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American Outlook

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American government
will shape the future:
a symposium

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Hyping the human genome



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As Daniel Webster noted, "Of all the contrivances for cheating the laboring classes of mankind, none has been more effective than that which deludes them with paper money."

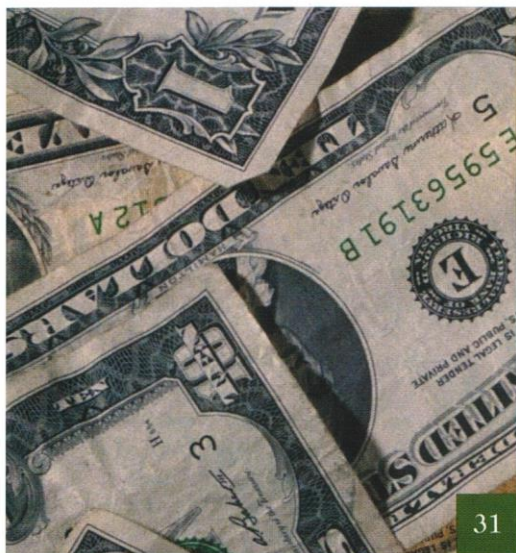
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Celestial Jukebox

Without control over their product, record companies and artists must now dance to their customers' tunes.

Jonathan Little

Music industry pundits from around the world seem agreed that we are on the cusp of one of the great transitions of music history. It's now more than 120 years since Thomas Edison made his memorable recording of "Mary Had a Little Lamb," and all subsequent developments in the music industry have been evolutionary transitions in the *formats*, or "containers," of music: from wax cylinder to shellac disc, then the long-playing vinyl record, audio-cassette, and compact disc—with all sorts of new formats now being predicted. Soon, however, we may see the demise of the physical product altogether, replaced by direct access to music anytime, anywhere, via the Internet, television, or even mobile phones.

As music is increasingly delivered in

intangible streams of electrons, industry analysts expect many of the present structures, conventions, terminologies, and paraphernalia of the music industry to change radically in the next few years. Before long, every single piece of music ever recorded will exist on remote computer servers, so-called celestial jukeboxes. Distribution will then be just a question of access. The major record labels, however, continue to frustrate the rapid spread of this technology, and it is the new "dot.coms"—the new music technology companies—that are leading the way, generating the greatest excitement and producing some striking innovations. The press has spoken a great deal recently about the controversial music-swapping website Napster, which operates in ill-defined copyright

*Rather than simply
relying on payment
for downloads (which
could be very cheap
or even free), a prime
source of revenue
in the future might lie
in marketing the
consumer information
many Internet
companies will hold.*