

Starving creators

WELL WORTH a read as a compelling argument for copyright and for paying people to produce “content” is Chris Ruen’s well-researched rant “Fifteen years of utter bollocks: how a generation’s freeloading has starved creativity.” It is at www.newstatesman.com/culture/2014/07/fifteen-years-utter-bollocks-how-generation-s-freeloading-has-starved-creativity

Ruen admits that back in the days of illegal “file-sharing” sites like Napster (remember them?) he was one of the most enthusiastic illegal file-sharers – until he started working in a Brooklyn coffee shop where he met members of his favourite bands, who were suddenly just as poor as he was.

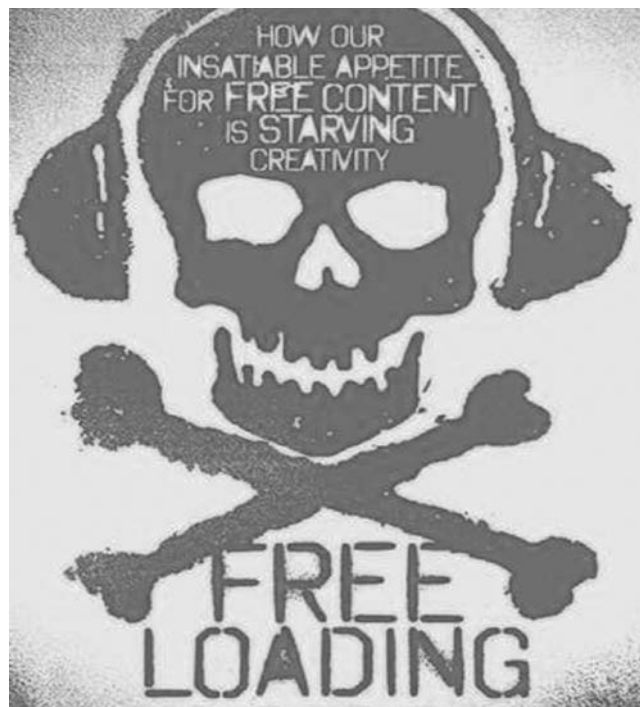
Says Ruen, “Once I realised that the great majority of artists and musicians actually needed their legal

rights enforced under copyright just to have the chance to break even, the usual excuses for digital piracy started to look like sophomoric drivel.” (The *Freelance* contacted Ruen and asked his permission to reproduce here the above quote, which he gave us. So not freeloading then, asking the creator nicely.)

He also looks into the myth that such file “sharing” sites are just “boundary-challenging adolescents swapping files with their friends,” and demonstrates how these are multi-billion dollar enterprises that attract investors.

The article also directs you to Ruen’s book *Freeloading: How our insatiable appetite for free content is starving creativity*, which looks in detail about whether anything can be done about such piracy

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Free Loading, Chris Ruen, ISBN 978-1921844294, £12.99 paper

A ten-point guide to not working for free

“No (wo)man but a blockhead ever wrote except for money.”
Samuel Johnson, April 5, 1776

1 First rule of working on a mates project for free – don’t do it!

2 Second rule of working on a mate’s project for free – don’t do it!

3 But, if you must, then make sure it’s a one-off and make said friend understands the enormous favour you are doing them.

4 Make sure you get something in return – entrance to events, free books to review, that sort of thing.

5 Do not do re-writes – if mate changes their mind about what they wanted in the first place and then requests massive changes that take up the entire day to work into the piece, do not be messed about.

6 Beware of mates who say no-one is being paid and that their mag would not exist unless people wrote or photographed for free: especially be careful of “arty” publications.

7 Be aware that someone on the project is most likely being paid. Always ask the question: why is a creative project refusing to pay their photographers or writers?

8 Warning! print-only magazines may switch formats, making it hard to prevent them putting your work online for a fee after you have donated it for nothing.

9 Beware legal liability. You are still vulnerable to libel, for example, even when working for free, and most likely the mag is not insured.

10 Working for free is bad for the self-esteem: always pitch and then deal!

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• The *Freelance* acknowledges the recursive irony inherent in publishing this user-generated content.

A soupçon of centimes...

Arguments in favour of paying workers more than just the minimum wage, while convincing, have often been less than entertaining in their presentation. Funny or Die’s Mary Poppins sketch, in which she explains to the children that she is leaving them because she is being paid only (US federal) minimum wage, is a brilliant exception. Watch it: www.funnyordie.com/videos/c2deb9a5e8/mary-poppins-quits-with-kristen-bell

How to get a Press Card

RENEWAL OF your NUJ press card has changed, and the *Freelance* thinks it probably worth repeating the information. There’s an online form for members, at bit.ly/NUJ-card. You’ll need to have your NUJ website username and password. If you’re not sure whether they sent you a new one when they recently

redesigned the NUJ website, call 020 7843 3705, ask to speak to Membership and tell them you’ve forgotten your password. Please do *not*, repeat *not*, ring the Freelance Office about Press Cards, nor the *Freelance* editor or assistant editor, especially not at their regular place of work – we can’t help.



(Right:) Taking this photo of my Press Card (with membership number obscured) reminded me it was about to expire
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Press Card design © Press Card Authority Ltd

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right of quotation, however, introduces ambiguity and uncertainty that will require legal clarification in the courts, costing rights holders legal fees and lost revenue.”

The measures were nevertheless passed. The Lords have also passed Statutory Instruments dealing with:

- so-called “extended collective licensing” – allowing, for example, the British Library to pay one fee to the collecting societies for putting certain works online; and
- licensing of orphan works – those

for whom an author cannot be found, after diligent search.

The chances of the House of Commons not passing these in the autumn seemed vanishingly small. Following dozens of consultation meetings with the Intellectual Property Office, they do contain important safeguards against abuse.

Other measures passed earlier this year provide for regulation of collecting societies.

This is especially important given that what the measure on extended collective licensing does is to set out

in detail how a collecting society could put a proposal to its members for a democratic vote on whether to offer such a licence to, for example, the British Library or the BBC for its archive programmes – or not.

On a brighter note, the NUJ and the European Federation of Journalists are arousing serious interest with officials in Westminster, Brussels and Geneva over the issue of the imposition of contracts. We have yet another Minister to deal with in the UK and are of course seeking meetings with her.