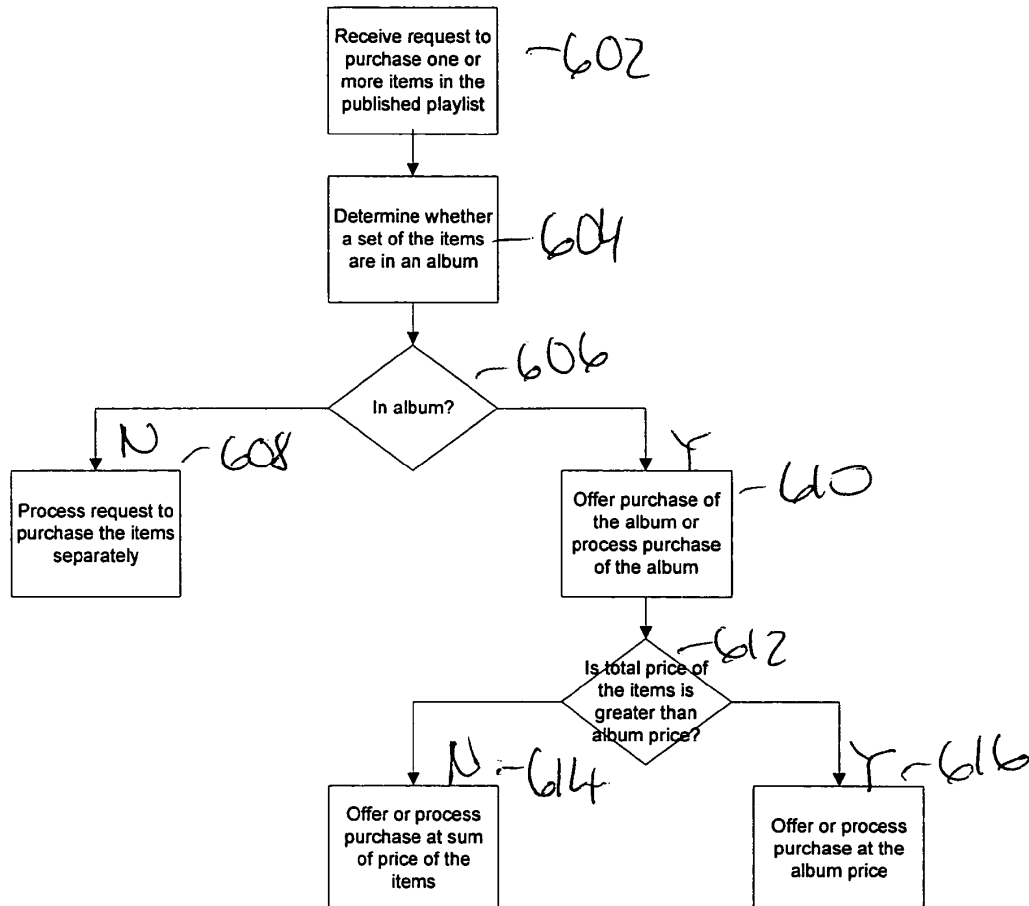




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(43) **Pub. Date: Oct. 27, 2005**(54) **METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR SHARING
PLAYLISTS**(22) Filed: **Apr. 27, 2004****Publication Classification**(75) Inventors: **Eddy Cue**, Mountain View, CA (US);
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(US)(51) **Int. Cl.⁷** **G06F 17/60**
(52) **U.S. Cl.** **705/27**(57) **ABSTRACT**Correspondence Address:
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Methods and systems for publishing a playlist are disclosed. A user generates or selects a playlist, which is then provided (e.g., uploaded) for publishing. A playlist identifying at least one of one or more tracks and one or more albums is received. The playlist may then be published such that the playlist is viewable by one or more individuals. A user may then purchase one or more tracks/albums identified in the playlist via an online store.

