me-terrific-idea\)](#)
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3six Recordings is pleased to announce the new 36 EP "Pulse Dive" which will be available on limited 12" vinyl (100 copies) and 24bit digital, exclusively from www.3six.net (<http://www.3six.net/>) in January 2015.

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