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RIAA files additional lawsuits

The recording industry's latest round of legal action pertaining to file sharing will target college students

By Steven Neuman
News Reporter

The Recording Industry Association of America announced on March 23 a new round of copyright violation lawsuits, this time specifically targeting college students.

The RIAA issued a total of 532 subpoenas, including 89 targeting individual college students who allegedly used university networks to distribute copyrighted sound recordings on peer-to-peer services.

The lawsuits affect students at 21 different schools in Arizona; California; Colorado; Indiana; Maryland; Michigan; New York; Pennsylvania; Tennessee; Washington, D.C. and Wisconsin.

The RIAA is also implementing the "John Doe" litigation process again, a strategy used to sue defendants whose names are not known. In the past year the organization has repeatedly targeted individual users of peer-to-peer file sharing programs — such as KaZaA, BearShare and LimeWire — that allow users to trade digital media content.

RIAA President Cary Sherman said in a press release that the music industry's current actions are a matter of enforcing music copyright laws and making a point.

"It's important for everyone to understand that no one is immune from

the consequences of illegally 'sharing' music files on P2P networks," Sherman said in the release. "Piracy, which is particularly rampant on college campuses, continues to hurt retailers, musicians, producers, record labels and the thousands of less-celebrated individuals involved in making music."

Although legal sources for buying music on the Internet such as Apple Computer's iTunes Music Store have proven popular, illegal downloads still persist despite repeated litigation by the RIAA.

Sunil Karia, a senior studying economics, switched from peer-to-peer downloading to pay services last year.

"I'm fine with (free downloads) if an artist is fine with it," Karia said. "I didn't agree with the RIAA, but I definitely saw some of the truth in their argument. I found some of my favorite bands by downloading illegally my freshman year, but there's something to be said about having a CD case with all the art."

According to Sherman, the lawsuits are not motivated by profit.

"It undermines the ability of the music community to invest in the great, up-and-coming artists of tomorrow — a real loss, especially for fans who look for fresh, new music," Sherman said in the release.

But sophomore business student Will Richard said he feels that the RIAA is motivated by greed.

"For them to attack innocent college students who are just evolving with the music industry makes no sense," he said. "If the RIAA is saying they're protecting the little guy they're flat-out lying. If you go to places like

Further.net where the artists give their permission to let fans download, they're not big names. That is proof to me that they're not out to help anyone but themselves."

The success of lawsuits against unnamed downloaders has come into question, however.

NPD, a business that tracks Internet traffic, reported that shortly before the initial round of individual lawsuits in September 2003, two in three households had at least one digital music file. The survey also found that more than half of U.S. homes had more than 50 songs and 8 percent of all households had more than 1,000 songs.

In January 2004, a follow-up report concluded that illegal Internet music downloads had increased since the lawsuits. The number of U.S. households downloading music from peer-to-peer networks rose 6 percent in October and 7 percent in November, according to the study. This rise in activity followed a decline in downloads that lasted six months.

For Richard, the lawsuits are also an example of unfair business practices that stifle commerce.

"For them to complain about people sharing their music is completely unjustified in today's society. The way capitalism works, companies have always had to deal with competition to survive and, to me companies like Napster and KaZaA are just competition to the music industry," Richard said.

Contact the business/science/technology reporter at stevenneuman@dailyemerald.com.

Activists to speak on campus

The aging Weathermen strive to educate younger activists about the history of protest in America

By Lennon Bergland
Freelance Reporter

Former members of the Weathermen, a radical anti-war group, will be on campus today and Saturday as a part of a two-day program that includes workshops on peace and social activism, a discussion and a showing of the Academy Award-nominated documentary "The Weather Underground."

The film will be shown in 180 PLC today at 7 p.m. The discussion following the film will look at social activism during the Vietnam War and how it relates to young people post-Sept. 11.

The first of Saturday's workshops, sponsored by the UO Survival Center, will run from 10 a.m. until noon with the theme of "Looking Backward:

Lessons for Activists from the Antiwar Movement." The second workshop, entitled "Looking Forward: Building Progressive Unity and Effectiveness in the Post 9/11 World," runs from 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

The documentary, by Sam Green and Bill Siegel, chronicles the Weathermen's emergence and impact in a world shaken by war and revolution. It documents the Weathermen, who got their name from a Bob Dylan lyric, as they split from the larger, more peaceful Students for a Democratic Society.

"The Weathermen isolated themselves," former member Carolyn Knox said. "We lost touch with the bigger movement."

The Weathermen were responsible for bombing numerous government buildings and monuments during the '60s and '70s to protest the United States' involvement in the Vietnam War and other policies. Their ultimate goal, according to Mark Rudd, a

leader of the movement and principal figure in the film, was the violent overthrow of the U.S. government.

"Our government was murdering 3 to 5 million people," Rudd said in the documentary. "This revelation was more than we could handle."

The discussion and workshops will feature younger activists as well as short presentations by former members of the Weathermen.

"The film and discussion are especially aimed at today's younger activists who the filmmakers have discovered have very little knowledge of this chapter of the history of American protest and dissent," Weathermen representative Steve Hecker said in a press release.

Rudd, Knox and former Weathermen members David Powell and Robin Marks-Fife are scheduled to speak during the discussions.

Lennon Bergland is a freelance reporter for the Emerald.



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