

# » IT'S MUSIC NOT GAS

Music pumps out of the tank.  
It looks like petrol  
but it is in fact music and film,  
and the tank contains per square  
metre as much music as a shop of  
700 square metres.



"WE DEVELOPED THE FUEL TANK  
IDEA BECAUSE THE INTERNET IS  
HIDDEN AWAY IN THE HOME OR  
THE OFFICE"

The music shop, Prefueled, has since 2005 provided music for all kinds of users, including those on the move. The unique thing about Prefueled is the clever petrol tank design of their download centre, which makes it possible to download music and film at rapid speeds outside of both home and office. The petrol tanks can be put, for example, in hotels, shops and airports so that passersby can simply fetch music via memory cards, USB sticks, Bluetooth and other wireless technology.

"We developed the fuel tank idea because the internet is hidden away in the home or the office. We want to take music out into the usual shopping places like malls, hotels, restaurants and so on. The petrol tank occupies

less than a square metre of space and can contain more millions of tracks than a Fona music shop of 600-700 square metres," says Prefueleds founder and director, Christian Marstrand.

Beyond their actual location, Christian Marstrand points out that the tanks, with 20 MB bandwidth make it possible to download a film in seconds in contrast to the home, where it can take all night. But he also points to the various payment possibilities.

"Many young people do not have a credit card, but with the tanks they can simply buy a card, which works both with Prefueled and a range of other outlets. For many older people, who are afraid for their Visa cards, it's a

midway station on the road to a purely digital world," says Christian Marstrand.

#### PREFUELED IS ALSO A COMMUNITY

Prefueled is based in Luxemburg but also serves the Scandinavian countries. Beyond its own unique petrol tank concept, Prefueled is also a flash-based music business with music from all the major record companies and the independents as well as a community, where independent artists can market their music.

Christian Marstrand expresses the belief that all music, every film that is made and every computer game will be able in the future to be downloaded, but is frustrated about the current situation. He believes that



record companies have shot themselves in the foot with their Digital Rights Management policy. It means that the digital market is developing much more slowly than is possible.

### DRM IS AN INVITATION TO CRIME

"DRM protection is tantamount to inviting criminal activity. DRM acts as a restraint in all directions. For example, we have millions of hits on our website but our sales do not relate to what we would expect with the amount of hits. We know that customers are finding interesting music with us, but why should they pay for a handicapped DRM file, when it is easier to steal or buy an MP3 file, which they can use as they see fit," says Christian Marstrander. He stresses strongly at the same time that he gives no support for piracy.

Christian Marstrander has also experienced potential customers arriving home with some kind of playing device, wanting to buy a track from Prefueled and discovering how complicated DRM is. They end up stealing the content, just because it is simpler. Even though they would like to pay.

"If we don't earn money, then none of the online stores will survive, with the possible exception of the telecommunications companies like TDC where the content is only a secondary product," Christian Marstrander emphasises.

"Protecting content via DRM is hopelessly old-fashioned and goes against every good retailing principle. The record companies have totally wasted the possibilities for digital distribution over the period 1998-2007, because they have not developed a usable legal method

and they must take responsibility for that themselves. We are a unique industry in comparison to the airlines or banks and others. None of them has wasted so much time. In general I am fascinated by the case of Napster's potential around 10 years ago. If the record companies had made a reasonable deal and seized the moment, everything would look very different now. Everyone wants music. It's in, it's trendy, but you just can't buy it in a reasonable way. I don't have anything against the record companies and it is helping a little that EMI have stood up against DRM, but getting rid of it is a decision that has to be taken centrally," says Christian Marstrander.

### A MOBILE NIGHTMARE LOOMING

He also points out that a similarly grid-locked situation is looming on the mobile front, and it will only be when all music becomes available in a universal MP3 format that the world will become simpler.

"It looks as if we are entering a new world, which is going to be a complete nightmare. What happens when hardware providers like Nokia and Apple lock their "firmware" in with their own devices?" asks Christian Marstrander. He answers his own question: "So it is over with this business. The record companies need to not only let go of DRM, but demand that the music is not locked into one format if the hardware providers want to have the content. As it now stands, it is as if, in the '80s you could only buy music in one shop like Illium for your Walkman. When it is so difficult, of course people will be prepared to steal music, and that's how both we and the record companies will die out."