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NIGERIAN ANTI-PIRACY INVESTIGATION LEADS TO HONG KONG ARRESTS & SEIZURES

Hong Kong - Customs officers and representatives of Hong Kong Film and Video Services Ltd. and the IFPI raided Hong Kong disc-mastering plant Winstep Technology Ltd. on Oct. 29, an outgrowth of a previous raid on music and movie pirates operating in Lagos, Nigeria.

“These raids underscore the global and organized nature of optical-disc piracy,” said Mike Ellis, the MPA’s senior vice president and regional director of the Asia Pacific Region. “Winning the international fight against copyright piracy will require constant and close collaboration with law-enforcement agencies such as the Hong Kong Customs Department. The MPA will continue to support great organizations like this department wherever and whenever needed.”

Customs officers arrested Winstep’s manager and sealed a laser-beam recorder valued at more than HK\$2 million (US\$257,345). The recorder burns digital versions of a movie or music recording onto glass master discs. Disc stampers then use those masters to manufacture tens of thousands of copies of a DVD or compact disc. Officers also seized a punching machine and three hard drives, equipment also used in disk replication. Winstep is Hong Kong’s first licensed optical-disc mastering factory to be raided on suspicion of manufacturing and distributing illegal copies of copyrighted movies and music.

The Hong Kong raid grew out of a June 17 raid in Lagos by Nigerian police working with representatives of the music industry and copyright associations to close a suspected music-piracy operation. Police seized 88 Video CD and CD stampers, 13 of which were used to make illegal copies of movie titles belonging to MPA member companies. The masters on those stampers are believed to have come from Winstep. The IFPI, which represents the music industry worldwide, coordinated with HKFVSL to assist Hong Kong Customs in the Winstep raid.

Piracy in Asia

MPA Member Companies lose an estimated US\$718 million in potential revenue annually in the Asia-Pacific region. Inadequate and ineffective copyright protection in the region is a major contributor to the losses.

In 2003, MPA investigators pursued nearly 15,500 piracy cases and participated in nearly 13,000 law-enforcement raids in the Asia-Pacific region. Those raids resulted in nearly 9,100 legal actions and the seizure of approximately 44 million illegal optical discs.

About HKFVSL: *Hong Kong Film and Video Services Limited is an organization representing the Motion Picture Association and its members in Hong Kong.*

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), Mexico City (Latin America), Montreal (Canada) and Hong Kong (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.; Columbia TriStar Film Distributors International Inc.; Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios Inc.; Paramount Pictures Corporation; Twentieth Century Fox International Corporation; Universal International Films, Inc.; and Warner Bros. Pictures International, a division of Warner Bros. Pictures Inc.*

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