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The Times

September 28, 2005

Miniature card to chip away at CDs

BY JOE BOLGER AND DAVID SANDERSON

A CARD the size of a fingernail is the latest entrant in the format wars for delivering music in a move that may spell the end of the CD.

The “gruvi” music cards, similar to the memory cards used in digital cameras, will contain pre-recorded music and are designed to play on mobile phones, MP3 players and computers. As the albums will take up only a small portion of the card’s capacity, the extra space could be used to store films, photographs and games.

They could also store content downloaded from the internet.

SanDisk, the technology company behind the cards, hopes that the new devices — which are being sold in the US for about \$40 (£23) and which will be available in this country by Christmas — will eventually reduce the costs of buying music. Several music companies, including EMI, have already shown an interest in providing their artists’ works on the “TrustedFlash” format cards.

Pedro Vargas, SanDisk’s director of mobile entertainment, said that the extra capacity and flexibility justified the additional price, adding that this would drop over time.

He said that after paying an initial price for the album, consumers could then visit online stores and download additional albums for an extra fee. Music publishers could also give users access to new artists by including a sample album which could be “unlocked”, for a fee, using an internet connection.

Mobile phones and MP3 players containing these so-called “flash memory” slots are just beginning to appear in the shops, but by 2008 industry analysts expect there to be about 350 million combined mobile phone and MP3 player handsets in circulation.

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