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Amazon MP3 to challenge Apple iTunes

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27th September, 2007

THE ARTICLE

Amazon MP3 to challenge Apple iTunes

Apple's music download service iTunes will soon meet its toughest rival yet. Amazon, the world's biggest book store, has released details of its long-awaited music download service, 'Amazon MP3'. Analysts say this is the first real challenge to Apple's dominance. Apple has been the unbeatable leader in digital music sales ever since it started iTunes. In spite of other companies entering the market over the past five years, Apple still dominates with over 70 per cent of all digital music sales. The new threat from Amazon comes in the form of considerably cheaper downloads – 89 cents, compared with \$1.29 from the Apple Store. Amazon's downloads will also be free of copy protection technology. This means music lovers will be able to play their downloads on any mp3 player.

Amazon MP3 will boast a catalogue of over two million songs. It has joined forces with 20,000 major and independent record labels, including biggies Universal and EMI, to provide consumers with a considerable choice of music from over 180,000 artists. Furthermore, Amazon will not have to overcome the hurdle that prevents other online music stores from gaining a foothold in the market - getting people to register credit card details. Hundreds of millions of people worldwide already have Amazon accounts. They'll soon be able to buy music downloads alongside their books and DVDs. Amazon.com's vice president for digital music said in a press statement: "We look forward to receiving feedback from our customers and using their input to refine the service." Time will tell whether it will eat into Apple's sales.

WARM-UPS

1. MP3: Walk around the class and talk to other students about MP3 music and music players. Change partners often. After you finish, sit with your original partner(s) and share what you found out.

2. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting and which are most boring.

Apple / iTunes / tough rivals / Amazon.com / analysts / downloads / songs / record labels / artists / hurdles / credit card details / feedback / books / DVDs

Have a chat about the topics you liked. Change topics and partners frequently.

3. FEEDBACK: You have been invited to give feedback on different companies. Your feedback will really make a difference to make things better. With your partner(s), talk about what feedback you would give to these companies / enterprises:

- Apple iTunes
- Amazon.com
- Microsoft
- Google
- the United Nations
- your nation's railway company
- your English school / college
- a restaurant in your town
- your bank or post office
- other _____

4. RIVALS: With your partner(s), talk about these rivals. Which do you think is best and why?

- Apple iPod / other music players
- MacDonald's / Kentucky Fried Chicken
- MySpace / Facebook
- CNN / BBC
- Coca Cola / Pepsi Cola
- Nike / Reebok
- Google / Yahoo / MSN

5. RIVALRY: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word "rivalry". Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

6. QUICK DEBATE: Students A think Apple is a better company than Amazon; Students B think Amazon is better than Apple. Change partners often. After your debates, share what you talked about.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|---|-------|
| a. Amazon.com will sue the Apple iTunes store in court. | T / F |
| b. Amazon will soon start selling music downloads from its website. | T / F |
| c. Apple is the dominant force in the digital music market. | T / F |
| d. Amazon will sell songs that will work on any digital music player. | T / F |
| e. Amazon has bought up 20,000 major record labels. | T / F |
| f. Music from over 180,000 artists will be available from Amazon. | T / F |
| g. Tens of millions of people worldwide have Amazon.com accounts. | T / F |
| h. Amazon will definitely take a big bite into Apple's profits. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| 1. rival | a. superiority |
| 2. yet | b. barrier |
| 3. dominance | c. aficionados |
| 4. considerably | d. team up |
| 5. lovers | e. big guns |
| 6. boast | f. foe |
| 7. join forces | g. possess |
| 8. biggies | h. to date |
| 9. hurdle | i. improve |
| 10. refine | j. much |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| 1. iTunes will soon meet its toughest | a. the form of ... cheaper downloads |
| 2. released details of its long- | b. lovers |
| 3. Apple has been the unbeatable | c. the hurdle |
| 4. The new threat from Amazon comes in | d. of over two million songs |
| 5. music | e. their books and DVDs |
| 6. boast a catalogue | f. rival yet |
| 7. have to overcome | g. into Apple's sales |
| 8. gaining a | h. awaited music download service |
| 9. buy music downloads alongside | i. foothold in the market |
| 10. Time will tell whether it will eat | j. leader in digital music sales |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words into the gaps in the text.

