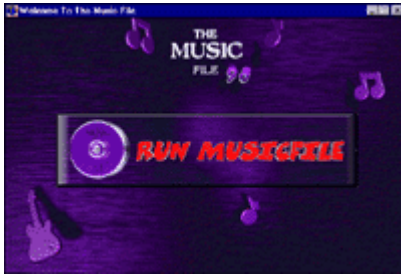


File Productions - Music FileFile Productions - Music File

In the late 1990s, PDMS identified a gap in the market for a PC based popular music reference product. Having recently implemented numerous successful electronic catalogue projects for clients, and with a desire to explore the CD-Rom product market, PDMS, under the trading name File Productions, set about developing the Music File, a CD-Rom based music catalogue product aimed at the consumer market.

"This is a massive, cleverly constructed reference source for a whole industry. If you are into contemporary music then Music File 98 is without doubt an indispensable and invaluable product" Dominic Allonby Software & Games Magazine



CD Roms for the consumer market

Challenge

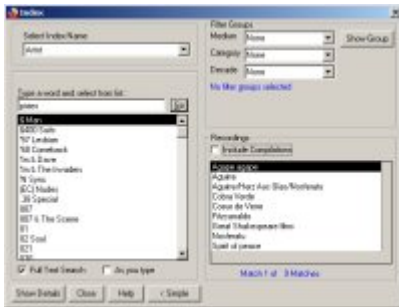
PDMS' primary objective for Music File was for it to be the definitive reference on popular music releases over the last 40 years.



In order to successfully appeal to music enthusiasts, it needed to provide quick and easy access to information on thousands of artists and albums and over a million tracks, and allow them to catalogue and manage their own individual music collections. It was essential that the end product was not only visually appealing, but was also easy to use so that it could be installed and operated by those with only minimal experience of using PCs. The main design challenge was to provide search and retrieval functions that were simple and intuitive to use but, above all, fast and effective on such a large, CD-ROM based data set.

In order to appeal to the widest possible audience, The Music File had to meet two additional criteria. Firstly, in order to be able to run on both Windows 95 and Windows 3.1x, it had to run on both 16 and 32-bit platforms. Secondly, it was decided to price The Music File comparatively with music CDs, rather than the relatively more expensive CD-ROMs.

Solution



PDMS sourced raw data from the music industry containing comprehensive information on rock and pop releases since the late 1950's. The data included 101,000 artists, 300,000 releases and 1.5 million tracks. The PDMS development team analysed this data and determined that compiling it into a static, published database would provide the best solution to meet the core requirements for search speed and flexibility. To partner this, a relational database was designed to handle the much smaller volume of user specific information.

The PDMS design team produced an interface that, whilst maintaining a familiarity to users of Windows, was attractive and individual. Music File allowed users not only to search for information by artist, album or track, but also provided the facilities for them to build, reference and manage their own personal collections. Further value was added to the product by adding a complete directory of UK music shops, mail order information and Internet sites with on-line ordering facilities.

Music File was officially launched in November 1996 and distribution was secured across all of the major music outlets and other related retailers. It was well received and with strong sales and positive feedback from both customers and the press.



In 1997, with the release of Music File 98, PDMS took the opportunity to upgrade the product and add several new features. A new advanced search facility was developed which enabled the searching and filtering of releases by category (genre), release format (CD, 12 inch etc) or decade, or any combination of these. The shopping section was extended to become a practical music business directory, containing information on not only on music stores but music venues, magazines, DJs, record labels and record companies. Improvements to the collection feature allowed users to enhance the information on the database either by changing existing information on tracks and releases, or by adding information on new releases as they were

purchased. This meant that users could keep the information on their collection records right up to date. Music File 98 also provided improved features for the passing of information to other Windows applications.

Achievement

Music File 98 went on sale towards the end of 1997 and was a huge hit, reaching number 1 in the HMV CD-ROM charts in December. The product was extensively tested and reviewed by the media with excellent feedback from the music and PC press.

Questionnaires returned by users of the Music File revealed high levels of satisfaction with the product - they found it to be both comprehensive in terms of the content and easy to use.

Latest figures suggest there are approximately 150,000 copies of The Music File in circulation, which compares exceptionally well with the more normal number of 5,000 for a typical retail CD-ROM product such as this.