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Should Google Index Pirate Websites?

With a simple search of the term "piracy" Google Gives me 30,100,000 results in 0.65 seconds, according to quick search. The results consist of countless articles on music and movie piracy, the SOPA and PIPA act, and sponsored articles by big industries to pound the idea into people's head just how evil you are to download files illegally. What if instead, we search the title of a song, for instance: "Livin' on a Prayer – Bon Jovi?" In order, I first see a Youtube video of the full song to listen to for free by a large music sponsor (Vevo). All is fine and well, but when I look at the Youtube sidebar at other related videos, I find quite a few reuploaded versions of the same song by complete Internet strangers. That can't be legal, right? Distributing a song, even if you payed for it is clearly illegal (RIAA), but these videos are several years old and haven't been taken down. We'll come back to this later. Onto the next page of result, we have a misshapen Wikipedia article, links to Soundcloud, iTunes, Vevo again, and a bunch of lyric websites. After scrolling away to the 17th results page, I found the first MP3 download website. Sites like these are infamous and spread like a virus after the copyright apocalypse sites Limewire and Napster became popular. You can find nearly every piece of audio ever recorded somewhere now. If I searched "Livin' on a Prayer MP3" I get 410,000 results in .69 seconds to pirate the song without buying it. I obviously cannot cite these sources.

One of the most famous court cases against Internet piracy was one by A&M Records against Napster. A&M was furious that music being published by them was being released by competitors for nothing. As a result, A&M sued big time to reimburse the hundreds of artists of whose work they've published. This issue brought to light the less immediate effects of buying music for free. Artists and companies never received money they would have, and should have otherwise had.

At first it seemed like a noble cause, no one wants to make their favorite artists to go broke, so that idea alone, in addition to the threats of years in jail were enough to deter average joes from downloading a quick free MP3. This is a failed guilt tactic however, record musicians make several millions a year, and record labels even moreso. They are hard to sympathize with considering how much they make in proportion to their work. Opinions and biases aside, artists are losing money, and users are committing crimes. So what can be done? It has become such a global problem because of its ease, and by the sheer number of disguise pirate sites alone that appear so innocent you may not even know you have done anything wrong. This raises a philosophical question: If everyone is committing a crime, do you make the crime legal, or do you simply arrest everyone? Neither of these are options, and baning all sites that offer downloads is implausible. The Stop Online Piracy Act was devised as a way of filtering out what people could see, but people very quickly turned against this en masse, seeing it as a threat to Internet freedom.

Because all it takes is one person to upload the file, but millions to download it, uploaders are often targets, sometimes being forced to pay up for lost revenue. Also impossible. No single person could ever pay back 1 million dollars so the only options are 3 generations of unpayed slavehood; an even worse solution.

The core problem Is that Internet technology is developing faster than the laws that attempt to govern it. Countless sites host illegal and semi-illegal files. To clarify by "semi-illegal" I mean media such as video game soundtracks that are owned by the video game company or an individual artist, but not for sale under normal circumstances and as a result do not have a set price as stand alone music. Even worse are mass file sharing via P2P (Peer to peer) and FTP (File Transfer Protocol) programs such as Filezilla™ as well as the use of encrypted files like torrents that make tracking downloads near impossible (Michael Sirivianos et al.). These are also not small groups of people, the lot of piracy is not even indexed at all. 1,000 to 2,000 times the normal amount of pirated files are accessible only by private means, such as the deep web. (Journal of Electronic Publishing)

What it all boils down to is the law, in addition to ethics. This is not a grey area when it comes to downloading copyrighted material, how illegal it feels is irrelevant because as we all know, ignorance of the law is no excuse. It is not stealing, it is simply piracy, and it is against the law. I rest my case.

Work Cited

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