

For Immediate Release
Aug 25, 2006

NEW ZEALAND MOVIE PIRATE SENTENCED TO TWO YEARS IMPRISONMENT

First Prison Sentence Awarded for Movie Piracy Under Copyright Act

Auckland – On August 25, the Manukau District Court sentenced 42-year-old John Houston to two years imprisonment for illegally copying and distributing pirated copies of movies. Judge David Harvey also ruled that Houston would have to pay the New Zealand Federation Against Copyright Theft (NZFACT) reparations of NZ\$5,000 (US\$3,175). On July 5, Houston pleaded guilty to 21 charges of illegally copying and distributing pirated copies of movies.

Houston was arrested on November 8, 2005 following a raid on his home, during which police, accompanied by NZFACT representatives, discovered 10 optical disc burners connected to a server with a one terabyte (1,024 gigabyte) storage capacity. Four hundred and eighty-six movie “masters” were stored on the server.

Police caught Houston in the act of burning pirate discs and discovered pirated optical discs infringing hundreds of NZFACT member company titles. Records were also found showing admissions made that Houston had earned between \$120,000 and \$150,000 per year for each of the past five years.

On August 23, Judge Harvey sentenced a music pirate to the first prison term awarded for violations of New Zealand’s Copyright Act. The ruling handed down to Houston today is the second prison sentence awarded for violations of the Copyright Act.

“This result today has come after a lengthy and collaborative investigation by NZFACT, the Police and the Department of Internal Affairs. NZFACT is serious about protecting our member companies’ Intellectual Property Rights and we welcome the decision given down by Judge Harvey today,” said Tony Eaton, Executive Director of NZFACT.

In his August 23 ruling, Judge Harvey said, “It should be made perfectly clear to those who are going to be engaged in commercial copyright infringement that if

they are going to embark on this type of activity there will be consequences, that they will be severe, and that if there are going to be downstream consequences for their families then so be it. That this type of activity cannot be allowed to continue and the message must be sent.”

Piracy in Asia-Pacific

In 2005, the MPA’s operations in the Asia-Pacific region investigated more than 34,000 cases of piracy and assisted law enforcement officials in conducting more than 10,500 raids. These activities resulted in the seizure of more than 34 million illegal optical discs, 55 factory optical disc production lines and 3,362 optical disc burners, as well as the initiation of more than 8,000 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: Village Roadshow Limited; 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.*

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:

Mike Ellis
MPA Asia-Pacific
65-6253-1033

Margaret Fu
MPA Asia-Pacific
852-2785-8677

Tony Eaton
NZFACT
09 479 1602
tony@nzfact.co.nz