(73) Assignee: **Apple Computer, Inc.**(21) Appl. No.: **10/833,879**

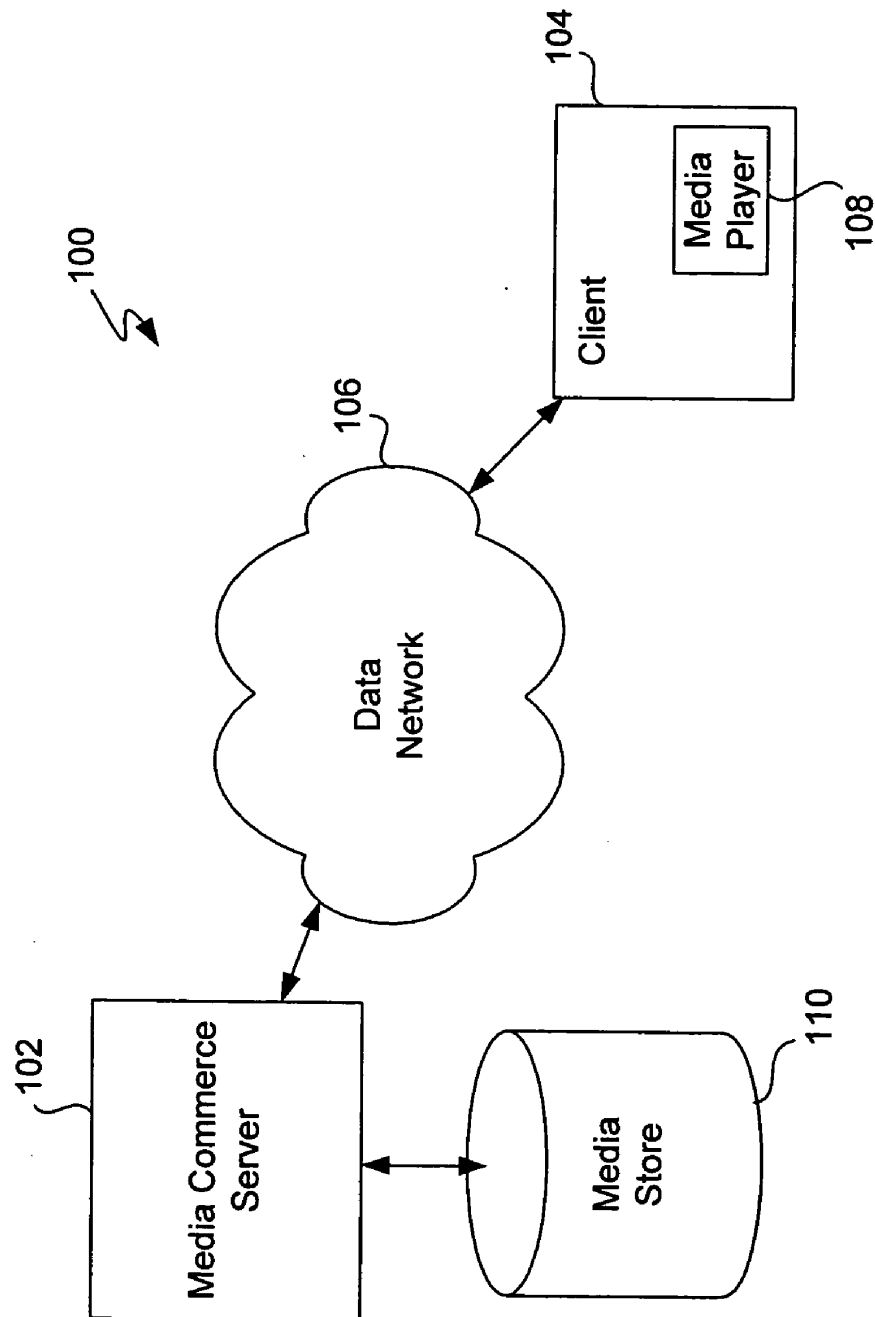


FIG. 1

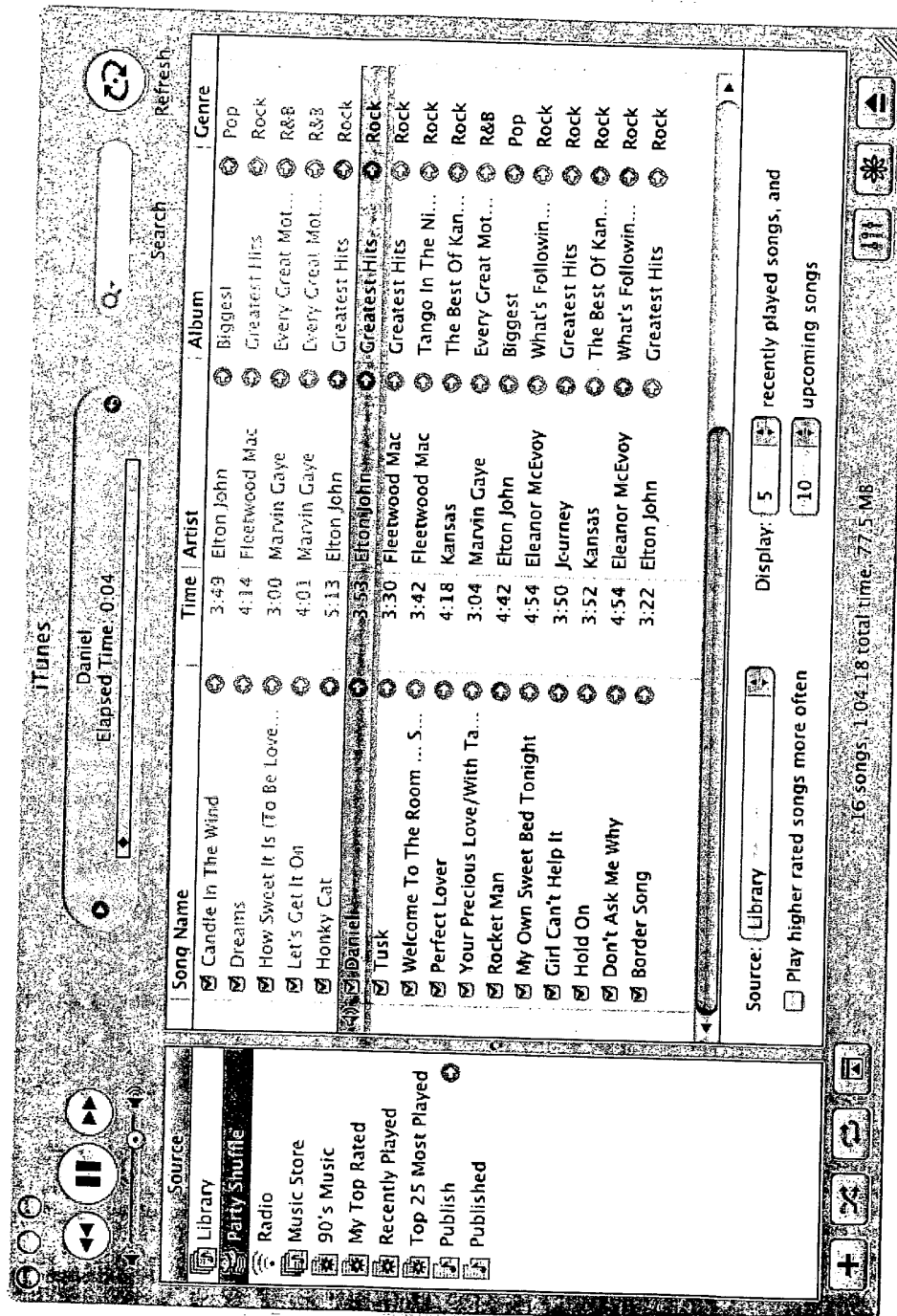


FIG. 2

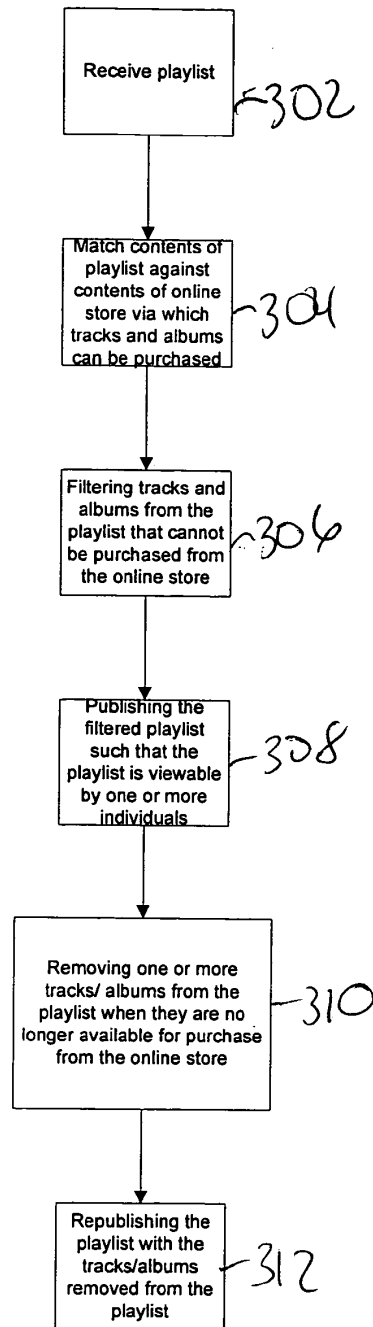


FIG. 3

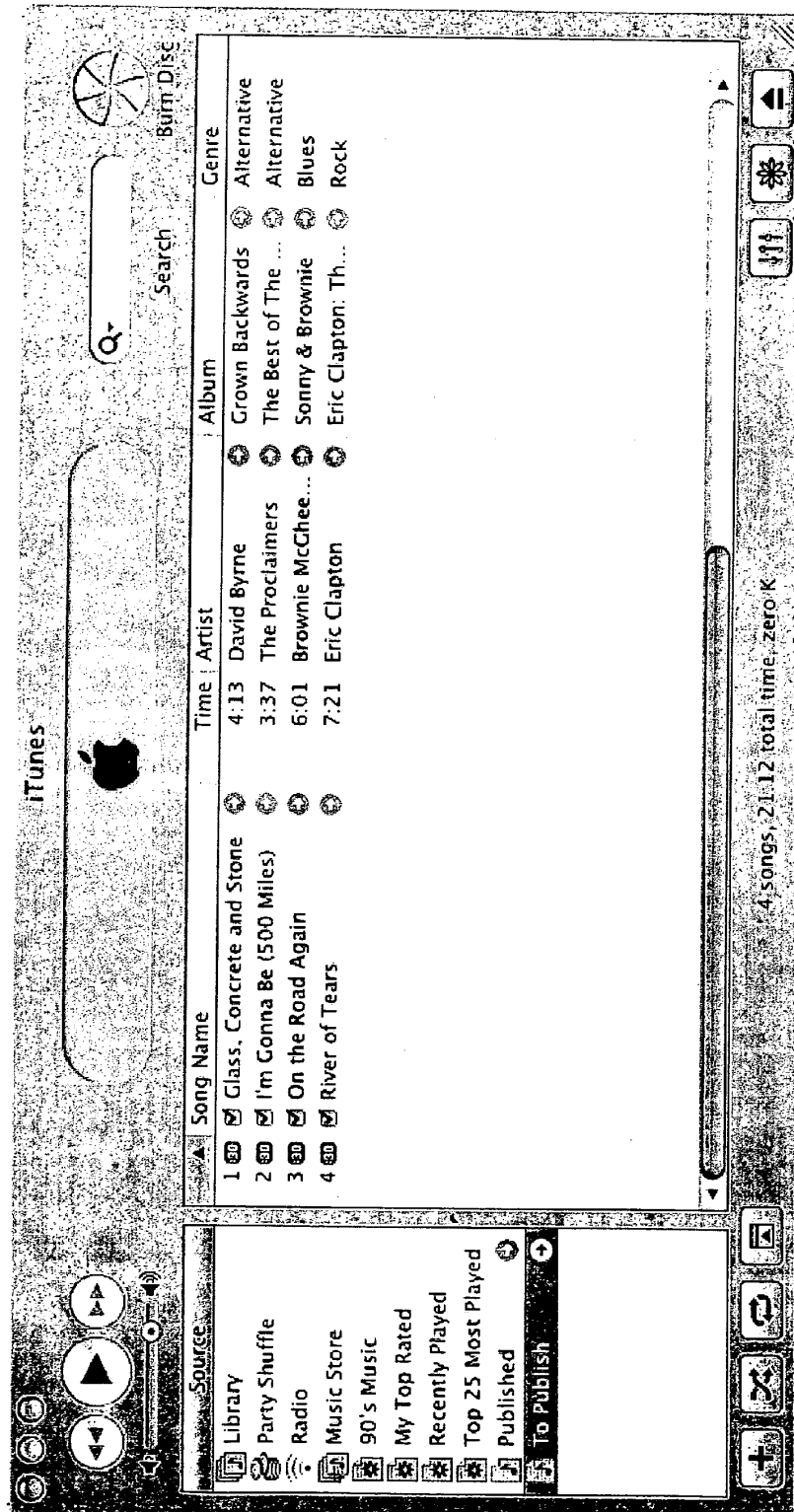


FIG. 4

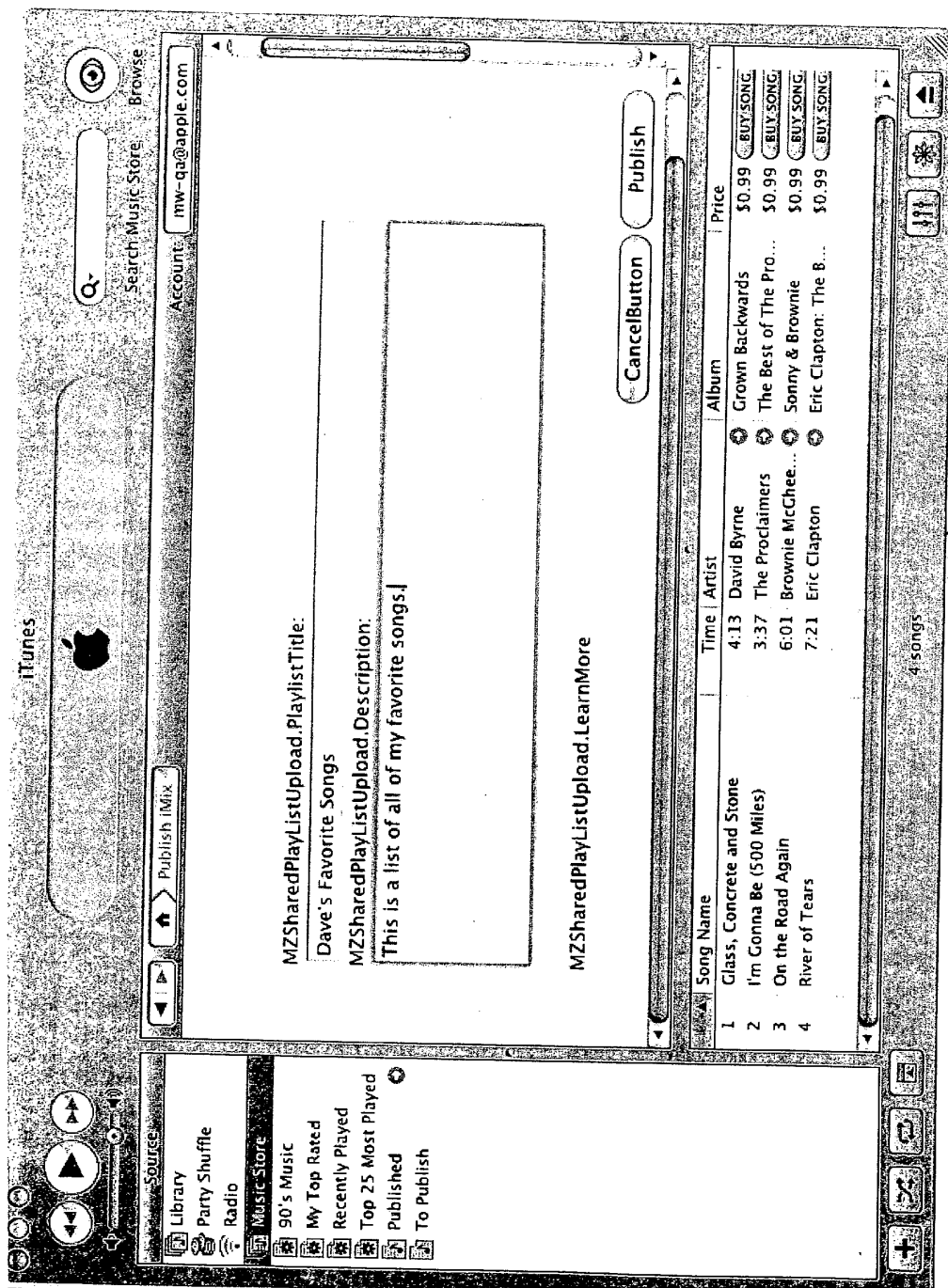


FIG. 5C

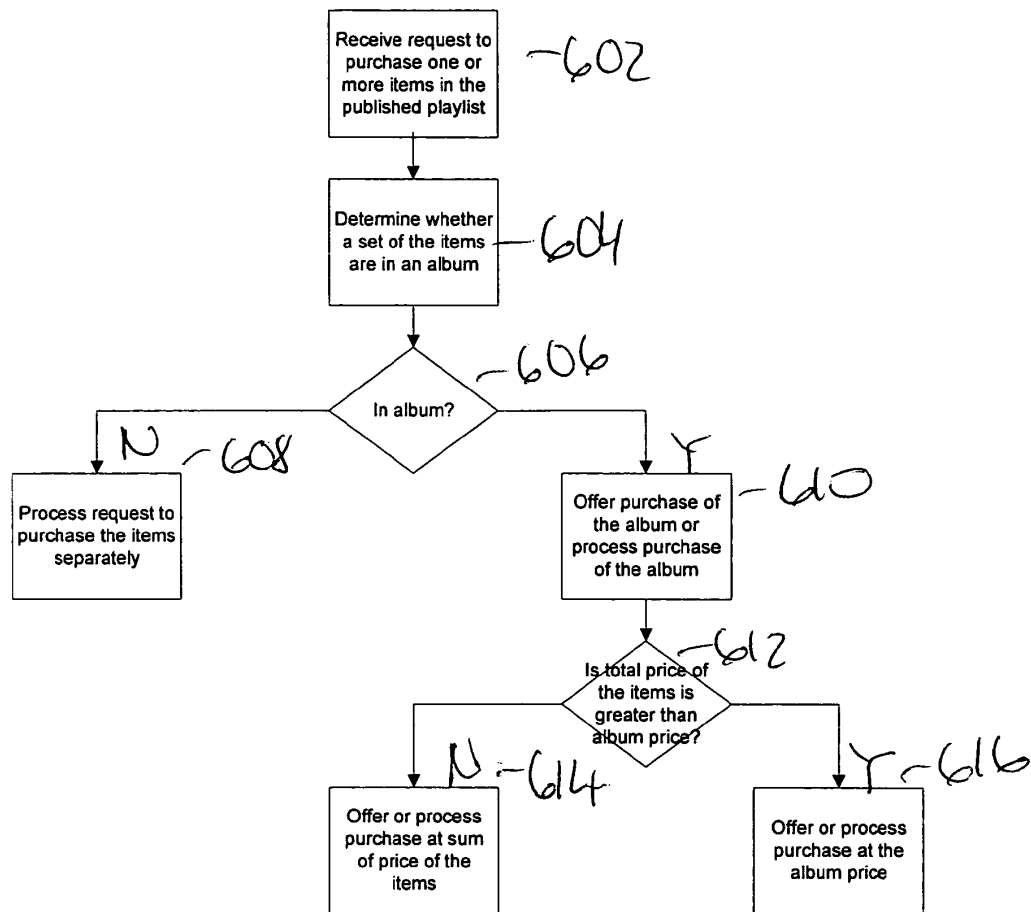


FIG. 6

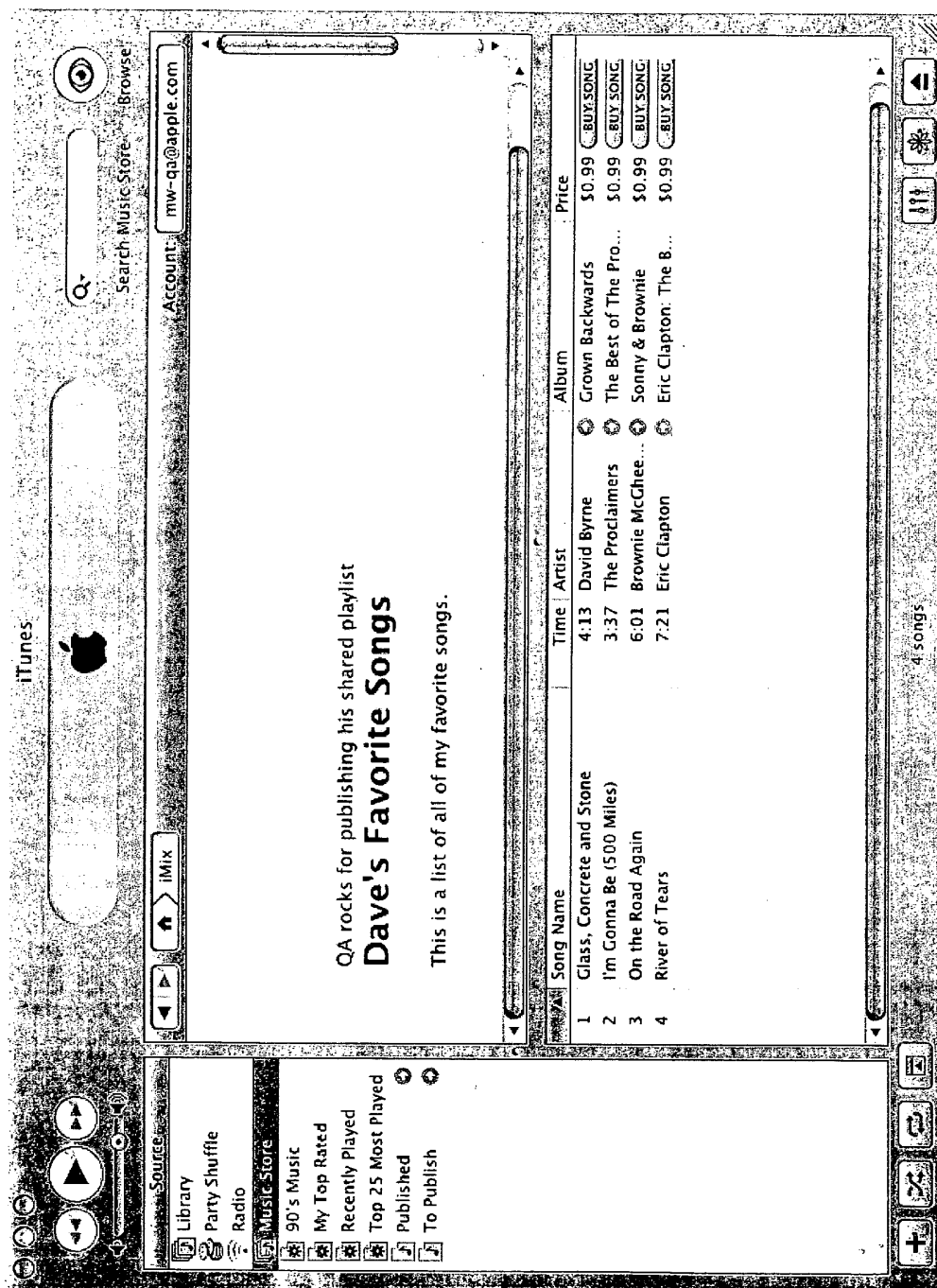


FIG. 7

METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR SHARING PLAYLISTS

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] 1. Field of the Invention

[0002] The present invention relates to playlists and, more particularly, to sharing playlists via a central server.

[0003] 2. Description of the Related Art

[0004] Traditionally, music has been purchased at music stores or music departments of larger stores. A consumer will visit the music store or department and manually browse for albums or compact discs (CDs) of interest. Often, the music in the music store or department is categorized by genre, and then indexed by artist. For example, genre can include rock, country, pop, soul, jazz, etc. After the consumer selects an album or CD of interest, the consumer proceeds to a check-out register to pay for the album or CD being purchased.

[0005] In recent years music delivery or distribution over the Internet has become popular. Due to the advances in efficient file formats, such as MP3 and MPEG4, the size of media files have become small enough to make their download via the Internet practical. Also, technological advances have led to higher-speed Internet connections and lower cost of memory. The combination of these advances make downloading media files, such as for music and videos, manageable and not too time consuming.

[0006] One popular approach to music distribution is mp3.com which uses a centralized server for storage of the numerous songs that are available for download. Another popular approach to music distribution was Napster in which peer-to-peer sharing was utilized. With peer-to-peer sharing, the numerous songs reside on the user machines of the many users, not on a centralized server.

