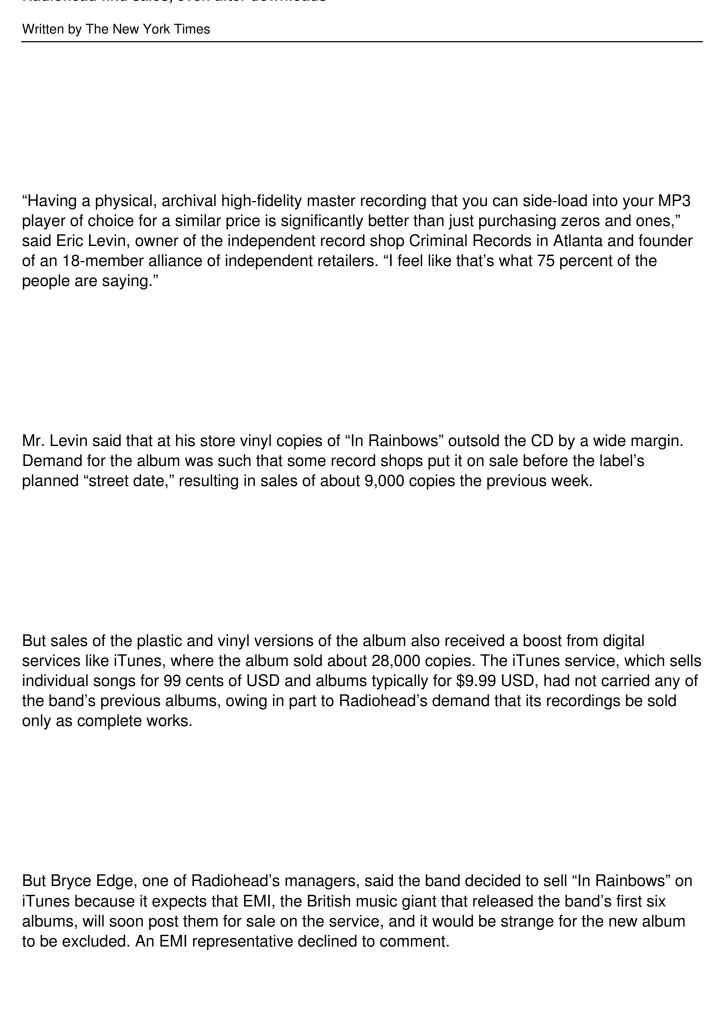




Some retailers viewed the Radiohead figures as a sign of the continuing market for so-called physical products in the music business, where the popularity of iTunes, music blogs and other sites have made the digital file appear to be the coin of the realm. In particular they said even fans who received the digital files distributed by Radiohead may have decided to pay for the better audio quality versions on CD or LP.

Radiohead find sales, even after downloads



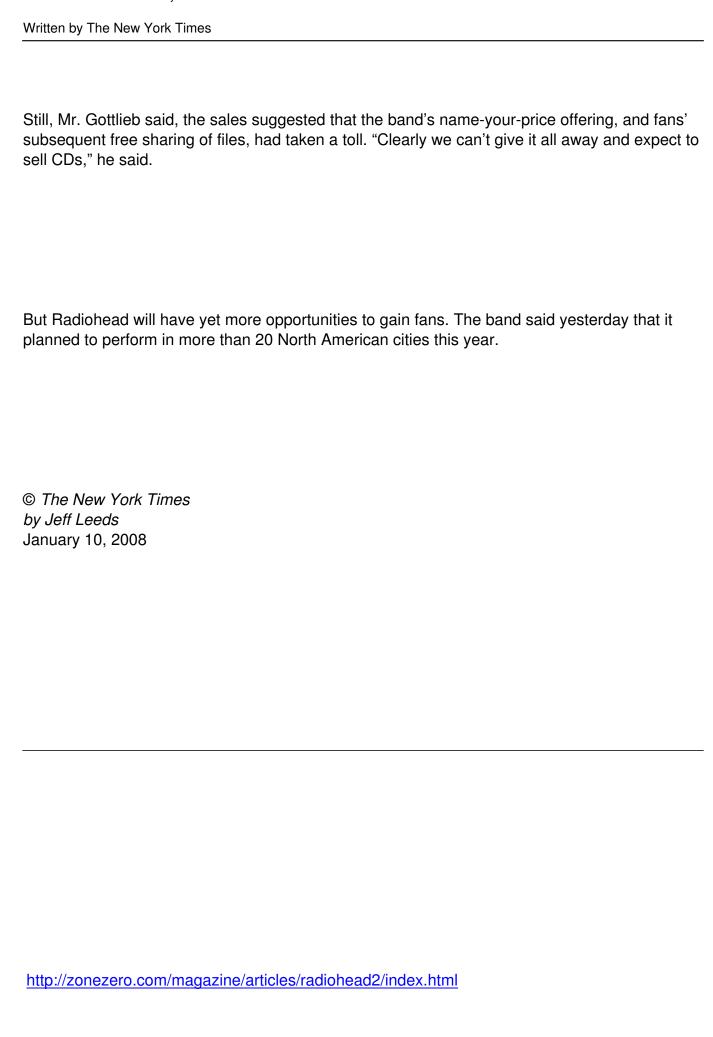
The decision to release the music as a digital file so far in advance of the CD also allowed time for the music to circulate on free, unlicensed file-swapping networks. Big Champagne, a tracking service that studies file-sharing, estimates that the album was downloaded more than 100,000 times on free networks in the first 24 hours after Radiohead delivered it to fans who had preordered it from its Web site. But Eric Garland, chief executive of Big Champagne, said that by offering the music for as little as zero from their own site, Radiohead "stole market share" from pirate networks.

Mr. Edge said that sales of 100,000 copies of the album this week would be "almost certainly less than the number we would have achieved if we hadn't" offered it as a digital download. But the band still came out ahead, he said, in part because it attracted so many fans to Radiohead's Web site, where it collected e-mail addresses from fans looking to acquire the album.

The band has not said how many copies it distributed. Now that the CD is in shops, some fans who paid for the initial downloads may have been tempted to buy the album, in effect, for a second time. But Steve Gottlieb, chief of the independent label TVT Records, said he believed the sales mainly reflected fans who were acquiring the music for the first time.

"Radiohead is one of those really big groups that appeals to people outside the intensely pirating demographic of 16 to 29," he said. "To the extent Radiohead still has a significant audience in its 30s and 40s, there's a bigger audience of those people who will still pick up something at Best Buy or don't want to bother with figuring out how to go to a Radiohead Web site and track it down."

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Written by The New York Times