

Commercial Digital Multitrack Recordings: New Preservation Issues

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Once upon a Time, the Collection and Preservation of Recorded Assets Was a Relatively Easy Process.....

A Tape Box

AMPEX
456

GARTH
BROOKS

1) FRIENDS IN
LOW PLACES

2) WOLVES

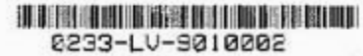
HORSE OF TROY PRODUCTIONS, INC.

ITEM # A-901-0032

DESCRIPTION:

FRIENDS IN LOW PLACES

WOLVES



0233-LV-9010002

And The “Metadata Stack” was Complete

Record Labels knew that:

- They had the asset
- They knew what was on the reel (or could find out relatively easily)
- They had other information regarding mixing notes, performers, etc.
- The analog reels were typically considered to have a long shelf life (10-20 years)

However, with born-digital
assets none of the previous
assumptions apply

Born-Digital Deliverables have changed the rules of Preservation and Management of Recorded Assets

Current commercial recording techniques have made the
delivery of recording projects extremely difficult to reconcile
in a timely fashion

A label might receive something like this:



Or this:



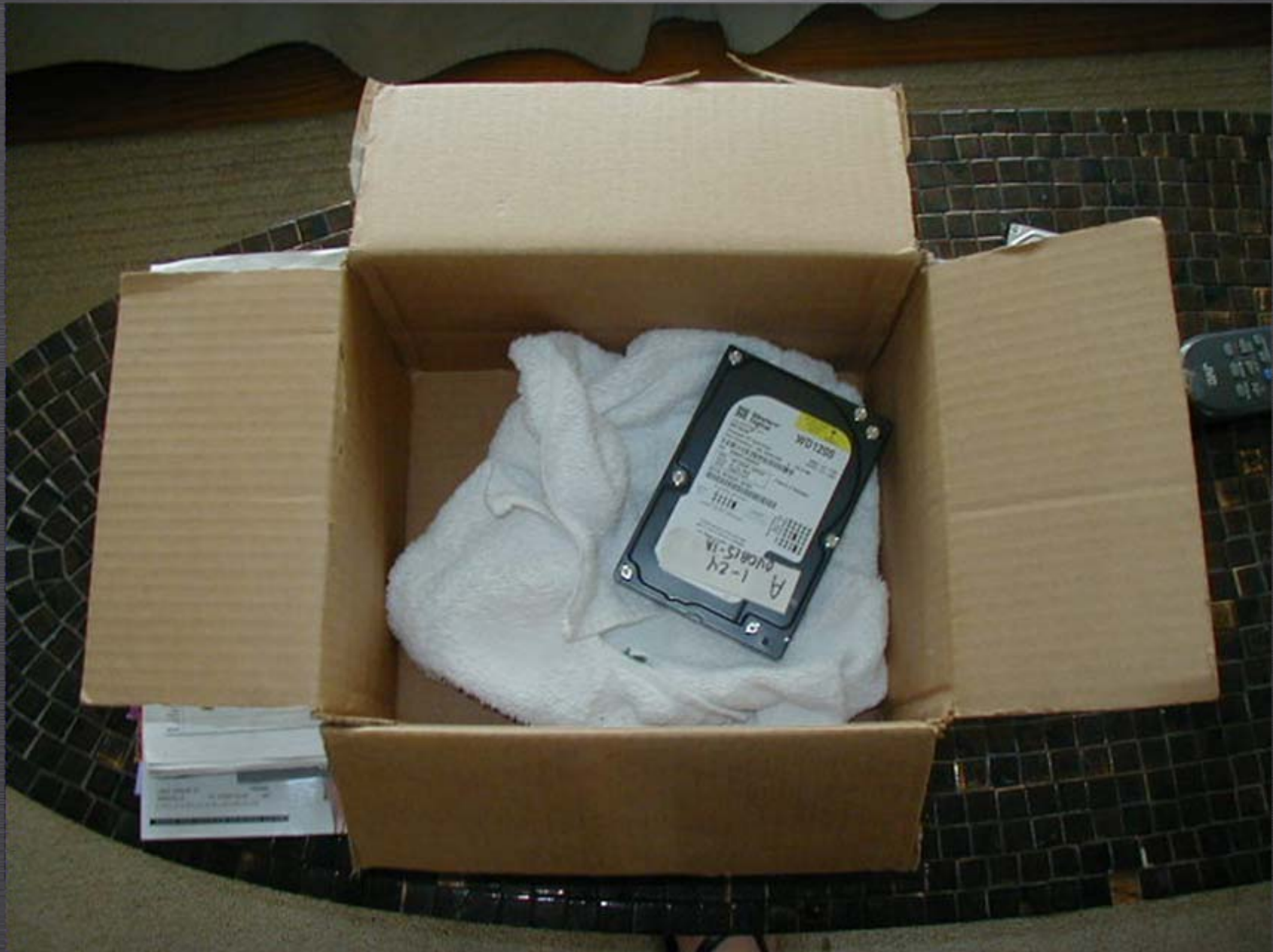
Or maybe this:



Or this:



Or my personal favorite:



The Problems are Many:

- For A&R Administrators, it is impossible to determine if all of the recordings (multitracks, mixes, ring-tones, recording notes, etc) are present and playable
- Many times, considerable amounts of money have already been spent on promotion of an upcoming release
 - Making the “release date” is priority #1 to maximize revenues
 - Typically, the contractual relationship between artist and label usually denotes a “back-end” payment due at the point of delivery

The Problems are Many:

- The use of Digital Audio Workstations (DAWs) in the recording process has greatly diminished the quantity of metadata (both technical and descriptive)
- DAWs allow for a collaborative recording process that can lead to distributed “pieces and parts” of the project spread across numerous computers and HDDs
- Without a consistent documentation process in place, any information collected during the recording project must be re-keyed if it is to be used for preservation identification and tracking within the archive

Label Issues

- Record labels have several business units and associated databases for various business units of the company (royalty tracking, liner copy, recording costs, publisher, etc.)
 - These databases will also add to the incoming metadata stack with additional information (ISRC codes, correct song titles, publishing information, liner notes and artwork, etc.)

Label Issues

- Labels, both large and small need the ability to bring in the information to a common template that can create numerous capabilities, such as subsets of metadata to facilitate copyright registration and e-commerce platforms
 - Organizational issues can also create a “disconnect” between departments that are tasked with deliverables and those who must sell the product
 - The preservation of the asset is usually the direct responsibility of yet another department - if the asset was determined to be complete at the time of delivery - otherwise, it may be missing elements (lead vocal track, guitar solo, etc.) that may never be located, destroying any opportunities to repurpose the asset

Existing Standards

- NARAS/ AES Recommended Delivery document - defines file type (BWF) and acceptable long-term deliverables (all of which are data tapes - LTO, SDLT, and AIT)
- AES-31.x - not required as a deliverable from most labels
- SMPTE RP-210 Metadata Dictionary (and other works in progress)
 - Material Exchange Format (MXF) - not requested as a deliverable, however as labels move towards treating recording projects as multiple file formats (liner art, videos, audio files, etc.) a “wrapped” environment may be desirable

Needed Standards

- A Schema, in concert with other emerging standards, that addresses the unique documentation process of the current recording process, freely available to stimulate development of additional metadata collection applications
- “real world” testing to develop and provide an application to the recording process that would allow comprehensive metadata to be collected and “handed off” to the label without minimal human intervention
- The need exists for individuals, small labels, or large record labels to have greater control over their assets, from the creation process to the preservation of the digital files

Example Deliverable:



