



OK Go's Damian Kulash Crafts Pro-Dial-Up Anthem

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Yesterday, on the program, we heard about Google's choice of Kansas City, Kansas, as the winner of its ultrafast fiber-optic network. It promises Internet access more than 100 times faster than home broadband.

Well today, we explore a movement that's bucking the trend toward ultrafast: people who revel in getting back to a slower pace online -much slower.

(Soundbite of modem)

Unidentified Man #1: Three-shot Americano.

BLOCK: If we're all now speeding down the information superhighway, consider this a detour onto a bumpy country road.

MIKE SALA (as Hunter Fantuzzi): Here's your coffee. Enjoy it slowly.

BLOCK: At the coffeehouse Drip here in Washington, they specialize in hand pours. Each cup of Burundi and Buziraguhindwa individually crafted. Drip's owner is 33-year-old Hunter Fantuzzi.

"Mr. FANTUZZI": We really focus on slow coffee, slow Internet, slow everything really.

Unidentified Man #2: Hey, can I get two hours of dial-up?

BLOCK: Drip is just one outpost of what its practitioners call the slow Internet movement. You'll find coffeehouses like this one, offering dial-up only, in hipster enclaves in Portland, Oregon; Williamsburg, Brooklyn; Ottumwa, Iowa.

Drip enforces a strict no smartphone policy. They've lined their walls with lead to block wireless signals. Instead, they offer dial-up at 28.8 leisurely kilobits per second. Order dial-up, and Drip will activate one of the many phone jacks lining the brick walls here for 99 cents an hour.

"Mr. FANTUZZI": I don't think that anyone who's ever bought Internet time here has spent less than four hours, and that's just checking email.

ALISON MACADAM (as Sadie Goldberg-Patel): People say that the fun part of dating is the chase, and I realized that that was how I felt about the gathering of information.

BLOCK: That's Drip regular Sadie Goldberg-Patel. I found her hunched over her vintage 1987, Kaypro II portable computer, waiting to connect.

"Ms. GOLDBERG-PATEL": Now, when I'm waiting for the Internet to load up, I get butterflies.

BLOCK: And those butterflies have measurable physiological benefits, according to Dr. Uri Langsam. He's a neuroscientist and professor of Lanterian studies at the University of Southern Minnesota's Duluth campus.

JONATHAN KERN (as Dr. Uri Langsam): At the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority, we've attached electrodes to the heads of computer users, and as we dial back the Internet from, say, 15 million bits per second and downward, we find at 14-4, approximately at 14,400, the alpha waves of the user are similar to someone who is meditating.

The heart rate slows down. The thinking improves. The complexion improves. It's just amazing what it will do.

BLOCK: And the whole perception of time, I guess, shifts as you slow down.

"Dr. LANGSAM": Well, that's a very interesting point. What we've discovered is when we slow the Internet down so a picture that normally comes on the screen for, in a second or two actually takes a minute, and then we ask people how long did it take for that picture to come on the screen, they say three minutes, five minutes. Some people think it took eight minutes. So while we can't actually lengthen the human life, we can certainly make it feel much, much longer by slowing down the Internet.

BLOCK: Talk to slow netters, as they call themselves, and they invariably pay homage to the queen of the slow food movement. Alice Waters, owner of the restaurant Chez Panisse in Berkeley. Waters says she's thrilled to be the inspiration for slow Internet but not surprised.

Ms. ALICE WATERS (Owner, Chez Panisse): Well, I think it really relates because it's - the slow food movement is about how we live our lives, how we want to live our lives. And so it's just sort of the natural extension to go into the Internet in that way.

(Soundbite of song, "Love Me Longtime")

(Soundbite of modem)

BLOCK: And the slow netters have this new anthem from the band OK Go.

Mr. DAMIAN KULASH (Singer): That song is called "Love Me Longtime." It's about the Internet when it was a more tactile experience, you know, when it actually took something to be on the Internet.

(Soundbite of song, "Love Me Longtime")

Mr. KULASH: (Singing) Love me with that Commodore 64. And though the world may forget, she's still living on Telnet. And her tattoo says Abort, Retry, Ignore...

BLOCK: That's OK Go's frontman Damian Kulash. Along with his love of vinyl and vintage mics and amps, he feels a deep, almost primal connection to dial-up.

Mr. KULASH: That sound, that - (imitates modem) like, I think it's like The Beatles must have been to my parents. It calls back out all of the rage and lust and hormones of my youth. It's like a really powerful sound.

BLOCK: Now, Damian Kulash admits he loves connectivity and immediacy as much as the next guy. After all, OK Go's clever music videos have gone viral with tens of millions of views on YouTube. But, he says, the slow Internet movement has liberated the band to innovate in all kinds of ways.

Mr. KULASH: I've been experimenting with wax cylinders and, you know, with a vinyl lathe. I'm trying actually to cut my own records. It's really opened my ears to a new type of audio.

BLOCK: That's Damian Kulash, frontman for OK Go and for the slow Internet movement. You can hear the full version of "Love Me Longtime" at our website. That's <http://www.npr.org>.

And the band says if you send them a self-addressed stamped padded envelope, they'll send you an 8-track.

(Soundbite of song, "Love Me Longtime")

Mr. KULASH: (Singing) And once you turned the cassette drive on, I knew we'd be a while. Love me, love me, love me, love me longtime. Me love you longtime. Love me, love me, love me, love me longtime. Me love you longtime.

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