

RIAA offers pirates amnesty, sues others

By Alex Veiga
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES — The recording industry filed hundreds of lawsuits Monday accusing individual music lovers of illegally downloading and sharing songs over the Internet.

The lawsuits, which had been expected, underscore the industry's increasing aggressiveness in cracking down on the trading of pirated music files over file-sharing networks such as Kazaa.

The 261 lawsuits were filed in federal courts around the country by the Recording Industry Association of America on behalf of its members, which include Universal Music Group, BMG, EMI, Sony Music and Warner Music. More waves of lawsuits were expected, and the total could eventually reach the thousands, the RIAA said.

"Nobody likes playing the heavy and having to resort to litigation," RIAA president Cary Sherman said in a statement. "But when your product is being regularly stolen, there comes a time when you have to take appropriate action."

The music industry says file-sharing is a violation of copyright laws and blames the practice for a 31 percent decline in compact disc music sales in the last three years, which have dropped 31 percent since mid-2000. The individuals sued Monday were sharing, on average, more than 1,000 songs each, the group said.

The recording industry also announced an amnesty program for people who admit they illegally share music online. They must, among other things, promise to delete any illegally downloaded music and not partici-

pate in illegal file-trading again.

Individuals targeted by Monday's lawsuits would be ineligible.

In June, the industry announced that it would target hundreds of individual computer users who illegally share music files, hoping to cripple online piracy by suing fans.

The announcement came just weeks after U.S. appeals court rulings requiring Internet providers to readily identify subscribers suspected of illegally sharing music and movie files.

"... When your product is being regularly stolen, there comes a time when you have to take ... action."

— Cary Sherman
RIAA president

Earlier, the recording industry association sued four college students it accused of making thousands of songs available for illegal downloading on campus networks. The group settled those cases for \$12,500 to \$17,000 each.

Monday's lawsuits resulted from subpoenas sent to Internet service providers and others seeking to identify roughly 1,600 people the group believes engaged in illegal music sharing.

Sen. Norm Coleman, R-Minn., chairman of the Senate Governmental Affairs' Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, has promised hearings on the industry's use of copyright subpoenas to track downloaders.

Coleman has expressed concerns that the campaign could ensnare innocent people, such as parents and grandparents whose children and grandchildren are using their computers to download music. He also said some downloaders themselves might not know they are breaking the law.

U.S. copyright laws allow for damages of \$750 to \$150,000 for each song offered illegally on a person's computer, but the industry group has said it would be open to settlement proposals from defendants.

Amnesty proposal not a realistic solution

For many college students, the Recording Industry Association of America is an unimportant body. But for Internet file sharers, many of whom are college

students, the RIAA has come to represent the bad guys in its showdown with individual Internet users over the common practice of file sharing.

The music and movie swapping giant Napster was successfully sued by the RIAA and the Motion Picture Association of America in 2001, forcing the company to cease making its online file-swapping services available to users. But since then, the RIAA has had little success suing other file-sharing services such as Kazaa, which has forced the recording industry to take aim at individual file sharers. So far, 1,600 people — representing the worst file-sharing offenders — have fallen under the industry's gun and are facing subpoenas.

But it is impossible to sue everybody, which is exactly what the RIAA must be thinking. The RIAA announced yesterday its plans to grant amnesty to repentant music and movie downloaders, but only after announcing that it would sue 261 more file swappers. As terms of the RIAA's proposed agreement, file sharers not wanting to be sued by the group would have to sign a notarized form admitting to illegal file swapping and agree to delete music files from their hard drives and never illegally trade files again. For most music sharers, this will be a hard pill to swallow.

It is presumptuous and arrogant for the RIAA to make such a proposition, as there is no guarantee it could successfully prosecute every-one who has ever illegally shared or

TECH Perspectives
George Deutsch



downloaded files, assuming all these people found. And even if people do sign the agreement, the record industry cannot guarantee that its terms are being met.

The recording industry is operating under the assumption that file sharers fear its many lawsuits, which may not be true. With the exception of the Napster suit, the RIAA hasn't had tremendous success stopping file sharing. For example, the parent companies of both Morpheus and Kazaa were able to beat RIAA lawsuits this year; Kazaa in the Netherlands and Morpheus in the United States. Many suits still remain unresolved, but the fact that Kazaa and Morpheus are still up and running is enough to show that not everyone fears the recording industry. This amnesty offer will only reinforce the belief that there is little the RIAA can do to punish file swappers. The agreement reeks of desperation.

The RIAA also neglected to mention an important point: the group does not represent every copyright holder whose property is being illegally shared. So just because a given file sharer signs the RIAA amnesty agreement does not mean he won't be sued. It just means he won't be sued by the recording industry.

That fact seems to be worth mentioning

on the part of the RIAA.

In fact, it remains to be seen whether any of the 1,600 names under subpoena will even be penalized and, if so, to what degree. Without the conviction of the 1,600, some of which were the ones sued yesterday, the RIAA's three lawsuits holds no weight. As the RIAA commands little respect from Internet users, as the music reaped from lawsuits doesn't benefit the musicians, but instead record labels.

The record industry's attempt to stop file sharing through an amnesty agreement will not work. The RIAA will continue to illegally share as long as CDs are overpriced, it will take more than a desperate plea bargain to change that.



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NASA

practical

By Mark
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SPACE CHALLENGE — NASA said it will shuttle a satellite to space sometime next month. The mission will essentially be a test flight, with astronauts and their ship and techniques to another Columbia.

The space shuttle mission is short on time. NASA decided to set of six or seven normal-length flights a week and a half overdue repair national space program.

"If we're going to take all this risk to get that, we ought to make sure that those things that the international community because if we do things, it raises the stakes," said Bill Shuttle program.

No firm launch date for the next shuttle. But in all likelihood, it will deliver a fresh station as originally planned.

Instead, the shuttle is being damaged, using the shuttle and practicing repairs.

Other objections to the shuttle program will take a while. William Readdy, commander of the shuttle program, said he may not represent the shuttle program as it was in 1981, a two-

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CHICAGO — A study of white teenagers used tanning beds, finding an alarming number of skin cancer cases. The study found that 20 percent of the teenagers used tanning beds, and 19 percent of those who used tanning beds had skin cancer.

Twenty-eight percent of the teenagers used tanning beds three or more times a week, the study found. The study was published in the journal *Archives of Dermatology* and reported by the Associated Press.

"Teenagers are the sad part of the skin cancer problem. Their skin will look like a sunburn after a dermatologist said Dr. Ted D'Amico at Nassau University Medical Center in New York, who was the lead researcher.

The study was published in the *Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics* & *Journal of the American Medical Association* Monday.

The Case Western Reserve University researchers and who answered the survey on adolescent skin cancer.

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