[0007] Various Internet web sites have made it possible to purchase music. In order to purchase goods, the purchaser must typically enter his or her credit card information for each purchase. Some web sites have made it possible for repeat customers to simplify this process by storing the user's credit card information so that this information need not be re-entered for each purchase. This is generally accomplished through a user account.

[0008] Unfortunately, it is often difficult for users to identify which songs or albums they have already purchased. In addition, the availability of peer-to-peer sharing has been to a large part eliminated in response to allegations of copyright infringement. As a result, users can no longer share songs or albums among one another.

[0009] In view of the above, it would be desirable if users could share music without the risk of copyright infringement.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0010] The present invention pertains to methods and apparatus for sharing a playlist. Specifically, a user may publish a playlist over a network (e.g., Internet). The disclosed embodiments may be implemented in association with a web site, thereby enabling a user to purchase items in the published playlist (or listen to samples of the items) via the web site.

[0011] In the following description, a list that lists one or more tracks (e.g., songs) and/or one or more albums (i.e., a purchasable unit such as a tape or CD) will be referred to as a "playlist." The playlist may be manually or automatically generated. It is important to note that the playlist is a list of attributes of each item (e.g., song) sufficient to identify the item (e.g., on the web site or server), and does not provide unlimited access to the actual content of tracks or albums referenced in the playlist.

