

Hollywood is afraid of people in theaters with camcorders. They want to pass laws so that bad, bad people like Kramer and Jerry Seinfeld can't grow cottage industries selling us wobbly movies with the sound of breathing on the soundtrack, pressed on DVDs and sold for 5 or 10 dollars on street corners.

I look at this tiny, tiny industry and ask why would people buy these DVDs ?

I don't think it's the price point of studio released DVDs. The street versions are cheaper, but usually by only 5 or 10 dollars. IMHO, the reason people buy the DVDs on the street is that they are available. If you can't make it to the theater to see a movie all your friends are talking about, why not buy it downtown on the way home from work?

The same applies to downloading. It's a hassle to download and watch a movie. First, it's going to take a few hours, once you find a good copy that can start downloading. Then you find yourself with a copy of the movie that not only is wobbly and not quite right, but only fills up half your screen.

Furthermore, if you used a bit torrent client to get it, rather than doing other work online while you are downloading, the bittorrent client is already using that bandwidth to upload the file segment you have, to others who want it. You may not write a check to download, but it's certainly not free (Unless of course you work for a technology company. In this case you would consider the cost of bandwidth and CPU cycles you are giving away the equivalent of stock options, and therefore free and not expensable).

So Hollywood has a choice. They can change their business model of windowed distribution of movies and significantly impede any potential impact of camcording and internet downloads. How?

They can release DVDs day and date with their theatrical release. Let the customer consume the movie exactly the way the customer wants to get it. What a concept. Shocking isn't it.

Or, they can keep the status quo and spend lots and lots of taxpayer dollars filling up our courts suing websites and kids. Of course suing and complaining means there is always going to be an excuse if business doesn't go well.

One of the nice things about being one of the owners of the [Landmark Theaters](#), [HDNet](#), [Magnolia Pictures](#) and [HDNet Films](#) with really smart partners, is that we can and will put our customers first and deliver our original movies in theaters, on DVD and on HDNet the exact same day. Our first movie, Enron – Ask Why, was selected to be in the Sundance Documentary Competition. So stay tuned!

But I digress. Picking on Hollywood some more... There is always a reason why their transition to new technologies has been slow. One of the repetitive themes is that there is a big risk in having a digital copy of a program or movie available because the quality is nearly as good as the original. That fear brought us the stupidity of the Broadcast Flag. It brought threats not to offer programming in High Def. Not that long ago, it was a threat not to offer programming and movies on DVD! All for fear of near original quality hitting the masses.

So imagine my surprise when I go to the newstand and pick up a magazine that I won't name, and I see ads for pristine 35mm prints of newer movies that have yet to be released on DVD.

I have been buying this same publication for the past 6 years. I started buying it not because I'm a movie collector, but because during the broadcast.com days, it was a great source of public domain movies and programs that we would host for streaming.

It was possible to buy the 35mm prints, in pristine condition, back then. It's still possible today. To paraphrase Monty Python: If I were so inclined, I could purchase one of those rubbery, I mean film prints, of Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow, or I Robot, or Hero with Jet Li, for 700 bucks a pop. I have my choice of places to buy Terminator 3, should I so desire. (this is where you all go 'YES, YES') Then I could take my lovely film to any of the many transfer houses and have it converted to DVD, HD, VHS wherever my proclivities take me. Or if perversion were my thing, I could just have them put it on a hard drive in any manner of codec.

If TV were my passion, I could call or email one of several advertisers offering my choice of 25 THOUSAND tv shows available for 14.95. Less, if I ordered in volume.

Of course, with every ad, there are those magic words that make everything alright.

"No Rights Implied or Given."

So collectors can purchase, own, sell and replicate movies and programs all they want. Every movie, every tv show you could ever want is out there. Waiting for you. Just as it's been for at least 6 years.

Where is the outrage? Where is the furor? Who will stop all this madness?

Or maybe it's all illegal and Hollywood slipped this law by me.