Amazon MP3 to challenge Apple iTunes

Apple's music download _____ iTunes will soon meet its toughest rival _____. Amazon, the world's biggest book store, has released details of its long-awaited music download service, 'Amazon MP3'. Analysts say this is the first real _____ to Apple's dominance. Apple has been the unbeatable leader in digital music sales ever since it started iTunes. In _____ of other companies entering the market over the past five years, Apple still _____ with over 70 per cent of all digital music sales. The new threat from Amazon comes in the _____ of considerably cheaper downloads – 89 cents, compared with \$1.29 from the Apple Store. Amazon's downloads will also be _____ of copy protection technology. This means music _____ will be able to play their downloads on any mp3 player.

lovers
spite
yet
form
service
dominates
free
challenge

Amazon MP3 will _____ a catalogue of over two million songs. It has joined _____ with 20,000 major and independent record labels, including biggies Universal and EMI, to provide consumers with a considerable _____ of music from over 180,000 _____. Furthermore, Amazon will not have to overcome the hurdle that prevents other online music stores from gaining a _____ in the market - getting people to register credit card details. Hundreds of millions of people worldwide already have Amazon accounts. They'll soon be able to buy music downloads _____ their books and DVDs. Amazon.com's vice president for digital music said in a press statement: "We look forward to receiving feedback from our customers and using their _____ to refine the service." Time will tell whether it will _____ into Apple's sales.

artists
forces
input
alongside
boast
foothold
eat
choice

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Amazon MP3 to challenge Apple iTunes

Apple's music download service iTunes will soon _____.
Amazon, the world's biggest book store, has released details of _____ download service, 'Amazon MP3'. Analysts say this is the first real challenge to Apple's dominance. Apple has _____ digital music sales ever since it started iTunes. In spite of other companies entering the market over the past five years, Apple still dominates with over 70 per cent of all digital music sales. The new threat from Amazon _____ considerably cheaper downloads – 89 cents, compared with \$1.29 from the Apple Store. Amazon's downloads will also _____ technology. This means music lovers will be able to play their downloads on any mp3 player.

Amazon MP3 _____ over two million songs. It has joined forces with 20,000 major and independent record labels, including biggies Universal and EMI, to provide consumers _____ of music from over 180,000 artists. Furthermore, Amazon will not have _____ other online music stores _____ market - getting people to register credit card details. Hundreds of millions of people worldwide already have Amazon accounts. They'll soon be able to buy music _____ books and DVDs. Amazon.com's vice president for digital music said in a press statement: "We look forward to receiving feedback from our customers and using their input to refine the service." Time _____ into Apple's sales.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'record' and 'label'.

record	label
---------------	--------------

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• yet• long-awaited• unbeatable• considerably• protection• lovers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• boast• biggies• hurdle• alongside• press• eat
--	--

STUDENT MP3 SURVEY

Write five GOOD questions about MP3s in the table. Do this in pairs. Each student must write the questions on his / her own paper.

When you have finished, interview other students. Write down their answers.

	STUDENT 1 _____	STUDENT 2 _____	STUDENT 3 _____
Q.1.			
Q.2.			
Q.3.			
Q.4.			
Q.5.			

- Now return to your original partner and share and talk about what you found out. Change partners often.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a) What did you think when you read the headline?
- b) What do you think of Apple's iTunes?
- c) What format of music do you prefer, vinyl, cassette, CD or MP3?
- d) Do you think Amazon MP3 will be a serious challenge to iTunes?
- e) Why do you think Apple still enjoys such a large slice of the digital music market?
- f) Do you think music downloads are reasonably priced?
- g) Do you care whether your music downloads come copy protection technology?
- h) What advice would you give to Apple's boss to stay number one?
- i) Do you think the iPod is the world's best digital music player?
- j) What other Apple products would you like?



STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a) Did you like reading this article?
- b) Will you buy music from Amazon MP3?
- c) Are your favourite artists signed to major or independent labels?
- d) Do you worry about giving your credit card details to websites?
- e) How important is online shopping to you?
- f) Are you looking forward to being able to buy books, DVDs and music downloads all from the same site?
- g) What do you think of Amazon.com?
- h) Do you think Amazon will eat into Apple's profits?
- i) What questions would you like to ask Amazon's boss?
- j) Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a) What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- b) Was there a question you didn't like?
- c) Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- d) What did you like talking about?
- e) Which was the most difficult question?

LANGUAGE

CORRECT WORD: Put the correct words from a–d below in the article.