[0012] In accordance with one aspect of the invention, methods and apparatus for sharing a playlist are disclosed. When a playlist identifying at least one of one or more tracks and one or more albums is received, the playlist may then be published by submitting a request to publish the playlist. The playlist is then published such that it is viewable by one or more individuals.

[0013] In accordance with another aspect of the invention, methods and apparatus for sharing a playlist enable the playlist to be made accessible via an online store from which contents of the playlist can be purchased. When the playlist is received, the contents of the playlist are matched against contents of an online store via which tracks and albums can be purchased. Tracks and albums that cannot be purchased from the online store may then be then filtered (i.e., removed) from the playlist. The filtered playlist may then be published, enabling users to purchase tracks and albums identified in the playlist.

[0014] In accordance with yet another aspect of the invention, methods and apparatus for sharing a playlist include obtaining a playlist identifying at least one of one or more tracks and one or more albums. The playlist is then published such that the playlist is viewable by one or more individuals. A request with respect to at least one of the one or more tracks and one or more albums is then received. The request may be, for example, a purchase request or search request. For instance, a search may be performed to ascertain those playlists that include a particular track (e.g., song) and/or album.

[0015] In accordance with yet another aspect of the invention, methods and apparatus for sharing a playlist include maintaining one or more playlists, each of the playlists identifying at least one of one or more tracks and one or more albums. One or more of the playlists are published such that the published playlists are viewable by one or more individuals. A request with respect to at least one of the tracks/albums associated with one of the playlists may then be received and processed. For instance, the request may be a purchase request or a search request.

