



NZFACT

NEW ZEALAND FEDERATION AGAINST COPYRIGHT THEFT



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

12 JUNE, 2007

INSIDE MAN FOUND GUILTY OF THEFT AND COPYRIGHT CHARGES

**“SIONE’S WEDDING” PIRATE CAUSED AN ALLEGED HALF A MILLION
DOLLARS DAMAGES TO NZ FILM INDUSTRY**

Auckland: On June 12th Mr Freddie Junior Higgins, of Auckland, was found guilty on three charges for pirating the New Zealand made hit movie “Sione’s Wedding”.

Speaking after the guilty verdict at Auckland District Court today, “Sione’s Wedding” Producer and Chief Executive of South Pacific Pictures, John Barnett, said, “We’re very happy that we have found the originating source of the theft and illegal distribution of “Sione’s Wedding”, and the judge’s summing up supported our own suppositions.”

Tony Eaton, Executive Director of the New Zealand Federation Against Copyright Theft (NZFACT) said, “New Zealanders have worked hard to build a film business that has produced some of the world’s best loved films, and we are thankful that the courts have taken seriously any threat to our legitimate creative industry.”

While “Sione’s Wedding” went on to record the biggest opening weekend of any New Zealand film, ahead of “Whale Rider” and “The World’s Fastest Indian”, Barnett estimates that the pirated copies cost an estimated \$300,000 in lost box office returns to the company and a further \$200,000 in DVD sales.

38-year-old Higgins, who worked as an employee of the post production house Digital Post Limited, was found guilty under The Crimes Act of two Theft charges relating to the theft of a blank DVD disc and a “submaster” copy that contained the hit movie “Sione’s Wedding”. Higgins was also convicted under the Copyright Act of the distribution of the submaster copy of “Sione’s Wedding”.

On the 27 February 2006, prior to the release of “Sione’s Wedding” in cinemas throughout New Zealand, a counterfeit copy of the movie was found in general circulation, and was handed over to South Pacific Pictures. Police and investigators from South Pacific Pictures, with support from the New Zealand Federation Against Copyright Theft (NZFACT), subsequently conducted an inquiry that resulted in Higgins being charged.

Higgins is due to be sentenced on 18 July 2007.

Penalties for copyright offences carry a maximum five years imprisonment and/or up to \$150,000 per offence.

Piracy in New Zealand

A study undertaken by independent research firm LEK Consulting on behalf of the Motion Picture Association (MPA) showed that piracy cost the film industry in New Zealand an estimated 25 percent of the potential market in 2005 – \$70 million. Internet piracy via P2P file-sharing networks is a significant concern and accounts for the majority of New Zealand movie industry losses – an estimated \$33 million in lost consumer spending in 2005. NZFACT represents the MPA in New Zealand.

Piracy in Asia-Pacific

In 2006, the MPA's operations in the Asia-Pacific region investigated more than 30,000 cases of piracy and assisted law enforcement officials in conducting nearly 12,400 raids. These activities resulted in the seizure of more than 35 million illegal optical discs, 50 factory optical disc production lines and 4,482 optical disc burners, as well as the initiation of more than 11,000 legal actions.

About NZFACT: The New Zealand Federation Against Copyright Theft was established in 2005 by the Motion Picture Association to protect the film industry in New Zealand from the adverse impact of copyright theft. NZFACT works closely with its members, government and enforcement authorities to protect the New Zealand film and television industry, retailers and movie fans. NZFACT members include: Buena Vista International, Inc.; Paramount Pictures Corporation; Sony Pictures Releasing International Corporation; Twentieth Century Fox International Corporation; Universal International Films, Inc.; and Warner Bros. Pictures International, a division of Warner Bros. Pictures Inc. NZFACT works in association with the Motion Picture Association, which represents the interests of the film industry across the world. NZFACT also has an alliance with the Recording Industry Association of New Zealand to share information regarding copyright infringement, and is a member of the recently-formed Anti Counterfeiting Group, which represents the interests of New Zealand's major intellectual property stakeholders, such as the music industry, computer software and publishing. NZFACT has a nationwide hotline that enables the reporting of film copyright theft 24 hours a day, 7 days a week: 0800 267 9744.

About the MPA: The Motion Picture Association (MPA) represents the interests of major motion picture companies in the global marketplace. On behalf of its Member Companies, the MPA conducts investigations around the world, assists with the criminal and civil litigation generated by such cases, and conducts education outreach programs to teach movie fans around the world about the harmful effects of piracy. The MPA directs its worldwide anti-piracy operations from its headquarters based in Encino, California and has regional offices located in Brussels (Europe, Middle East and Africa), São Paulo (Latin America), Montreal (Canada) and Singapore (Asia-Pacific). The MPA's anti-piracy activities have helped to transform entire markets from pirate to legitimate, benefiting video distributors, retailers, and foreign and local filmmakers alike. The MPA Member Companies include: Buena Vista International, Inc.; Paramount Pictures Corporation; Sony Pictures Releasing International Corporation; Twentieth Century Fox International Corporation; Universal International Films, Inc.; and Warner Bros. Pictures International, a division of Warner Bros. Pictures Inc.

For more information, contact:

Tony EATON

Executive Director

New Zealand Federation Against Copyright Theft

Ph 09 479 1602

Tony.Eaton@nzfact.co.nz

