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DETROIT - Bob Seger turned the page, and Metallica finally found justice for online fans. Now, only a few remaining big-name musical acts refuse to make their songs available on Apple Computer's popular iTunes Music Store.

Analysts say the online holdouts — including the Beatles, Led Zeppelin, Garth Brooks, Radiohead and Kid Rock — probably can't avoid iTunes forever as fans flock to the Internet to buy music.

But the artists argue online distribution leaves them with too small a profit. And, they say, iTunes wrecks the artistic integrity of an album by allowing songs to be purchased by the track for 99 cents. Some bands, such as AC/DC have released albums on other, more flexible sites, but not iTunes.

"We've always thought certain artists put out albums that aren't meant to be compilations with 50 other artists," said Ed "Punch" Andrews, manager for both Seger and Kid Rock. "We're hoping at some point albums become important again like they were in the past 30 years."

There are other reasons bands avoid cyberspace. In some cases, various parties that own or control older music catalogs can't agree to a distribution contract. Others have avoided the Internet altogether out of piracy concerns. (Most online stores, however, use rights-management technology to protect against unauthorized distribution.)

Since record companies have realized the popularity of iTunes and other sites, many reworked contracts to give artists less money per download. Andrews said while record companies once offered artists about 30 cents for each song sold, now musicians are earning less than a dime.

Contractual issues, the fight to save full-length albums and worries about piracy have kept both Seger and Kid Rock from distributing their works online, Andrews said. Seger, however, did allow online stores to sell his new single "Wait For Me," from his upcoming September release — his first studio album in 11 years.
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Seger, the legendary rocker from Michigan who entered the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2004, is considering releasing his classic 1976 album "Night Moves," but wants to make it so it only can be downloaded as an album, Andrews said.

"It's amazing how many people go there," Andrews said of iTunes. "We're hoping albums work there." Andrews said he wasn't sure if Apple eventually would allow the album to be kept intact.

An Apple spokesman declined comment.

But bands can no longer risk losing out on sales and marketing generated from the digital formats, especially on iTunes, said Phil Leigh, an analyst with Inside Digital Media, a market research firm. With CD sales continuing to drop, it's only a matter of time until the last holdouts give up, he said.

"Any artist that doesn't is going to be left at the station," Leigh said. "It's not a secret that growth in the CD market is as dead as General Custer."

The popularity of iPods already has made Apple’s iTunes the dominant way of legally downloading music. The three-year-old store has already sold more than a billion songs.

Because songs downloaded at Microsoft Corp.’s MSN Music, Napster and other sites won't work on Apple's 58 million iPods, iTunes holds about 70 percent of the legal downloading market.

Metallica, who helped lead the charge to shut down the old Napster in 2000, finally gave in late last month and released their songs on iTunes, including several unreleased live tracks.

"Over the last year or so, we have seen an ever-growing number of Metallica fans using online sites such as iTunes to get their music. ... Fire up your iTunes, your iPods and whatever else you've got, like we do, and enjoy iMetallica," the band wrote on its Web site.

The Red Hot Chili Peppers joined iTunes in April with the launch of "Stadium Arcadium," their first album in three years. The band presold tickets for its tour and gave bonus content to fans who preordered the album. This month, Bob Dylan also used the site to presell concert tickets.

Record labels say they're working with their bands to embrace all possible formats, including online music stores.

"It's undeniably clear that fans go online to keep up with artists," said Jeanne Meyer, spokeswoman for EMI North America, which has represented the Rolling Stones and Beastie Boys among other bands as they made successful leaps online. "So it follows that there is a fairly big demand for buying music legitimately online."

The growth of online distribution should help stabilize the industry, particularly as more devices such as cell phones are able to play songs bought online, said Russ Crupnick, an analyst with NPD Group Inc., a marketing research firm.

For musicians, it's another way to resell their entire catalogs to fans who want the songs in multiple formats, he said.
Still, online holdouts remain.

The Beatles, who were one of the last bands to embrace CDs, haven't allowed any online service to sell their music. Solo songs from John Lennon, for instance, are not on iTunes but available on MSN Music and other sites.

The band's Apple Corps, the guardian of the group's commercial interests, has been locked in various lawsuits for years with Apple Computer over the use of the Apple logo. In May, a London judge ruled Apple is entitled to use the logo on iTunes. Apple Corps argued the computer maker had broken a 1991 agreement in which each side agreed not to enter into the other's field of business.

London-based Apple Corps did not respond to interview requests.

Led Zeppelin songs aren't at the sites, but some solo material from Jimmy Page and Robert Plant are available at iTunes and other online stores. A spokeswoman from Warner Music Group declined comment.

Radiohead songs can't be downloaded either, but lead singer Thom Yorke's new album "Eraser" is available. A publicist said the band didn't respond to interview requests.

Garth Brooks left Capitol Records in 2005 and then inked a deal with Wal-Mart Stores Inc. to sell his material. The country singer hasn't allowed his songs to be legally downloaded at any major stores including Wal-Mart's service, where songs are sold for 88 cents. Brooks' manager, Bob Doyle, did not return calls.