

03/19/05

The Copyright Office

RE: Orphaned Films.

I recently came across an online discussion of orphaned films at the Mobius Home Video Forum (mhvf.net) which contained a link to your page and I wished to add my “two cents” regarding this issue.

I’m viewing this strictly from a “film buff’s” perspective; as someone who wishes to have all films remain available for public consumption. I felt that perhaps an online database might be a potential way for films that have fallen into the limbo of public domain to be catalogued for reference purposes as well as for the benefit of those who are seeking to reclaim ownership of a “lost” film . We currently have the Internet Movie Database (imdb.com) on the web as a source for film information and my thought was that their web site could be used as a template for a similar, “orphaned films-only” site.

This database could allow copyright holders the opportunity to discover the status of their property as well as give the general public a chance to supply information on the history of films that are thought to be in the public domain. The Internet Movie Database site requires registration from its users and reviews all information submitted to verify that it is correct and up to date. I would imagine that it would require quite a bit of elbow grease from all involved to look into claims of ownership but it could be beneficial in the long run if it means that more films will become available for viewing. That is, if they can be proved to be in the public domain due to lapsed copyright renewal or if an individual wished to restore the copyright on a film that had been orphaned.

I realize that I am simply a layman in regards to matters of copyright issues and I hope that my opinion is not naïve and that I am not oversimplifying things. I believe that filmmakers meant for their work to be seen but I also know that the owners of films should be compensated for their time and effort in keeping that work available. This database would hopefully allow for both to happen.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Matthew Allison