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Top of the Pops Before Hitting the Shops

By J Square Humboldt

It was only a matter of time before cyberspace prevailed in the music industry ...

'Crazy' by Gnarls Barkley made history by becoming the Number One song in the United Kingdom's singles charts without one CD being available in stores. Over 31,000 legal downloads were compiled after the song was featured on BBC's Radio One.

Among other things, that would rank the song right up there as the ultimate impulse buy.

To be accurate, 'Crazy' won this distinction because of a recent amendment to the British music industry's rule that a song's download couldn't count against its sales until it became available in stores. However, the point has been made that, just as digital discs replaced tapes and records in personal music consumption, the torch has now been passed to digital transfers.

PC World noted this eventuality in its January 2006 issue, noting that music download sales tripled in 2005. That accounted for six percent of the music industry's sales for the year, impressive in that it also signifies a dent in the number of pirated tracks. Figures released by the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry --- the authoritative source --- revealed a tally of \$1.1 billion in download sales during the year.

Gnarls Barkley's digital achievement came just over a month after another cyber-landmark was attained. The billionth download in iTunes history occurred in late February 2006, when a Michigan teen ordered Coldplay's 'Speed of Sound' for the sum of 99 cents. That price is yet another reason why singles --- almost eradicated by the trend toward albums in the 1970s --- are back, and in a big way.

And to think that the music industry spent the early years of the Cyber Era trying to deny, or at least discourage, its existence.

Perhaps finally realizing that such a tactic didn't work for blacksmiths at the turn of the last century, the recording moguls --- albeit grudgingly --- sought to learn from the new technology. The key to their success to date is their seeming awareness that their objective is to find their niche in the cybermarket,

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rather than attempt to dominate it. Granted, it's a mega-niche, but the industry apparently accepts that it will no longer be the lone gateway between artist and consumer.

Retailers, for example, are beginning to capitalize on the social aspects of music purchases. There will always be teens, and congregating for music is a long-standing trait of theirs. When it's in the malls or on Main Street, the major chains are preparing to offer kiosks where downloads can be purchased on-site. With their vast inventories of stock, these stores present an ideal means of searching for songs, sampling them and then sharing opinions, which perfectly describes the normal buying habits of both teens and tweens (ie- the 9-to-12 set).

Verizon is on the front lines for the mobile niche of music retailing with its VCast technology. This service transforms the wireless phone into a portable music player by synchronizing music already stored on the user's PC. It can also be used to buy new songs or albums from the Verizon Wireless music catalog, which is accessed via cellular phone or PC.

Quality of sound for music downloads continues to improve exponentially, which further increases the attractiveness of downloads. FXSound is on the cutting edge in this respect with its critically acclaimed DFX Audio Enhancement package. Compatible with virtually every major music platform, from MP3s to Internet radio, DFX is trumpeted as "the first plug-in to make truly professional-quality audio processing available to Internet audio users." They do this by restoring the full range of frequency harmonics, thus creating the auspices of a high-end home music system. Its effects are amazing.

Where Gnarlz Barkley has gone, legions will follow. Cyber-dominance in the music industry is now a hard fact, so the real top has yet to be popped.

J Square Humboldt writes for the Longer Life Group, which provides information designed to improve the quality of living. His page is at

<http://longerlifegroup.com/cyberiter.html>

and his observations are

published three times per week.

Goal Setting: Pops Proves Its Never Too Late

By Vic Johnson

Pops first set the goal in high school, but when he graduated he thought he wasn't mature enough to pursue it so he enlisted in the U.S. Army.

He dreamed about it as a member of the 82nd Airborne as he became an Army Ranger. Later, in the first Gulf War, he thought about his goal again, as he also did during his service in the Kosovo conflict.

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For 20 years, through his Army career, a war, marriage and six children, Pops kept the dream and the goal alive.

Never mind that he was considered far too old to pursue his dream, Pops just couldn't let go.

When he retired from the Army at 39, he decided it was finally time to do something about the goal he'd set so many years before. He moved his family to Columbia, South Carolina and enrolled as a freshman at the University of South Carolina.

No, he wasn't considered too old for that. Many others, much older, have pursued college degrees for the first time. What Tim "Pops" Frisby did was even more special. At an age when even most professional players have hung up their helmets, he began working out with the South Carolina Gamecocks football team during the winter. Working out with players half his age, all of whom were young enough to be his son, he competed for a position on a Division One major College Football Team.

It was a goal that Pops had lived with for a long time and he began to realize it when coaches invited him back for fall drills. When South Carolina kicked off their season against the University of Georgia, Tim Frisby was on the sidelines wearing Gamecock jersey number 89. On September 25th, against Troy, the legendary Lou Holtz, head coach at South Carolina, sent Pops into the game for its final four plays. "I have a lot of respect for the guy," Holtz said. "A Ranger, 20 years in the Army, six kids. He loves this team. I thought it would be good to get him in. I'm sorry we could not throw it to him." But knowing the way that Pops Frisby makes his dreams come true, that's just a matter of time.

Frisby, who turns 40 in February, has been featured on ESPN's "College GameDay." ABC's "Good Morning America," CNN, the New York Times and the Los Angeles Times are all planning stories.

Incidentally, the father of six between the ages of six months and 16, also maintains a 3.88 (out of a possible 4.0) grade point average.

Still think it's too late for your dream? Goal setting and goal starting is a process that can start at any age and at any time. There's no need to wait until January 1st to set or start a goal. Goal setting and goal starting doesn't have to take place at the first of the month, or even the first of the week. I once started on a big goal at midnight on the 24th of the month.

Tim Frisby accomplished his goal and realized his dream for two simple reasons: he never let time take

his dream away, and when the time finally came, he took action. It worked for Pops — and it'll work for you too!

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Vic Johnson is a popular motivational speaker, author and Internet Infopreneur who has created some of the most visited personal development sites on the Web. His flagship site

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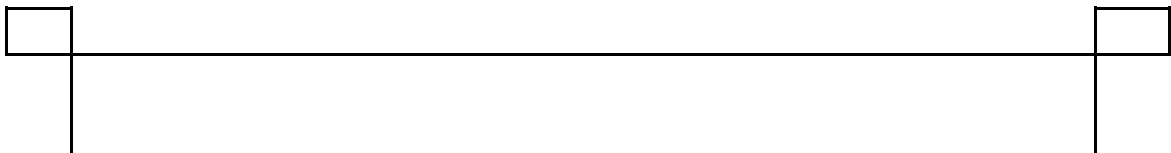
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