[0016] The invention also relates to graphical user interfaces that assist users in sharing a playlist, viewing a playlist, performing various searches, and sampling, listening to, or purchasing items listed in a playlist, as well as those that are used to notify a user that the playlist has been published. For instance, a graphical user interface for use in facilitating the publication of a playlist is disclosed. In addition, a graphical user interface for use in purchasing items listed in a playlist is disclosed.

[0017] The invention can be implemented in numerous ways, including as a method, system, device, apparatus, graphical user interface, or computer readable medium. Other aspects and advantages of the invention will become

apparent from the following detailed description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings which illustrate, by way of example, the principles of the invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0018] The invention will be readily understood by the following detailed description in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, wherein like reference numerals designate like structural elements, and in which:

[0019] **FIG. 1** is a block diagram of a media purchase system according to one embodiment of the invention.

[0020] **FIG. 2** is an exemplary graphical user interface for publishing a playlist and viewing a published playlist in accordance with one embodiment of the invention.

[0021] **FIG. 3** is a process flow diagram illustrating a method of publishing a playlist in accordance with one embodiment of the invention.

[0022] **FIG. 4** is an exemplary graphical user interface that may be used to publish a playlist in accordance with one embodiment of the invention.

[0023] **FIG. 5** is an exemplary graphical user interface that may be presented to a user that has requested publication of a playlist in accordance with one embodiment of the invention.

[0024] **FIG. 6** is a process flow diagram illustrating a method of purchasing tracks or albums presented in a published playlist in accordance with one embodiment of the invention.

[0025] **FIG. 7** is an exemplary graphical user interface that may be presented to enable a user to purchase albums or songs that are listed in a published playlist in accordance with one embodiment of the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0026] Embodiments of various aspects of the invention are discussed below with reference to **FIGS. 1-7**. However, those skilled in the art will readily appreciate that the detailed description given herein with respect to these figures is for explanatory purposes as the invention extends beyond these limited embodiments.

[0027] One aspect of the invention pertains to a system and method for sharing a playlist. In the following description, a list that lists one or more tracks (e.g., songs) and/or one or more albums (i.e., a purchasable unit such as a tape or CD) will be referred to as a "playlist." By publishing a playlist, the playlist may be accessible by one or more individuals. For instance, a hypertext link including a Uniform Resource Locator (URL) to the playlist may be transmitted to one or more individuals. The individuals may then access the playlist by clicking on the link provided in the email. As another example, the playlist may simply be accessible via a web site (e.g., central server). The playlist may be accessible by the public, or merely those who have a particular password or email address.

[0028] Another aspect of the invention pertains to a system and method for purchasing items such as tracks or albums that are listed in a playlist (e.g., published playlist) over a network. Specifically, the disclosed embodiments

may be implemented in association with a web site supporting a user account such as a publisher or purchaser account, thereby enabling the purchaser to purchase track(s) and/or album(s) via the web site that are listed in the publisher's (or purchaser's) playlist.

[0029] Another aspect of the invention enables a potential purchaser to sample and purchase items in a playlist (e.g., if it has been uploaded by the purchaser) or a published playlist. Specifically, the potential purchaser can browse through published playlists identifying media items that are available for purchase. The potential purchaser can thereafter purchase one or more media items on-line with great ease. Upon purchasing a media item, the content for the media item can be downloaded over the network to the purchaser. The content for the media item is then encrypted for the purchaser's use and stored on the purchaser's machine. Thereafter, the purchaser can make use of the media item (e.g., play the media item).

[0030] Still another aspect of the invention pertains to a graphical user interface suitable for assisting users in uploading a playlist, publishing a playlist, and purchasing items from a playlist, as well as those that notify a recipient that a playlist has been published.

[0031] **FIG. 1** is a block diagram of a media purchase system **100** according to one embodiment of the invention. The media purchase system **100** includes a media commerce server **102**. The media commerce server **102** coordinates review and/or purchase of media items through on-line transactions. On-line transactions to purchase media items is also referred to as electronic commerce (e-commerce). The media purchase system **100** also includes a client **104**. Typically, the media purchase system **100** would include a plurality of different clients **104**. Each client **104** includes a media player **108**. The media player **108** is an application program (e.g., software application) that operates on the client **104**, which is a computing device. The client **104** is coupled to the media commerce server **102** through a data network **106**. Hence, any of the clients **104** can interact with the media commerce server **102** to review and/or purchase media items. In one embodiment, the data network **106** includes at least a portion of the Internet. The clients **104** can vary with application but generally are computing devices that have memory storage. Often, the clients **104** are personal computers or other computing devices that are capable of storing and presenting media to their users.

[0032] The media purchase system **100** also includes a media store **112**. The media store **112** provides mass storage of the numerous media items that are available for purchase via the media purchase system **100**. In addition, the media store **112** may provide storage for one or more playlists that have been uploaded and/or published. Once purchased (e.g., via selection from a playlist), the media items can be accessed from the media store **112** over the data network **106** by way of the media commerce server **110**.

[0033] More particularly, the media purchase system **100** allows a user of the client **104** to utilize the media player **108** to browse, search or sort through a plurality of playlists identifying one or more media items (e.g., tracks/songs or albums) that can be purchased from the media commerce server **102**. The media player **108** may also allow the user to preview a media clip (i.e., sample) of the media items (e.g., songs). In the event that the user of the media player **108**

desires to purchase a particular media item, the user (via the media player **108**) and the media commerce server **102** engage in an on-line commerce transaction in which the user pays for access rights to the particular media item. In one embodiment, a credit card associated with the user is credited for the purchase amount of the particular media item.

[0034] In the media purchase system **100**, the media items are stored in the media store **112** and retrieved via the media commerce server **102**. However, a separate media storage server could additionally be provided and coupled between the data network **106** and the media store **110**. The benefit of such a media storage server would be that the media commerce server **102** need not burden its resources to deliver any of the media items that may be purchased to the client **104**. Instead, on purchasing a particular media item, the media commerce server **102** sends download information to the media player **108** on the client **104**. The download information can then be used by the media player **108** (and the client **104**) to retrieve the media content for the particular media item by interacting with the media storage server through the data network **106**. In this regard, the media storage server obtains the media content corresponding to the particular media item from the media store **112** and downloads such content through the data network **106** to the client **104**. The downloaded media content can then be stored on the client **104**. In one embodiment, the downloaded media content is encrypted as received at the client **104** but is decrypted and then re-encrypted before persistent storage on the client **104**. Thereafter, the media player **108** can present (e.g., play) the media content at the client **104**. In addition, media search processing/browsing may be performed by an application program operating on a client. The application program is, for example, the media player **108** illustrated in **FIG. 1**.

[0035] Here, in one example, the media commerce server **102** illustrated in **FIG. 1** can also serve as the media storage server. However, it is important to note that these functions may be implemented in separate servers. The search request may be a request to the remote media server to perform a search in accordance with the search criteria for a particular song or album. For instance, the search may request access to published playlists including a particular song or album. The user may then choose to purchase some or all songs or albums in a particular playlist. Here, the media commerce server **102** includes at least information (e.g., metadata) for a large number of media items that are available to be purchased from the media commerce server **102**, though the content of the media items that are purchased may be acquired at the client via download with respect to another remote server, such as the media storage server.

[0036] The connections through the data network **106** between the media commerce server **102**, the client **104** and the media storage server can be through secure connections, such as Secure Sockets Layer (SSL). Further, the media content may be re-encrypted prior to storage at the client **104** such that downloaded media content is not stored in the clear, but is instead stored in an encrypted manner.

[0037] **FIG. 2** is an exemplary graphical user interface for publishing a playlist and viewing a published playlist in accordance with one embodiment of the invention. As shown in **FIG. 2**, various playlists may be generated. As shown, the "Source" may be a playlist that has been placed

in the user's "Library," such as the "Party Shuffle" playlist. Other playlists may also be generated, such as the "90's Music" and "My Top Rated" playlists. Thus, a user may select a preexisting playlist. A playlist may be manually or automatically generated. Automatic generation may include generation based upon one or more criteria (e.g., genre, artist).