Amazon MP3 to challenge Apple iTunes

Apple's music download service iTunes will soon meet its (1) ____ rival yet. Amazon, the world's biggest book store, has released details of its long-(2) ____ music download service, 'Amazon MP3'. Analysts say this is the first real challenge (3) ____ Apple's dominance. Apple has been the unbeatable leader in digital music sales ever since it started iTunes. In spite of other companies entering the market (4) ____ the past five years, Apple still dominates with over 70 per cent of all digital music sales. The new threat from Amazon comes in the (5) ____ of considerably cheaper downloads – 89 cents, compared with \$1.29 from the Apple Store. Amazon's downloads will also be free of copy protection technology. This means music (6) ____ will be able to play their downloads on any mp3 player.

Amazon MP3 will (7) ____ a catalogue of over two million songs. It has joined forces with 20,000 major and independent record labels, including (8) ____ Universal and EMI, to provide consumers with a considerable choice of music from over 180,000 artists. Furthermore, Amazon will not have to overcome the (9) ____ that prevents other online music stores from gaining a (10) ____ in the market - getting people to register credit card details. Hundreds of millions of people worldwide already have Amazon accounts. They'll soon be able to buy music downloads (11) ____ their books and DVDs. Amazon.com's vice president for digital music said in a press statement: "We look forward to receiving feedback from our customers and using their input to refine the service." Time will (12) ____ whether it will eat into Apple's sales.

- | | | | | |
|-----|-----------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| 1. | (a) toughest | (b) tougher | (c) tough | (d) trough |
| 2. | (a) waiting | (b) wait | (c) awaited | (d) waiter |
| 3. | (a) up | (b) with | (c) by | (d) to |
| 4. | (a) under | (b) over | (c) via | (d) through |
| 5. | (a) from | (b) farm | (c) firm | (d) form |
| 6. | (a) lovey-dovey | (b) loving | (c) lovers | (d) love |
| 7. | (a) beast | (b) boast | (c) boost | (d) best |
| 8. | (a) biggies | (b) tots | (c) buggies | (d) bigger |
| 9. | (a) hurdle | (b) huddle | (c) hurl | (d) herd |
| 10. | (a) footwork | (b) footnote | (c) foothold | (d) footloose |
| 11. | (a) lengthy | (b) longing | (c) along | (d) alongside |
| 12. | (a) speak | (b) tell | (c) say | (d) ask |

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information about Amazon MP3. Talk about what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

3. MUSIC PLAYERS: Make a poster comparing different digital music players on the market. Which ones are best? Show your poster to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all find out similar things?

4. MAGAZINE ARTICLE: Write a magazine article about the digital music revolution and what the future of music will look like. Include imaginary interviews with the CEOs of Apple and Amazon.

Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Which article was best and why?

5. LETTER: Write a letter to the boss of Amazon MP3. Ask him/her three questions about why he/she thinks Amazon MP3 will be a big success. Give him/her three pieces of advice on how to catch up with rival Apple. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions.

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

a. F b. T c. T d. T e. F f. T g. F h. F

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| 1. rival | a. foe |
| 2. yet | b. to date |
| 3. dominance | c. superiority |
| 4. considerably | d. much |
| 5. lovers | e. aficionados |
| 6. boast | f. possess |
| 7. join forces | g. team up |
| 8. biggies | h. big guns |
| 9. hurdle | i. barrier |
| 10. refine | j. improve |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
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| 1. iTunes will soon meet its toughest | a. rival yet |
| 2. released details of its long- | b. awaited music download service |
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| 4. The new threat from Amazon comes in | d. the form of ... cheaper downloads |
| 5. music | e. lovers |
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| 9. buy music downloads alongside | i. their books and DVDs |
| 10. Time will tell whether it will eat | j. into Apple's sales |

GAP FILL:

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Amazon MP3 will **boast** a catalogue of over two million songs. It has joined **forces** with 20,000 major and independent record labels, including biggies Universal and EMI, to provide consumers with a considerable **choice** of music from over 180,000 **artists**. Furthermore, Amazon will not have to overcome the hurdle that prevents other online music stores from gaining a **foothold** in the market - getting people to register credit card details. Hundreds of millions of people worldwide already have Amazon accounts. They'll soon be able to buy music downloads **alongside** their books and DVDs. Amazon.com's vice president for digital music said in a press statement: "We look forward to receiving feedback from our customers and using their **input** to refine the service." Time will tell whether it will **eat** into Apple's sales.

LANGUAGE WORK

1 - a 2 - c 3 - d 4 - b 5 - d 6 - c 7 - b 8 - a 9 - a 10 - c 11 - d 12 - b