

March 10, 2005

## Flash Drive Puts Music Under Your Thumb

By [THOMAS J. FITZGERALD](#)

**T**HUMB-SIZE flash drives for data storage come in a wide array of colors, shapes and sizes. Now they are available with something less visible: prerecorded music.

The TunePlug, from the online record label Magnatune ([magnatune.com](http://magnatune.com)), is a U.S.B. flash drive that comes loaded with MP3 files from 10 independent recording artists. It is available in four sizes. The largest has a capacity of 512 megabytes, enough to hold 10 albums, with 85 megabytes left over for storage. The device is a standard reusable flash drive; you can store digital photos, word-processing documents and other files on it. To create more storage space, you can erase the music files.

The music can be played using desktop software like Windows Media Player and [iTunes](#), a browser-based interface, or it can be copied to CD-R's and MP3 players.

The first edition of the device, scheduled for release today on Magnatune's Web site, includes a range of Magnatune's music, including electro-pop, alternative, progressive and retro-pop rock.

"It's the best of the best," said John Buckman, founder and owner of Magnatune, which offers music from 180 artists. "It's like getting 10 CD's all in one pack."

Artemis Robison, of the San Francisco-based band Artemis, says the device has the potential to draw new listeners to shows and to help the independent artists gain new licensing deals and income. "Getting my music out there is great exposure for me," said Ms. Robison, whose 2001 album, "Undone," is on the device. "It will be interesting to see what the response is like."

The flash drives are manufactured and distributed by Hana Micron, a Korean maker that is licensing the music from Magnatune. The artists' share of Magnatune's proceeds is 50 percent.

The licensing fee means that the cost of Magnatune drives is less than 10 percent more than blank drives, said Jon Jaroker, a vice president at Hana Mircon.

The device is scheduled to be available beginning today at Magnatune's Web site ([magnatune.memina.com](http://magnatune.memina.com)). The 512-megabyte unit is \$70, and the smallest model, with 64 megabytes of capacity, is \$20. Buyers of models too small to hold the 10 albums can download them at no extra cost. (The price of a blank 512-megabyte flash drive typically is \$45 to \$90, depending on the brand and features.)

Hana Micron plans to distribute similar drives with other music providers in other genres, including jazz and rock, Mr. Jaroker said.

"I'm putting together an entire portfolio of products that can reside on a new type of container," he said.