By Dean Goodman
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LOS ANGELES (Reuters) - The Red Hot Chili Peppers have lashed out at a music pirate who leaked the funk-rock band's upcoming album onto the Internet, and urged fans not to download it illegally.

The band's spokeswoman said on Wednesday the offender was being tracked down. The group's highly anticipated first studio album in four years, "Stadium Arcadium," is still on track to go on sale on Tuesday via Warner Music Group Inc.'s Warner Bros. Records, she said.

In a rambling open letter, the band's bass player, Michael "Flea" Balzary, said he and his colleagues would be heartbroken if fans downloaded the album beforehand.

"For people to just steal a poor sound quality version of it for free because some a--hole stole it and put it on the internet is sad to me," he said.

"I can not put in words how much this record, 'Stadium Arcadium,' means to us, how sacred the sound of it is to us, and how many sleepless nights and hardworking days we all had thinking about how to make it be the best sounding thing we could and now, for someone to take it and put it out there with this poor sound quality it is a painful pill for us to swallow," Balzary added.

If caught, the leaker could face the same fate as two men indicted by the U.S. government in March on allegations of making parts of an album by rock singer Ryan Adams available on the Internet before it was released.

Under a provision of the 2005 Family Entertainment and Copyright Act, which makes it a separate crime to pirate music and movies before their official release date, they each face up to 11 years in prison if convicted.

The band's spokeswoman said she did not know how the album was leaked. Warner Bros. often distributes advance copies of albums to journalists in special envelopes that
Red Hot Chili Peppers angered by Internet leak – Yahoo! News

declare the recipient responsible for any misuse of the CD once the seal is broken. The discs are watermarked and bear the recipient's name, which makes leaks easier to trace.

Leaks are sometimes also traced to recording studios and post-production plants.

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