



NEWS RELEASE

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VENTURA COUNTY MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO ILLEGALLY UPLOADING TWO THEATRICAL MOVIES TO INTERNET

A man who obtained two Academy Award "screeners" of Hollywood movies and made them available to Internet users pleaded guilty today to two felony charges of uploading a copyrighted work being prepared for commercial distribution.

Derek Hawthorne, 21, of Moorpark, pleaded guilty this morning, admitting that he uploaded "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button" and "Australia" to websites, where visitors could download the movies to their own computers.

The two movies had been shown in theaters, but were not yet available on DVD. Hawthorne obtained screeners of the movies, used a computer program that allowed him to upload the movies and made them available for viewing on the Internet. Authorities are continuing to investigate how Hawthorne obtained the screeners.

Hawthorne pleaded guilty to the two charges before United States District Judge R. Gary Klausner in Los Angeles. Judge Klausner is scheduled to sentence Hawthorne on September 28, at which time he faces a statutory maximum sentence of six years in federal prison.

The case against Hawthorne was investigated by the United States Secret Service.

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