[0038] In order to publish a playlist identifying one or more tracks and/or albums, the playlist is first obtained. Specifically, the playlist is uploaded for publishing. In this example, the playlist "Party Shuffle" has been uploaded for publishing. As can be seen from this example, a playlist includes one or more tracks (e.g., songs) and/or albums. For each entry in the playlist (e.g., song), the name is identified. For each song, the artist is also identified. In addition, an album name, genre, play time and personal rating (not shown) may also be identified in a playlist entry for a track such as a song. For instance, the genre may be pop, rock, or R&B. Although songs are identified in the exemplary playlist, other entries may also be identified. For instance, an entry may merely identify a track or, alternatively, an album.

[0039] When the playlist is received, the playlist may then be published for access by one or more additional users. The contents of the playlist may be published in the order in which the contents are listed in the uploaded playlist. Publishing may merely involve publishing all text contents of a playlist, such as those set forth above. However, the playlist may also be filtered prior to publishing, as will be described in further detail below with reference to **FIG. 3**.

[0040] **FIG. 3** is a process flow diagram illustrating a method of publishing a playlist in accordance with one embodiment of the invention. As shown at block **302**, a playlist is received. For instance, the playlist may be uploaded by a user intending to publish the playlist. In this manner, the playlist may be sent to an online store. As described above, the playlist identifies at least one of one or more tracks (e.g., songs) and one or more albums. The contents of the playlist (e.g., textual contents) are then matched against the contents of an online store via which the tracks and/or albums can be purchased at block **304**. The matching may be performed in the order in which the contents are listed in the playlist. Tracks and albums that cannot be purchased from the online store are then filtered from the playlist at block **306**. The filtered playlist may then be published at block **308** such that the playlist is viewable by one or more individuals. As set forth above, the contents of the playlist may be published in the order in which the contents are listed in the uploaded playlist. Similarly, when songs or albums are no longer stocked by the store, these songs and albums can be removed from the published playlist. Thus, at block **310**, the tracks/albums that are no longer available for purchase from the online store may be removed from the playlist. The playlist may then be republished at block **320**.

[0041] By filtering albums or songs from published playlists that cannot be purchased from the online store, only those items that can be purchased from the online store are present in the published playlists. A user may then click on any album or song playlist entry to purchase that album or song from the online store.

[0042] Other types of tracks and albums may also be filtered from a playlist prior to publishing the playlist. For

instance, pornographic or obscene names associated with tracks or albums may be filtered from the playlist. In addition, the number of items in a playlist that is published may be limited and therefore the playlist may be filtered accordingly, such as through removal of the last entries in the playlist.

[0043] A user may submit a request to publish any playlist such that the playlist is viewable by one or more individuals. **FIG. 4** is an exemplary graphical user interface that may be used to publish a playlist in accordance with one embodiment of the invention. As shown in **FIG. 4**, the user may select a publish playlist option by clicking on the "To Publish" link to submit a request to publish a particular playlist. In accordance with one embodiment, publication of playlists is account-based. Thus, the publish playlist option may be available for selection from an account page for an individual selecting the publish playlist option. Once a playlist is published, an indicator may be used to indicate that the playlist has been published. In this manner, a user may ascertain whether he or she has published a particular playlist. In addition, the published playlist may be relocated to a group of published playlists such as a group of published playlists that have been published by that user. Publication of a playlist may also be indicated by a status associated with the playlist. Specifically, the status may indicate whether the playlist is public or private. A public status may indicate that the playlist is accessible by a plurality of individuals (e.g., one or more specified individuals or the public), while a private status may indicate that the playlist is accessible only by the individual responsible for uploading the playlist. Thus, a playlist would have a status of private prior to publishing the playlist and a status of public after publishing the playlist.

[0044] Publication may be achieved in a variety of manners. For instance, publication may result in a playlist that is viewable by the public, or merely one or more individuals specified by the publisher. Thus, the publisher may notify one or more individuals of the publication, which may be achieved via a pop-up window, email or other suitable mechanism. For instance, the publisher may provide a URL, which may be provided to one or more individuals via an email indicating that the playlist can be accessed via the URL. Thus, a published playlist may be accessed via a link to a web site (e.g., iTunes Music Store). In other words, the publishing user may specify the individual(s) by whom the playlist may be viewed after the playlist is published. Of course, it is possible for the user to modify the group of individuals after the playlist has been published (e.g., by adding users to the publication group). This may be accomplished, for example, by entering the email address of the specified users into the system for automatic notification. Alternatively, each individual may be emailed directly to notify the individual of the playlist publication, and to provide the URL to the individual. Each of the specified individuals may thereafter access and view the playlist by clicking on the link provided in the email. Alternatively, a published playlist may be made available via a web site and accessed via a password which may be transmitted or provided to the intended recipients. In this manner, one or more playlists may be provided via a central server.

[0045] In addition to accessing a published playlist via a URL, the URL may also provide access to an online store from which contents of the published playlist may be

purchased. Various methods of purchasing items listed in a published playlist will be described in further detail below.

[0046] Assuming playlists have been published and accessible by the public, a user may submit a search request to search the playlists. As one example, the request may be a request to display one or more playlists including a particular search term, track (e.g., song), or album. The request may be a request to display the most viewed playlists such as those including one or more specified tracks and/or albums. Similarly, the request may be a request to display the most purchased playlists such as those including one or more specified tracks and/or album. The playlists identified in the search results are then provided in response to the request. In some embodiments, permission to view the published playlists may be verified (e.g., via email address or password). As another example, a user may submit a request for those tracks and/or albums purchased by individuals who purchased a particular track or album. Thus, the identification of one or more tracks/albums purchased by the individual publishing a particular playlist may be accessed. In this manner, a user may search for and purchase similar or closely related types of music.

[0047] **FIG. 5** is an exemplary graphical user interface that may be presented to a user that has requested publication of a playlist in accordance with one embodiment of the invention. Once a user has requested publication of a particular playlist, the user may provide a description and/or title of the playlist. Alternatively, a default description and/or title may be used, such as the previously established description and/or title. In addition, confirmation is obtained prior to uploading or publishing the playlist. In this example, a "Cancel Button" is provided to enable the user to confirm his or her intention to publish the playlist. If the user wishes to cancel the request to publish, the user may click on the "Cancel Button." Alternatively, the user may confirm his or her intention to publish by selecting a publish playlist option from the online store by clicking on the "Publish" button.

[0048] Upon publication, a title or description may be filtered to remove any unwanted language. For instance, any offensive or obscene language may be removed. In addition, personal information such as addresses and phone numbers may be removed.

[0049] As shown in **FIG. 5**, a purchase price may be provided in association with each playlist item. Specifically, a purchase price associated with the online store may be retrieved and published with the playlist item. In addition, or alternatively to a per-item purchase price, it is also possible to purchase items as a group. For instance, if it is cheaper to purchase an album including multiple tracks presented in a published playlist than it is to purchase the tracks separately, a purchase price associated with the album may be provided or obtained for the purchase transaction. Thus, the purchase of the album may be offered at the album price rather than the sum of the price of the requested tracks.

[0050] An individual accessing a published playlist may purchase one or more tracks or albums identified in the published playlist from the online store. **FIG. 6** is a process flow diagram illustrating a method of purchasing tracks or albums presented in a published playlist in accordance with one embodiment of the invention. As shown at block **602**, a request to purchase some or all of the tracks/albums identified in the playlist is received. It is then determined

whether a set of the items in the playlist are in an album. Specifically, it is determined whether the tracks or a number of tracks (e.g., a majority of the tracks) identified in the playlist are in the same album at block 604. If the tracks or a number of tracks identified in the playlist are not in an album, the request to purchase the items is processed such that each of the items is purchased individually at block 606. Otherwise, an offer to purchase the album is provided at block 610 (or alternatively, the purchase of the album is processed). If the total price of the items (e.g., tracks) is determined not to be greater than the album price at block 612, the request to purchase the items is processed at the sum of the price of the individual items at block 614. However, if the total price of the items is greater than the album price, an offer to purchase the album (or the set of items) is provided at the album price at block 616 (or the purchase request is immediately processed at the album price).

