

Star Wars bootleggers face retribution

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Pirates peddling bootlegged copies of the just-released Star Wars: Episode III: Revenge of the Sith will be tracked down and caught, Hollywood's chief lobbyist warned.

The stern words from Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) president Dan Glickman came as the final instalment of the 28-year-old Star Wars franchise opened on screens in countries across the world.

Even as cinemas played the film for the legions of fans who have been anxiously awaiting its release, some file-swapping Web sites claimed to already have copies of the film.

"Fans have been lined up for days to see Revenge of the Sith," Glickman said.

"To preserve the quality of movies for fans like these and so many others, we must stop these Internet thieves from illegally trading valuable copyrighted materials on-line.

"My message to illegal file-swappers everywhere is plain and simple: You are stealing, it is wrong and you are not anonymous," said Glickman.

Pirating movies, such as George Lucas's final Star Wars offering, hits the cinema industry hard, costing jobs and thwarting innovation and creativity, he said.

Glickman said that an average movie cost US\$98 million (AU\$128.91 million) to make and market and that fewer than one in 10 films managed to recoup their investment from ticket sales, while six in 10 never manage to cover their costs.

"If piracy and those who profit from it are allowed to flourish, they will erode an engine of economic growth and job creation; undermine legitimate businesses that strive to unite technology and content in innovative and legal ways and limit quality and consumer choice," Glickman said.

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