



GrayZone Digest

May 1996

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Artists Actions

James Brown filed suit in a Manhattan federal court against four video companies for distributing bootleg films of his concerts. Videofilm Producers International Ltd., Heron Communications Inc., JCI Video and Kultur are accused of violating copyrights held by Brown and Warner/Chappell Music, Inc.

The alleged bootleg titles are "James Brown, Live In Concert", "James Brown and His Very Special Guest, B.B. King" and "James Brown, Admit One." The suit seeks unspecified damages.

(Reuters May 16, 1996)

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Worldwide Update

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Bulgaria

As part of a large anti-piracy campaign, Bulgaria has shut down an illegal compact disc factory known as SMC. Authorities from the National Investigative Service confiscated 13,000 CDs.

Since June 1995, the theft of intellectual property has been ruled a criminal act and Bulgaria has joined the Rome and Geneva conventions, which sets standards for protecting intellectual copyright.

(Reuters 5/20/96)

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China

Attempting to avert a multi-billion dollar trade war, piracy talks have begun in Beijing between U.S. Trade negotiator Lee Sands and Beijing officials.

U.S. officials claim dozens of Chinese factories are producing millions of counterfeit music product, computer software and videos, many for export, at an estimated cost to the U.S. trade industry of \$2.3 billion this year alone. Beijing denies these charges and claims that its protection of intellectual copyright is unrivaled. Chinese officials also claim the U.S. is using the dispute to criticize Chinese ideology, which has strong roots

in Communist beliefs.

Commencing June 17, the U.S. said it will put new tariffs on \$2 billion worth of Chinese products. Beijing responded by unveiling a list of U.S. goods to be slapped with retaliatory tariffs. Motion picture, music, computer software and the textile industries applauded the U.S. trade action but importers and retailers said the move will hurt the U.S. consumer.

Trade officials scheduled a public hearing June 6 and 7 to give industries and other interested parties the opportunity to comment on the sanctions.
(Reuters May 9 / May 22, 1996)

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France

British manufacturers were arrested selling pirate CDs at a Paris record fair. Among seized items was a Bruce Springsteen collection with a bogus Columbia Records logo.
(Live Magazine - May 1996)

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Ireland

Microsoft will launch an anti-piracy campaign in Ireland, which has a piracy rate almost double that of the European average, according to the U.S. based Business Software Alliance. The enforcement effort will focus on computer dealers selling pre-loaded pirated software on hard drives.
(The Know-How Report May 1996 Vol. 1 Num. 4)

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Mexico

President Ernesto Zedillo has promised to revive a committee to meet with American officials to monitor intellectual property protections, after a meeting with Bill Gates, chairman of Microsoft.

There is also pressure on the Mexican government by the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) to take action against video piracy.
(The Know-How Report May 1996, Vol. 1 No. 4)

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Singapore

In a series of anti-piracy raids coordinated by the Commercial Crime department of the National Police, 5,800 CD-ROMs worth \$700,000 were seized.
(The Know-How Report May 1996, Vol. 1 No. 4)

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Taiwan

In an attempt to overcome its reputation for allowing flagrant piracy, Taiwanese officials arrested individuals selling CD-ROMs loaded with pirated software. They also discovered a significant manufacturing operation while arresting three other individuals. Computer software seizures totaled \$74 million U.S. dollars.
(Reuters April, 30 1996)

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Internet

Washington

A Senate Judiciary Committee chaired by Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), were told of rampant copyright violations on the Internet. Ken Kay, head of Creative Incentive Coalition, a group whose membership includes Motion Picture Association of America, Recording Industry Association of America, and the National Cable Television Association demonstrated how books, a Mariah Carey video and snippets of "Return Of The Jedi" are already illegally available on the Internet.
(Reuters May 8, 1996)

By May 22nd, the House had canceled a scheduled vote for a second time, on a bill sponsored by Carlos Moorehead (R-Calif) to protect artists from piracy on the Internet. The bill has been stalled due to a "black box" amendment dealing with products that can be used to encourage copyright theft. Prospects for legislation this year are slim due to the short legislative year, the election and a continuing dispute between the Internet service providers and the copyright community over liability.
(Reuters May 22, 1996)

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