[0051] Similarly, if a purchase request indicates a request to purchase all of the tracks/albums identified in a playlist, a discount off of the purchase price may be offered to the purchaser. This discount may be a dollar amount or a percentage amount. This promotional discount may be offered each time a user requests a purchase of an entire playlist, or a percentage (e.g., 90 percent) of a playlist.

[0052] FIG. 7 is an exemplary graphical user interface that may be presented to enable a user to purchase albums or songs that are listed in a published playlist in accordance with one embodiment of the invention. In this example, a purchase price is listed for each playlist item. The user may click on the "Buy Song" icon to purchase the corresponding song. Similarly, the user may simply choose to listen to a sample for that song (if present). The sample may then be copied to a selected library (e.g., associated with the individual). Alternatively, the user may wish to listen to the user's copy of the song. Thus, a comparison of the text in the playlist entry may be compared to songs stored in the user's library present on the web site or on the user's local memory. Once a match has been found, the user's copy of the song may be played.

[0053] In order to keep track of those tracks/albums that have already been purchased, the tracks/albums in the playlist may be flagged to indicate that they have been purchased by the individual viewing the published playlist from the online store. The individual (purchaser) may be the individual who uploaded and published the playlist or, alternatively, the purchaser may be an individual accessing the published playlist (e.g., via the URL). The flagged items may be visible from the user (purchaser) account. Moreover, the tracks/albums that have been purchased may be flagged (e.g., in response to a request for flagging the purchased items). Other information may similarly be displayed for a published playlist, such as the number of people who purchased all items (e.g., albums/tracks) in a particular playlist, or the number of people who accessed a particular playlist.

[0054] Once a playlist has been published, a publishing user may wish to unpublish the published playlist. This may be accomplished, for example, by selecting an unpublish playlist option from the online store. The playlist may then be deleted from the online store, or unpublished in a similar manner via an indicator or other suitable mechanism. For instance, publishing may be performed in accordance with a

publication status associated with each of the playlists, where the publication status when in a first state indicates that the corresponding playlist is to be published and when in a second state indicates that the corresponding playlist is not to be published.

[0055] An individual who has uploaded and published a particular playlist may wish to modify the published playlist. For instance, the individual may wish to add and/or remove one or more tracks/albums from the playlist. In these situations, the individual may wish to republish the playlist such that the modified playlist is uploaded and viewable by one or more individuals. Republishing may be initiated via selection of a republish playlist option. The republish playlist option, like the publish playlist option, may be selected from an online store from which contents of the published playlist can be purchased. For instance, the republish (and publish) option may be available for selection from an account page for the individual. Similarly, the republication may be achieved via the same notification mechanisms used to accomplish publication. For instance, the modified playlist may be provided via a URL such as the URL via which the playlist was initially published. Thus, the URL may provide access to an online store from which contents of the published playlist can be purchased. Moreover, an email may be sent to one or more individuals indicating that the playlist has been modified. The email may further identify a URL via which the modified playlist can be accessed. In addition, the email may include a message including additional text provided by an individual publishing the playlist. The email may be sent directly by the publisher, or indirectly by specifying or selecting one or more email addresses associated with the intended recipients of the publication/republication notice.

[0056] Publication may be implemented by transmitting an identifier associated with a playlist to the server/online store with the playlist. The identifier may also be transmitted with the playlist upon republication. The identifier may, for example, be an email address or password.

[0057] It is also possible to contact the publisher of a playlist by submitting a request to contact the publisher (i.e., individual who uploaded and published the playlist). For instance, an email may be sent to the individual, wherein the identity and email address of the individual are kept confidential. In other words, the email may be a blind email sent via the web site. In addition, emails sent by the individual in response may be received upon stripping any email address or other identifying information from the emails.

[0058] The various aspects, features, embodiments or implementations of the invention described above can be used alone or in various combinations. In addition, the media items can pertain to audio items (e.g., audio files or songs, such as for music), video items (e.g., video files or movies), or image items (e.g., photos).

[0059] The invention is preferably implemented by software, but can also be implemented in hardware or a combination of hardware and software. The invention can also be embodied as computer readable code on a computer readable medium. The computer readable medium is any data storage device that can store data which can thereafter be read by a computer system. Examples of the computer readable medium include read-only memory, random-access memory, CD-ROMs, DVDs, magnetic tape, optical data

storage devices, and carrier waves. The computer readable medium can also be distributed over network-coupled computer systems so that the computer readable code is stored and executed in a distributed fashion.

[0060] The advantages of the invention are numerous. Different embodiments or implementations may, but need not, yield one or more of the disclosed advantages. As set forth above, one advantage of the invention is that a user may publish a playlist. Another advantage of the invention is that items listed in a published playlist may be purchased, as well as used to initiate a further search in other published playlists.

[0061] The many features and advantages of the present invention are apparent from the written description and, thus, it is intended by the appended claims to cover all such features and advantages of the invention. Further, since numerous modifications and changes will readily occur to those skilled in the art, the invention should not be limited to the exact construction and operation as illustrated and described. Hence, all suitable modifications and equivalents may be resorted to as falling within the scope of the invention.

What is claimed is:

1. A method of sharing a playlist, comprising:
 - receiving the playlist, the playlist identifying at least one of one or more tracks and one or more albums;
 - matching contents of the playlist against contents of an online store via which tracks and albums can be purchased; and
 - filtering tracks and albums from the playlist that cannot be purchased from the online store.
2. The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising:
 - publishing the filtered playlist such that the playlist is viewable by one or more individuals.
3. The method as recited in claim 2, wherein the published filtered playlist includes a purchase price associated with each item in the published filtered playlist.
4. The method as recited in claim 2, further comprising:
 - removing at least one of one or more tracks and one or more albums from the playlist when the one or more tracks and albums are no longer available for purchase from the online store; and
 - republishing the playlist with the one or more tracks and albums removed from the playlist.
5. The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising:
 - receiving a request to purchase one or more tracks or albums identified in the filtered playlist from the online store.
6. A method of sharing a playlist, comprising:
 - receiving the playlist, the playlist identifying at least one of one or more tracks and one or more albums;
 - receiving a request to publish the playlist; and
 - publishing the playlist such that the playlist is viewable by one or more individuals.
7. The method as recited in claim 6, further comprising:
 - indicating that the playlist has been published.

9. The method as recited in claim 6, wherein publishing the playlist comprises:

- publishing the playlist such that the playlist is viewable by the public.

10. The method as recited in claim 6, wherein publishing is performed via a web site.

11. The method as recited in claim 6, further comprising:

- receiving a request to contact the individual from whom the playlist was received; and

- sending an email to the individual, wherein the identity and email address of the individual are not provided in response to the request.

12. The method as recited in claim 6, further comprising:

- matching contents of the playlist against contents of an online store via which tracks and albums can be purchased; and

- filtering tracks and albums from the playlist that cannot be purchased from the online store;

- wherein publishing the playlist includes publishing the filtered playlist.

13. The method as recited in claim 12, further comprising:

- removing one or more tracks and albums from the playlist when the one or more tracks and albums are no longer available for purchase from the online store such that a modified playlist is generated; and

- publishing the modified playlist.

14. The method as recited in claim 6, further comprising:

- filtering at least one of pornographic and obscene tracks and albums from the playlist prior to publishing the playlist.

15. The method as recited in claim 6, further comprising:

- filtering at least one of one or more tracks and albums from the playlist prior to publishing the playlist.

16. The method as recited in claim 6, further comprising:

- unpublishing the published playlist.

17. The method as recited in claim 6, wherein publishing the playlist such that the playlist is viewable by one or more individuals comprises:

- providing the playlist via a URL.

18. The method as recited in claim 6, wherein publishing the playlist such that the playlist is viewable by one or more individuals comprises:

- providing a plurality of playlists including the playlist via a server.

19. The method as recited in claim 17, further comprising:

- sending an email including the URL to one or more individuals, wherein the email indicates that the playlist can be accessed via the URL.

