
From The Times

December 16, 2008

Downloads undermine UK television and film

Film and TV producers call for action to stop illegal online file-sharing

Sir, We are a group of UK film and TV producers, directors and writers who have made some of the UK's most innovative and distinctive moving pictures and television programming. Our output entertains millions of people, employs tens of thousands in the UK's creative sector, attracts foreign direct investment, wins awards and creates billions in revenue.

We are very concerned that the successes of the creative industries in the UK are being undermined by the illegal online file-sharing of film and TV content. At a time when so many jobs are being lost in the wider economy, it is especially important that this issue be taken seriously by the Government and that it devotes the resources necessary to enforce the law.

In 2007, an estimated 98 million illegal downloads and streams of films took place in the UK, while it is believed that more than six million people illegally file-share regularly. In relation to illegal downloads of TV programmes, the UK is the world leader, with up to 25 per cent of all online TV piracy taking place in the UK. Popular shows are downloaded illegally hundreds of thousands of times per episode.

We are asking the Government to show its support by ensuring that internet service providers play their part in tackling this huge problem.

The creative economy — of which film and television is part — comprises 7 per cent of the total economy, and is growing faster than any other sector. This is partly due to the ability of film and TV producers and their sponsors to continue contributing to the economy, creating jobs, generating tax revenue, and securing a return on the investments they make — all of which is now threatened by the widespread availability of illegal, free content.

Internet service providers have the ability to change the behaviour of those customers who illegally distribute content online. They have the power to make significant change and to prevent their infrastructure from being used on a wholesale scale for illegal activity. If they are not prepared to act responsibly, they should be compelled to do so.

Sir Alan Parker, Ken Loach, Kenneth Branagh, Mike Leigh, Nick Hytner, Richard Curtis, Richard Eyre, Terry Jones, Jon Thoday, Howard Brenton, Peter Bennet-Jones, Robert Fox, Lynda La Plante, Allon Reich, Andrew Macdonald, Ann Skinner, Barnaby Thompson, Bharat Nalluri, Caroline Hewitt, Charlie Higson, Damian Jones, David Heyman, Duncan Kenworthy, Giles McKinnon, Graham Broadbent, Guard Brothers (Tom and Charlie), Hilary Bevan Jones, Iain Softley, Jim Sheridan, Joe Burn, John Madden, John Maybury, Jonathan Cavendish, Justin Chadwick, Liz Karlsen, Lloyd Levin, Luc Roeg, Lynne Ramsay, Marc Samuelson, Mark Huffam, Mark Mylod, Mary Richards, Michael Kuhn, Nicky Kentish Barnes, Paul Berrow, Pail McGuigan, Paul Webster, Paul Welland, Richard Jobson, Robert Jones, Robyn Slovo, Roger Michell, Rupert Sanders, Rupert Wyatt, Sarah Radclyffe, Simon Bosanquet, Simon Channing-Williams, Simon Curtis, Simon Mcburney, Simon Relph, Stephen Daldry, Stephen Woolley, Susanna White, Tristram Shapeero, John Willis, David Aukin, Jon Thoday, David Sproxtton, Murray Ferguson, Nicola Schindler, Jonny Persey, Andrew O'Connor, Andre Singer, David Strachen, Magnus Temple, Jed Mercurioo, Waldemar Januszczak, Jon Blair, Peter Berry, Ashley Pharoah, Matthew Graham, Ben Richards, Simon Beaufoy, Steve Morrison, Paul Smith, David Frank, Eileen Gallagher, Jimmy Mulville, Charles Wace, Roy Ackerman, Alison Rayson, Tim Haines, Jasper James, Daisy Goodwin, Alex Graham, Gareth Neame, Addison Creswell, Andy Harries, Mike Watts, Lucinda Whiteley, Malcolm Brinkworth, David Smith, William Burdett-Coutts, Tony Jordan, Sebastian Scott, Phil Morrow, Michael Waldman, Simon Nye, Frank Deasey, Peter Morgan, Bill Nicholson, Abi Morgan, Charlie Parsons, Peter Moffat and Simon Moore

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