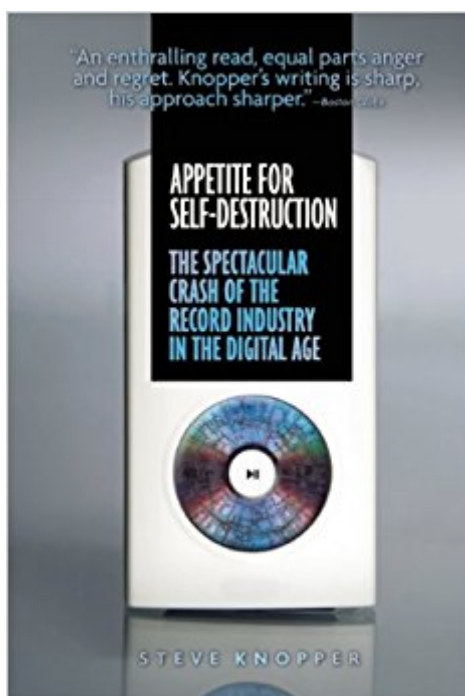


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# Appetite For Self-Destruction: The Spectacular Crash Of The Record Industry In The Digital Age



## Synopsis

For the first time, *Appetite for Self-Destruction* recounts the epic story of the precipitous rise and fall of the modern recording industry, from an author who has been writing about it for more than ten years. With unparalleled access to those intimately involved in the music world's highs and lows—including Warner Music chairman Edgar Bronfman Jr., renegade Napster creator Shawn Fanning, and more than 200 others—Steve Knopper is the first to offer such a detailed and sweeping contemporary history of the industry's wild ride through the past three decades. From the birth of the compact disc, the explosion of CD sales, and the emergence of MP3-sharing websites that led to iTunes, to the current collapse of the industry as CD sales plummet, Knopper takes us inside the boardrooms, recording studios, private estates, garage computer labs, company jets, corporate infighting, and secret deals of the big names and behind-the-scenes players who made it all happen. Just as the incredible success of the CD turned the music business into one of the most glamorous, high-profile industries in the world, the advent of file sharing brought it to its knees, and Knopper saw it all.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In this ambitious look at the music industry's digital revolution, freelance music writer Knopper admirably attempts to make sense of more than three decades of fitful technological innovation and ego clashes. The story begins with the antidisco rallies of the late 1970s, spends a great deal of time on the excesses of the CD era (with an unnecessary detour into the nefarious business

dealings of boy band manager Lou Pearlman), then chronicles the reign of Napster and its eventual usurpation by Apple's legal iTunes service. Knopper is at his best giving life to the tales of technological innovation and diligent salesmanship that fueled these shifts in consumer trends, as in the story of the CD's invention and the subsequent difficulty of persuading label executives to adopt the new format. The later tales of backroom deals featuring Steve Jobs and various label heads have the spark of real drama, but this is undermined by Knopper not having access to Jobs and by the historical proximity of the events. (Jan.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Knopper, a regular contributor to Rolling Stone, takes an inside look at the highs and lows of the record industry during the past 30 years. Beginning with the crash of the disco craze in the late 1970s, the industry revitalized itself numerous times over the years, beginning with Michael Jackson, MTV, and the boom in CD sales in the 1980s, through the teen pop of the Backstreet Boys, N Sync, and Britney Spears in the 1990s. The entrenched sense of entitlement and complacency was rocked to its foundation, however, with the ushering in of the digital age. Instead of embracing the new medium, the record companies insisted on clinging to the old model of forcing buyers to pay \$18.95 for a CD just to get the one or two songs they really wanted. Knopper takes us inside the boardrooms for heated debates between high-flying record executives, and into the basements and garages of the computer geeks who brought them down. Although the record industry continues its uneasy relationship with digital music, he shows how independent artists are finding creative ways to use the medium to their advantage. --David Siegfried --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Being in my early forties, I am just old enough (and just young enough) to have lived through pretty much every stage of the decline of the record industry so painstakingly detailed in this book. I grew up going to record stores, then chain stores, then saw the advent of the CD when I started college. I lived through the CD boom and read about big-name acts signing new contracts worth untold millions of dollars primarily because their back catalogs were selling so well when the world was upgrading their record collections from vinyl to CD. I watched in horror as the "boy bands" seemed to take over. I again watched in horror as the labels pushed only the best-selling artists and dumped the rest from their rosters. I moaned in disbelief when I learned that WalMart was the biggest brick-and-mortar retailer of recorded music, and that was sad and unfortunate because their