20. The method as recited in claim 19, wherein the URL provides access to an online store from which contents of the published playlist can be purchased.

21. The method as recited in claim 17, wherein the URL provides access to an online store from which contents of the published playlist can be purchased.

22. The method as recited in claim 21, wherein each entry in the published playlist includes a purchase price.

23. The method as recited in claim 21, further comprising:
flagging one or more entries in the published playlist indicating one or more tracks or albums that have been purchased by an individual viewing the published playlist from the online store.

24. The method as recited in claim 23, wherein the individual is the individual who uploaded and published the playlist.

25. The method as recited in claim 23, wherein the individual is one of the one or more individuals accessing the playlist via the URL.

26. The method as recited in claim 21, further comprising:
receiving a request to purchase all of the tracks and albums identified in the published playlist from the online store.

27. The method as recited in claim 21, further comprising:
receiving a request to purchase one or more tracks or albums identified in the published playlist from the online store.

28. The method as recited in claim 27, wherein the request to purchase is received from the individual who uploaded and published the playlist.

29. The method as recited in claim 27, wherein the request to purchase is received from one of the one or more individuals accessing the playlist via the URL.

30. The method as recited in claim 27, further comprising:
flagging the one or more tracks or albums in the published playlist that have been purchased from the online store.

31. The method as recited in claim 21, wherein publishing the playlist includes selecting a publish playlist option from the online store.

32. The method as recited in claim 31, further comprising:
unpublishing the published playlist.

33. The method as recited in claim 6, further comprising:
modifying the playlist; and

republishing the playlist such that the modified playlist is uploaded and viewable by one or more individuals.

34. The method as recited in claim 33, wherein the publishing and republishing are initiated from an online store from which contents of the published playlist can be purchased.

35. The method as recited in claim 33, wherein modifying the playlist includes removing or adding at least one of one or more tracks and one or more albums from the playlist.

36. The method as recited in claim 33, wherein publishing the playlist includes providing the playlist via a URL and republishing the playlist includes providing the modified playlist via the URL.

37. The method as recited in claim 36, wherein the URL provides access to an online store from which contents of the published playlist can be purchased.

38. The method as recited in claim 33, further comprising:
sending an email to one or more individuals indicating that the playlist has been modified, wherein the email identifies a URL via which the modified playlist can be accessed by the one or more individuals.

39. The method as recited in claim 6, wherein each of the tracks or albums is identified by at least one of a name, artist, and album.

40. The method as recited in claim 6, wherein each of the tracks or albums has a personal rating associated therewith.

41. The method as recited in claim 6, wherein the playlist has a status indicating that the playlist is public or private, wherein when the status indicates that the playlist is public the playlist is accessible by a plurality of individuals and when the status indicates that the playlist is private is accessible only by an individual responsible for uploading the playlist, wherein the playlist has a status of private prior to publishing the playlist and has a status of public after publishing the playlist.

42. The method as recited in claim 6, further comprising:
specifying at least one of a description and title of the playlist.

43. The method as recited in claim 42, further comprising:
filtering at least one of an address and a phone number from the description.

44. A method of sharing a playlist, comprising:
maintaining one or more playlists, each of the playlists identifying at least one of one or more tracks and one or more albums;

publishing one or more of the playlists such that the published playlists are viewable by one or more individuals; and

receiving a request with respect to at least one of the one or more tracks and one or more albums associated with one of the playlists.

45. The method as recited in claim 44, wherein publishing is performed in accordance with a publication status associated with each of the playlists, the publication status when in a first state indicating that the corresponding playlist is to be published and the publication status when in a second state indicating that the corresponding playlist is not to be published.

46. A method of sharing a playlist, comprising:
obtaining a playlist identifying at least one of one or more tracks and one or more albums;
publishing the playlist such that the playlist is viewable by one or more individuals; and

receiving a request with respect to at least one of the one or more tracks and one or more albums.

47. The method as recited in claim 46, wherein the request is received from one of the one or more individuals.

48. The method as recited in claim 46, wherein each item in the playlist includes at least one of a name, artist, album, genre, play time and personal rating for each of the tracks and albums.

49. The method as recited in claim 46, wherein the request identifies at least one of the tracks or albums, the request being a request to display one or more playlists including the identified track or album.

50. The method as recited in claim 49, wherein the request is a request to display the most viewed playlists including the identified track or album.

51. The method as recited in claim 49, wherein the request is a request to display the most purchased playlists including the identified track or album.

52. The method as recited in claim 46, further comprising:
displaying one or more tracks or albums purchased by the individual responsible for publishing the playlist.

- 53.** The method as recited in claim 46, further comprising:
determining a number of people who purchased all albums and tracks in the playlist; and
displaying the number of people who purchased all albums and tracks in the playlist.
- 54.** The method as recited in claim 46, further comprising:
determining a number of people who accessed the playlist; and
displaying the number of people who accessed the playlist.
- 55.** The method as recited in claim 46, wherein the request is a request to play a copy of the track or album on a local computer, the method further comprising:
locating a copy of the track or album on the local computer; and
playing the copy of the track or album.
- 56.** The method as recited in claim 46, wherein the request is a request to listen to a sample of the track or album, the method further comprising:
obtaining a sample associated with the track or album; and
playing the sample associated with the track or album.
- 57.** The method as recited in claim 46, wherein the request is a request to copy a sample of the track or album to a library, the method further comprising:
copying the sample associated with the track or album to a selected library.
- 58.** The method as recited in claim 46, wherein the request is a request to purchase all of the one or more tracks and albums identified in the playlist.
- 59.** The method as recited in claim 58, further comprising:
determining whether the tracks or a number of the tracks identified in the playlist are in an album.
- 60.** The method as recited in claim 59, wherein when it is determined that the tracks or a number of tracks identified in the playlist are not in the same album, processing the request such that each of the tracks is purchased individually.
- 61.** The method as recited in claim 59, wherein when it is determined that the tracks or a number of tracks identified in the playlist are in an album, offering a purchase of the album.
- 62.** The method as recited in claim 61, wherein the purchase of the album is offered at the album price.
- 63.** The method as recited in claim 58, further comprising:
determining whether the tracks or a majority of the tracks identified in the playlist are in an album.
- 64.** The method as recited in claim 63, wherein when it is determined that the tracks or a majority of the tracks identified in the playlist are in an album, offering a purchase of the album.
- 65.** The method as recited in claim 64, wherein the purchase of the album is offered at the album price.
- 66.** The method as recited in claim 64, wherein the purchase of the album is offered at the album price when the total price of the tracks requested is greater than the album price.
- 67.** The method as recited in claim 58, further comprising:
offering a discount off of the purchase when the request is a request to purchase all of the tracks and albums identified in the playlist.
- 68.** The method as recited in claim 58, further comprising:
offering a discount off of the purchase when the request is a request to purchase a specified percentage of the tracks and albums identified in the playlist.
- 69.** The method as recited in claim 46, wherein the request is a request to flag the tracks and albums that are owned by an individual who has submitted the request.
- 70.** The method as recited in claim 46, further comprising:
locating one or more additional published playlists including the one or more tracks and albums identified in the request; and
providing the one or more additional published playlists in response to the request.
- 71.** A computer-readable medium storing thereon computer-readable instructions for sharing a playlist, comprising:
instructions for receiving the playlist, the playlist identifying at least one of one or more tracks and one or more albums;
instructions for receiving a request to publish the playlist; and
instructions for publishing the playlist such that the playlist is viewable by one or more individuals.
- 72.** An apparatus for sharing a playlist, comprising:
means for receiving the playlist, the playlist identifying at least one of one or more tracks and one or more albums;
means for receiving a request to publish the playlist; and
means for publishing the playlist such that the playlist is viewable by one or more individuals.
- 73.** An apparatus for sharing a playlist, comprising:
a processor; and
a memory, at least one of the processor and the memory being adapted for:
receiving the playlist, the playlist identifying at least one of one or more tracks and one or more albums;
receiving a request to publish the playlist; and
publishing the playlist such that the playlist is viewable by one or more individuals.
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