



Nokia shows hand with music download service

Bowie to godfather new offspring

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When content services find themselves unable, or unwilling, to sign deals with the big labels then they traditionally label themselves "indie" and try to turn failure in to feature by claiming to highlight new talent and promote new producers. Such a façade generally lasts until some big labels are signed up, or the business quietly goes away.

But when Nokia makes the same pitch and recruits David Bowie as the "godfather", then you have to take notice.

These days many people have complete control of their listening and viewing experience, no longer dependent on a DJ or scheduler to decide what they want and when they want it, but the problem with always having access to the music and TV you love is that you rarely experience anything else, making the discovery of new bands and/or TV shows more difficult.

So we increasingly rely on brands and bands to guide us, and while Nokia's new Music Recommenders service might appear to take us away from that, in reality it just introduces some new brands and asks us to trust them.

In addition to Mr Bowie, who will be providing his picks and

occasional podcasts, recommendations will come from various record stores around the world, with each store specialising in a specific genre.

Those who sign up to the free service get an email or text message each month with personalised recommendations and links to 30 second clips of the recommended music.

Most importantly, those in the UK and Australia also get a "buy" button to purchase the music at 89 pence per track, using the Loudeye system Nokia acquired earlier this year. Sign up will be available soon, with the service coming online in November.

The music shops get a cut of the sale price, though Nokia wouldn't say how much, and while the system is very much indie-orientated right now it is the first step towards the more comprehensive system Nokia will be launching next year, which might even have some relationship to mobile phones. Nokia is already the largest manufacturer of cameras (yes, I said cameras) in the world, and has set its sights on making more music players than anyone else in 2006. The Music Recommenders service is an indication of how it intends to go about doing that - the lesson of iTunes, about the importance of services to support devices, has not been missed by Nokia. ®