MP3, the much loved audio compression algorithm, is dead-- or so its creator, the Fraunhofer Institute for Integrated Circuits, insists as it terminates licencing for a number of related patents.



Instead, the institute suggests, customers should switch to Advanced Audio Coding (AAC), which it describes as a "de facto standard for music download and videos on mobile phones." AAC is definitely superior to MP3, since it allows for streaming TV and radio broadcasting with higher-quality audio at lower bitrates.

The story of the MP3 format started in the late 1980s, when Fraunhofer and the Friedrich-Alexander University of Erlangen-Nuremberg joined forces to work on a means to send audio over telephone lines. The eventual result was the MP3, a technology the Fraunhofer failed to capitalise on due to a combination of industrial sabotage, piracy and, at one unfortunate point, the German government refusing to give a patent for a music streaming service due to its being technologically absurd at the time.

By 1995 MP3 was actually near death, having managed to get just one licensing deal for use in hockey arenas in the US. After another failed attempt at getting the format standardised, Fraunhofer simply gave away the software allowing customers to convert CDs into MP3s, and the rest is (recent) history.

But is the format actually dead? Not necessarily-- after all, customers will continue using MP3 files in their PCs and players, even if AAC and other formats (such as Master Quality Authenticated) are making headway in audio space. But MP3 remains testament to the want for easily accessible music, and as deserves to be remembered not only as an audio and internet innovation, but one in technology at large.

Go MP3

Go The MP3 is Officially Dead, According to its Creators (NPR)