

Saturday, August 12, 2006

Digital Rights Management or Digital Restrictions Management?!?!?

The FCC has mandated that by early 2009, all television stations must begin broadcasting in digital format. This opens the way for both high definition broadcasts and DRM. DRM will change the way that people look at entertainment media.

Digital Rights Management (or DRM) is a technology that has been developed (and is in the process of being refined) to restrict the user's ability to access digital media content in ways other than the publisher chooses. While this may, at its face, seem like a good thing that will allow publishers to prevent theft of their products, such as bootlegging,... it has a far more sinister ramification. DRM will allow publishers to prevent television shows from being recorded for time-shifting purposes, prevent end-users from converting their entertainment into formats such as MP3s for use in portable devices, and can even allow entertainment media to be able to be "timed-out" requiring the payment of license fees for continued use. Imagine a world where you pay to download a song... to be played on your portable music device, and find that a month or two later, you must pay again if you want to continue listening to it. Because the file will be digital, it is even possible that the file and/or the players could delete it from your device once it reached its expiration date. Want to tape the latest episode of "24" so you can watch it when you get back from your child's high school basketball game??? Sorry,... that functionality just may be managed away... Software license fees are the first area where this is happening. Microsoft has recently included its Windows Genuine Advantage software (WGA), which has snuck into its latest updates. WGA phones home, without telling Windows users to alert Microsoft about users' software status. While the goal of this software is to prevent pirating of Windows software, the overall effect is to strong arm users into vendor lock-in. WGA also has a demonstrated tendency to give false alerts, increasing the likelihood that users will be locked out of their systems for false pretenses, having to pay license fees falsely or attempt to explain to tech support personnel what happened, hoping they will agree that it was a mistake. Imagine this happening just before an important business presentation... With entertainment, this will result in having to buy the same movie or song multiple times. It could also result in your DVD purchase being essentially just a glorified rental, which has to be re-activated by payment of a fee each time you choose to watch it. Do you want to move your songs or movies to your portable device to watch during a trip??? Well, there will be a separate license fee for that... Figure it will be less than a rental charge is currently???... maybe... but probably not much less... Digital Rights Management??? This is more like Digital Restrictions Management. It's not about protecting artists' rights, its about creating revenue streams. And the movie and recording industries will be forcing this on you whether you like it or not. Industry lobbying has created the DMCA (Digital Millenium Copyright Act), which makes it illegal to circumvent any software or electronic device in order to gain access to its content, OR even TALK about the method of circumventing it. They have even attempted to mandate by law that DRM technology be included in EVERY consumer electronic device. The only way consumers can prevent DRM from making our wallets open to the movie and recording industry, is to become educated and to refuse to "upgrade" to systems and devices that include these upcoming "features."

Posted by JaseP in Entertainment at 19:21

Thursday, March 3, 2005

Passion Recut -- Is watering down The Passion's violence the right choice???

Mel Gibson will be re-releasing The Passion for the viewing population for the upcoming Easter Holiday season. Is this the most appropriate course of action in response to the criticism that the violence in the film had received?

It seems that removing the scenes of the scourging of Christ in the movie is nothing more than an appeasement of the masses who would not watch the movie because of its violence. However, part of the power of The Passion was its violence. It was the first biblical film that portrayed the death of Jesus with such drama. Removing one of the very things that makes the message so powerful effectively neuters the film and makes it just a slightly more dramatic version of an event that has been portrayed by many other films in the past. For fans who do not want to see that level of violence, I would suggest averting your eyes. The very violence that you do not want to see is the very thing that should drive this Easter message home. Easter is not about bunny rabbits and colored eggs and sugar covered marshmallows. It is about a tremendous sacrifice that Jesus Christ made on the Cross and his Resurrection and Ascension. The message is not about feeling good that Christ did not suffer. The message is about feeling good that he suffered that much for us. Let's keep The Passion uncut, shall we???

Posted by JaseP in Entertainment at 11:52