Sony tests anti-CD burning technology. 30/05/2005. ABC News Online

Sony tests anti-CD burning technology

As part of its mounting United States rollout of content-enhanced and copy-protected CDs, Sony BMG is testing technology that bars consumers from making additional copies of burned CD-R discs.

Since March the company has released at least 10 commercial titles - more than 1 million discs in total, featuring technology from UK anti-piracy specialist First4Internet that allows consumers to make limited copies of protected discs, but blocks users from making copies of the copies.

The concept is known as "sterile burning" and, in the eyes of Sony BMG executives, the initiative is central to the industry's efforts to curb casual CD burning.

"The casual piracy, the school-yard piracy, is a huge issue for us," Thomas Hesse said, president of global digital business for Sony BMG.

"Two-thirds of all piracy comes from ripping and burning CDs, which is why making the CD a secure format is of the utmost importance."

Names of specific titles carrying the technology were not disclosed.

The effort is not specific to First4Internet.

Other Sony BMG partners are expected to begin commercial trials of sterile burning within the next month.

To date, most copy protection and other digital rights management-based solutions that allow for burning have not included secure burning.

Early copy-protected discs as well as all Digital Rights Management (DRM)-protected files sold through online retailers like iTunes, Napster and others offer burning of tracks into unprotected WAV files.

Those burned CDs can then be ripped back onto a personal computer minus a DRM wrapper and converted into MP3 files.

Under the new solution, tracks ripped and burned from a copy-protected disc are copied to
a blank CD in Microsoft's Windows Media Audio format.

The DRM embedded on the discs bars the burned CD from being copied.

"The secure burning solution is the sensible way forward," First4Internet chief executive officer Mathew Gilliat-Smith said.

"Most consumers accept that making a copy for personal use is really what they want it for.

"The industry is keen to make sure that is not abused by making copies for other people that would otherwise go buy a CD."

- Reuters