COPYRIGHT CRIMINALS

A FILM PRODUCED BY BENJAMIN FRANZEN AND KEMBREW MCLEOD

Can you own a sound? As hip-hop rose from the streets of New York to become a multibillion-dollar industry, artists such as Public Enemy and De La Soul began reusing parts of previously recorded music for their songs. But when record company lawyers got involved everything changed. Years before people started downloading and remixing music, hip-hop sampling sparked a debate about copyright, creativity and technological change that still rages today.

PLANNING A SCREENING

Topics and Issues Relevant to COPYRIGHT CRIMINALS

As you plan your screening, you might consider finding speakers, panelists, or discussion leaders who have expertise in one or more of the following areas:

- Hip-hop music and culture
- Copyright law
- Intellectual property issues
- The recording industry
- Fair use applications
- New digital technologies
- Music education
- Freedom of expression

As You Plan Your Event

A screening of COPYRIGHT CRIMINALS can be used to spark interest in any of the topics listed above, as well as to inspire individual and community action. Using the checklist below will help ensure a high quality/high impact event.

Set realistic goals.
Will you host a single screening or use the film to spur ongoing efforts? Will you steer a panel or discussion toward a specific topic or let the participants pursue whatever issues they choose? Be sure to include your event partners in the decision-making process. Being clear about your goals will make it much easier to structure the event, target publicity and evaluate results.

Structure your event to match your event to your goals.
Do you need an outside facilitator, translator or sign language interpreter? If your goal is to share information beyond what is included in the film, are there local experts on the topic who should be present? How large a group do you want? (Large groups are appropriate for information exchanges. Small groups allow for more intensive dialogue.)

Arrange to involve all stakeholders.
It is especially important that people be allowed to speak for themselves. If you expect participants to plan action that affects people other than those present, decide how will you give voice to those not in the room.

Choose an accessible venue.
Is the space wheelchair accessible? Is it in a part of town that's easy to reach by various kinds of transportation? Can you provide clear signage? If you are bringing together different constituencies, is it in neutral territory? Does the physical configuration of the room allow for the kind of discussion you hope to have? Can everyone easily see the screen and hear the film? Is the room comfortable?

Leave time to plan for action.
If you hope that your screening will have lasting impact, it is important to leave time to plan action. Planning next steps can help people leave the room feeling energized and optimistic, even when the discussion has been difficult. It is also important to be prepared to facilitate networking. Consider having a sign-in sheet at the door so people can share contact information, such as e-mail addresses. Let participants know exactly how that information will (and won't) be shared.

FACILITATING A DISCUSSION OF COPYRIGHT CRIMINALS

People who feel safe, encouraged, respected and challenged, are likely to share openly and thoughtfully. As a facilitator you can encourage that kind of participation. Here's how:

Prepare yourself:

Identify your own hot-button issues. View the film before your event and give yourself time to reflect so you aren't dealing with raw emotions at the same time that you are trying to facilitate a discussion.

Be knowledgeable. You don't need to be an expert on organ donation or health care reform to lead an event, but knowing the basics can help you keep a discussion on track and gently correct misstatements of fact. Prior to your event, take time to check the Background Information and Suggested Resources in the film guide handout.

Be clear about your role. Being a facilitator is not the same as being a teacher. A teacher's job is to convey specific information. In contrast, a facilitator remains neutral, helping move along the discussion without imposing their views on the dialogue.

Know who might be present. It isn't always possible to know exactly who will attend a screening, but if you know what kinds of groups are present in your community, you may be able to predict who might be represented. You should also keep in mind that issues can play out very differently for different groups of people. Factors like geography, age, race, religion, and socioeconomic class, can all have an impact on comfort levels, speaking styles, and prior knowledge. Take care not to assume that all members of a particular group share the same point of view.

Preparing the group:

Agree to ground rules around language. Prior to starting a discussion or Q&A with a panel, remind the participants of basic ground rules to ensure respect and aid clarity. Typically such rules include no yelling or use of slurs and asking people to speak in the first person ("I think…") rather than generalizing for others ("Everyone knows that…"). If speaker break a ground rule, gently interrupt, remind them of the rule and ask them to rephrase.

Ensure that everyone has an opportunity to be heard. Be clear about how people will take turns (for example, you might set time limits) or ways they can indicate that they want to speak. Plan a strategy for preventing one or two people from dominating the discussion.

Talk about the difference between dialogue and debate. In a debate, participants try to convince others that they are right. In a dialogue, participants try to understand each other and expand their thinking by sharing viewpoints and listening to each other actively. Remind people that they are engaged in a dialogue.

Encourage active listening. Ask the group to think of the event as being about both listening and discussing. Participants can be encouraged to listen for things that challenge as well as reinforce their own ideas. You may also consider asking people to practice formal "active listening," wherein participants listen without interrupting the speaker, and then rephrase to see if they have heard correctly.

Remind participants that everyone sees through the lens of their own experience. Who we are influences how we interpret what we see—attendees may have a different view about the content and meaning of the film they have just seen, and all of them may be accurate. Inviting speakers to identify the evidence on which they base their opinion can help people to understand one another's perspectives.

Take care of yourself and group members. If the intensity level rises, pause to let everyone take a deep breath. Also, think carefully about what you ask people to share publicly so that you are not asking them to reveal things that could place them in legal or physical danger. Let the audience and invited speakers know whether or not the press will be present at the beginning of your event.