selection was so narrow. I nearly cried as the rock radio stations I listened to became far more repetitive and far less interesting. I was initially horrified by Napster and sided with Metallica -- file swapping was theft, plain and simple. But the labels' litigious response to it was no less outrageous. Understandable on some level, but outrageous nonetheless. When digital music became the norm, the powers-that-be did everything they could to stem the tide, and they did it in such a way to sour the record-buying experience. Perhaps worst of all, though, is that the "album" has all but died. It's all about the hit single. There is almost no such thing as artist development anymore. Remember a few decades ago when artist would put out a record every calendar year and tour behind it every calendar year? Each year you could count on seeing your favorite band (Van Halen, Journey, KISS, Rush, The Police, maybe even The Who) tour all over the U.S., even hitting the secondary markets. Nowadays many big-name artists wait up to 3 or 4 years between releases. MTV and the labels milking every last drop from every last album changed all that. Basically, I lived through every milestone event Steve Knopper details in this book. I stood on the sidewalk and watched that entire fiasco parade pass by. This book reads like an "E! True Hollywood Story" account of the demise of the record industry. Part of the fun of browsing through a huge record store's bins was getting to discover and listen to new music. Not any more. There's a huge difference between trying out a new record at the listening station and hearing a 30-second snippet on iTunes or . There's very little of the feeling of ownership anymore, at least with digital download. No more opening up the record or CD to peruse the insert booklet, read the liner notes, read the lyrics, look at the artwork and photos, check the credits to see what guest artist or studio musicians may have played on it or co-written a tune or two. But in today's world that may not be important to everyone. It's hard to believe, but there is an entire generation of kids out there buying music online who have NEVER set foot in a record store EVER. Boggles the mind. I'm getting old, but I'm not THAT old. Many people my age saw most of these events as they happened. The great thing about Knopper's book is that we now have names to put with those events. We know the "what", and thanks to Knopper's research we also know the "who", "why", and "how". As with many other culture-shifting events and history-making events, the change in the tide isn't always an inevitable force of nature. Often it is the end result of the actions (or lack of action) of a relatively few people of influence, the events affected by their individual personalities, ambitions, prejudices, greediness, or what-have-you. You might even say that the whole reason the record industry playing field was moved in the first place was because of the rise of the personal computer, and for that we have various players like Gates, Jobs, Woz, folks at the Palo Alto Research Center at Xerox, IBM, etc. One might say the music business changed so dramatically because the personal computer industry simply came into existence. Had the latter

never developed (or developed differently), the former may not have changed the same way. I guess a better introduction for Knopper's book could have been the book "Accidental Empires" or the PBS documentary "Triumph of the Nerds". Everything that happens is a result of many seemingly unrelated things that happened previously. Everything is connected. "Appetite For Self-Destruction" is a fascinating book. Highly recommended.

This is an excellent book. Steve Knopper, contributing editor for Rolling Stone magazine, and who has also written for such publications as Wired, Esquire, Entertainment Weekly and the Chicago Tribune, has written this book detailing the trends from the near death of the music industry in the late 70s to early 80s to the life-saving entities such as MTV and Michael Jackson's "Thriller" album. Knopper provides meticulous detail about the negative and positive trends of the music industry over the past 20 years to the newly developed digital age of downloading music via iTunes. Knopper mentions names of major label leaders; details the decisions these major labels have made that have been effective and those decisions that have been fairly detrimental. Moreover, Knopper describes how the rise of Napster ultimately led to severe bleeding within the music industry due to the consumer now having the knowledge to easily pirate music. The reaction of the music industry to Napster and its smaller subsequent file-sharing groups eventually led to the slow death of major labels. Knopper details how and why this happened. Additionally, Knopper details how Steve Jobs (of Apple computers) strong-armed the five major music labels into deals that led to iTunes and huge sales of the iPod. This trend ultimately changed the music industry and pushed it into a direction to which it has not adjusted very well. In fact, according to Knopper, it has taken the major music labels nearly ten years to realize how technology can actually help the industry, but now it's probably too late. Moreover, many bands and artists are actually turning to their own independent methods of releasing their new albums and songs. These bands and artists (such as NIN, Radiohead, the Eagles, etc.) are realizing that this new avenue is actually more appealing to their listeners and making them a larger profit than they ever had signing contracts with the major labels. This, and much more is described in great detail in this work. This is a very telling book about how greed and ignorance has actually cost the music industry in the long run. And, according to Knopper, if the major labels do not make massive changes very quickly, the music industry as we have known it for the last several decades will no longer exist.

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