



NEW ZEALAND FEDERATION AGAINST COPYRIGHT THEFT



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Sione's Wedding pirate sentenced to 300 hours community service
"Inside man caused an alleged half million dollars
in damages to NZ film industry"

Auckland: Mr Freddie Junior Higgins, of Auckland, was today sentenced to 300 hours of community service for stealing a pre-production copy of the New Zealand made hit movie "Sione's Wedding".

Speaking after the sentencing, "Sione's Wedding" Producer and Chief Executive of South Pacific Pictures, John Barnett, said, "The significant issue was the Court's determination that he was guilty of theft. Clearly he does not have the resources to make good the damage that has been done, and in this case, a prison term would not be appropriate, given the particular circumstances. However, he has paid a very high price at a personal level. There is no question that this case has raised the public awareness of the massive cost of piracy to the community as a whole."

Tony Eaton, Executive Director of the New Zealand Federation Against Copyright Theft (NZFACT) said, "This is the first time a New Zealander has been convicted of stealing a pre-production version of a movie. The creative endeavours of New Zealand's filmmakers require an immense commitment of time and money, but all this is under threat unless the copyright in the creative content can be protected. Movie pirates will continue to be prosecuted wherever we find them."

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, investigators came across the first pirated copy of the movie and handed it 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 exhaustive inquiry that resulted in the arrest of Higgins.

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.

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