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Jim Farber has been the Daily News chief pop music critic for more than a decade. Along with writing regular trend pieces, profiles, reviews, and breaking news stories for the paper, Jim pens two regular columns each week: One, which appears Tuesdays, covers who's breaking on the charts -- and who's bombing on them -- which is why it's called "Bullets & Bombs." In another regular column, appearing on Sundays, Jim offers an in depth review of the biggest album of the week. Jim has written about pop music since high school. His first piece for Rolling Stone appeared when he was 16. If you saw the movie "Almost Famous," you know the story. Over the years, he has written for hundreds of publications in the U.S. and abroad and has contributed essays and chapters to more than dozen books. His essay in last year's "Rolling Stone:

## Extras have minuses

In an age of rampant file-sharing and corporate downsizing, record companies need all the marketing gimmicks they can get. But their latest is sure to leave some fans grumbling.

Universal Records just re-released the biggest album of the year — Usher's "Confessions" — with four extra tracks. The super-size version boasts a song that's all over radio right now, "My Boo," a duet between Usher and Alicia Keys.

Clearly, the freshened up "Confessions" has struck a chord.

It's expected to shoot Usher's CD all the way to No. 1 from No. 27 on tomorrow's Billboard Top 200 Album chart. The "new" CD has added roughly 325,000 copies in its first week to its already hefty total of 5.7 million copies.

It's proof that fans really love Usher. But is it fair to exploit their ardor by encouraging them to pay twice for the same album? Universal's vice president of marketing, Phillana Williams, notes that if fans don't like the situation they can download the four new tracks on iTunes. But she - acknowledges that Usher's fans are likely to buy the whole CD again, - especially entering the holiday season.

At the same time, the new release from the pop punk band Good Charlotte, "The Chronicles of Life & Death," just arrived in two versions — each featuring a different bonus track and distinct cover to highlight it.

This encourages fans to buy two copies of the CD right off that bat, and the strategy probably helped the album's launch. It's expected to open at No. 3 on Billboard's latest chart, with roughly 200,000 in sales.

Such schemes aren't new. They're simply elaborations of a trend that's been going on for years.



The '70s" won a Deems Taylor Award, the most prestigious prize in music criticism.

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Here's how it started:

For a long time, a version of a hit on the radio wasn't included on the artist's original CD. Often the song would come in a hotter remix — sometimes featuring new guest artists — and it was rarely available as a commercial single. So, months after the song took off, companies began "stripping" the single back onto a "new" version of the CD. In the last few years, this has occurred with Jennifer Lopez, LL Cool J and many other stars.

This year's twist is that companies have been adding multiple songs and DVD elements to increase the chance of a second CD purchase. In 2004, that's happened with albums by Switchfoot, Norah Jones, Jessica Simpson and more.

Often it pays. According to Billboard's Geoff Mayfield, Jones' redone CD resulted in the biggest sales increase for any album during its week of release.

Industry analyst **Sean Ross** says that re-selling the same product is "better than the old alternative, when you had no way of getting the song that was so hot on the radio."

But MTV vice president Amy Doyle sees a potential problem.

"If fans learn that there will be a better version coming months down the line," she says, "they may wait to buy. And that hurts those all important debut sales weeks."

Worse, such practices may further alienate all those file-sharers who believe what they're doing isn't stealing but retaliation.

**Originally published on October 11, 2004**

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