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References

Ben-Yehuda, A. (2009). MIX AND MATCH. *Billboard*, 121(22), 16. Retrieved from MAS Ultra - School Edition database.

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Section: UPFRONT: LATIN

MIX AND MATCH**Mixup Launches MP3 Store In Mexico**

Mexico's premier music retail chain, Mixup, launched its much-anticipated MP3 store May 21. The store, Mixup Digital (mixupdigital.com), opened with nearly 700,000 digital rights management-free tracks from all four major labels, with independents to be added at a later date, Mixup founder Isaac Massry says.

The goal is to reach 1 million tracks by the end of the year. Songs are priced at 10-12 pesos each (77-92cents). A check of the store's beta site showed that only EMI tracks went for the higher price. There didn't appear to be any full-album discounts, though first-time shoppers get 12 tracks for free.

Mixup Digital will be supported by a marketing campaign that includes in-store signage, newly designed shopping bags, employee buttons, print ads and radio spots. Wisin & Yandel, Yahir and Alexander Acha have taped video testimonials encouraging consumers to download legally from the store.

Online download stores Beon and Tarabu haven't fared well in Mexico, in part due to the lack of portability of their rights-protected tracks. "Labels have finally decided to sell MP3s so we've decided to support them," Massry says.

As MP3 files, Mixup Digital's offerings can be used on a computer, phone, iPod or other MP3 player.

Lower online credit card use and rampant piracy have also stymied online downloads in Mexico. But with 65 locations throughout the country, Mixup enters the digital world with an established brand behind it. For music fans, "it's a natural destination," says Sergio Lopes, EMI VP of marketing and digital development for Latin America.

"We're pretty positive on it," says Seth Schachner, Sony Latin VP of digital business for Latin America, on the store's prospects, noting that Mixup's prepaid gift card business, promoted through its physical stores, is a "critical distinction" from Beon and Tarabu. Among other things, the ability to pay with prepaid cards eliminates the reluctance of some consumers to use credit cards or enter confidential information online.

An earlier attempt at an MP3 store in Mexico was spearheaded by the Mexican independent label Noiselab from its own branded storefront within Beon.com. But when it came to sales, "nothing happened," Noiselab founder Hector Mijangos says. "Everybody is downloading from blogs and torrents."

For Mixup Digital to be successful, Mijangos thinks it should offer added value: "If you buy 10 records you'll get one free, or tickets for a show or something like that."

Like Mixup, Beon.com is part of the retail conglomerate Grupo Carso, leading some to speculate that Mixup's MP3 store will replace Beon. (At press time, Beon's site featured the message "We are changing to serve you better. We will have news for you soon.")

Apple didn't comment on speculation that its iTunes store would launch in Mexico this year.

PHOTO (COLOR): In the mix: Mixup Digital is the online outlet of Mexico's top retailer.

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By Ayala Ben-Yehuda

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