

1 Brett L. Gibbs, Esq. (SBN 251000)
Steele Hansmeier PLLC.
2 38 Miller Avenue, #263
Mill Valley, CA 94941
3 415-325-5900
blgibbs@wefightpiracy.com

4 *Attorney for Plaintiff*
5

6
7 IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE
8 NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA
9

10
11 FIRST TIME VIDEOS, LLC,) **No.**
12)
13 Plaintiff,) **Judge:**
14 v.)
15 DOES 1-95,) **COMPLAINT**
16 Defendants.) **DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL**
_____)

17
18 **COMPLAINT**

19 NOW COMES Plaintiff First Time Videos, LLC, through its undersigned counsel, hereby files this
20 Complaint requesting damages and injunctive relief, and alleges as follows:

21 **JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

22
23 1. This is an action of necessity. Plaintiff brings this suit as its only way to adequately
24 preserve the value of its unique copyrighted work from those unlawfully downloading it over the
25 Internet. Plaintiff has exhausted all other means in attempting to protect its work, and it now turns to
26 this Court as its last line of defense. This suit alleges infringement under the United States
27 Copyright Act and a related civil conspiracy claim under California common law to combat the
28 willful and intentional infringement of creative work over the Internet. Currently anonymous

1 Defendants, whose identities Plaintiff expects to ascertain during discovery, illegally reproduced and
2 distributed Plaintiff's copyrighted creative work by acting in concert via the BitTorrent file sharing
3 protocol and, upon information and belief, continue to do the same. As a result of this unlawful
4 activity, by and through this Complaint, Plaintiff seeks a permanent injunction, statutory or actual
5 damages, award of costs and attorney's fees, and other relief.
6

7 2. Per N.D. Cal. Local Rule 3-5, this Court has federal subject matter jurisdiction over
8 the copyright infringement claim under 17 U.S.C. §§ 101, *et seq.*, (commonly referred to as "the
9 Copyright Act"), 28 U.S.C. § 1331 (granting federal courts federal question jurisdiction over civil
10 actions arising under the laws of the United States), and 28 U.S.C. § 1338(a) (granting federal courts
11 original jurisdiction over any Congressional acts relating to copyrights). This Court has
12 supplemental jurisdiction over the civil conspiracy claim under 28 U.S.C. § 1367(a) because it is
13 directly related to Plaintiff's copyright infringement claim, which is within this Court's original
14 jurisdiction, such that the two claims form part of the same case and controversy under Article III of
15 the United States Constitution.
16

17 3. This Court has personal jurisdiction over all of the parties because, upon credible
18 information and belief, all of the Defendants either reside or committed copyright infringement in
19 the State of California. Plaintiff used geolocation technology to trace the IP addresses of each
20 Defendant to a point of origin within the State of California. Geolocation is a method for
21 ascertaining the likely geographic region associated with a given IP address at a given date and time.
22 Although not a litmus test for personal jurisdiction, the use of geolocation gives Plaintiff good cause
23 for asserting that personal jurisdiction is proper over the Defendants.
24

25 4. In the alternative, this Court also has personal jurisdiction over non-resident
26 Defendants, if any, under the California long-arm statute, California Code of Civil Procedure §
27 410.10, because they downloaded copyrighted content from, or uploaded it to, California residents,
28

1 protocol. Plaintiff cannot ascertain Defendants' actual identities without information from
2 Defendants' Internet Service Providers ("ISPs").

3 **JOINDER OF MULTIPLE DEFENDANTS**

4
5 9. Joinder of Defendants is proper because they engaged in a series of transactions to
6 illegally reproduce and distribute the same Video, using the same highly-interactive online protocol,
7 and unlawfully "sharing" the exact same File in the same BitTorrent swarm. Specifically, the
8 Defendants intentionally entered and participated in a single BitTorrent swarm that was formed for
9 the purpose of exchanging pieces of the File, which was entirely unique to that swarm. The File, in
10 this case, was a specific digital reproduction of the Video. The series of transactions in this case
11 involved exchanging pieces of the File containing the Video with other Defendants in the group of
12 individuals who were sharing pieces of the File among one another (i.e. the swarm) to obtain a
13 complete copy of the Video. Plaintiff's agents observed multiple swarms involved in reproducing
14 and distributing the Video, but the Defendants in this action joined in one swarm.

15
16 10. Joinder is also proper because Defendants participated in a civil conspiracy to
17 illegally reproduce and distribute the Video. The Defendants intentionally entered a swarm for the
18 purpose of collaborating with the other Defendants and numerous third parties to conduct illegal
19 distribution and reproduction of the particular File containing the Video. The Defendants were
20 collectively engaged in the conspiracy even if they were not engaged in the swarm
21 contemporaneously because they all took concerted action that contributed to the chain of data
22 distribution. Plaintiff has asserted a right to relief jointly and severally against the Defendants.

23
24 11. Joinder is also proper at the early stage of the litigation because, upon information
25 and belief, a single individual can be associated with multiple IP addresses. Due to the dynamic
26 nature of most consumer IP address assignments, an individual's IP address can change frequently.
27 Thus, Plaintiff's monitoring software, which identifies infringing activity by IP address, may
28

1 identify multiple instances of infringing activity that are actually associated with a single individual.
2 In other words, it is likely that multiple Doe Defendants (i.e. IP addresses listed on Exhibit A) are, in
3 fact, a single individual. For example, in the past, a single individual was associated with nearly one-
4 third of the IP addresses contained in an initial complaint. Joinder of identical claims against a single
5 individual is encouraged under the Federal Rules and conserves the resources of this Court.
6

7 12. Finally, Defendants share the same questions of law with respect to copyright
8 infringement, including but not limited to:

9 (A) Whether “copying” has occurred within the meaning of the Copyright Act;

10 (B) Whether entering a torrent swarm constitutes a willful act of infringement;

11 (C) Whether entering a torrent swarm constitutes a civil conspiracy; and

12 (D) Whether and to what extent Plaintiff has been damaged by the Defendant’s conduct.
13

14 13. Supporting the propriety of joinder in this case is the underlying nature of the
15 BitTorrent file distribution protocol. The BitTorrent protocol is different than the standard peer-to-
16 peer (“P2P”) protocol used for such networks as Kazaa, Grokster and Limewire. Unlike standard
17 P2P networks, every BitTorrent downloader is also an uploader of the illegally transferred file.
18 Further, the BitTorrent protocol breaks an individual file into small pieces, which are shared among
19 a group of collaborators. Standard P2P protocols involve the one-to-one transfer of whole files. Use
20 of the BitTorrent protocol provides significant benefits to swarm participants that derive from its
21 distributed and collaborative nature, but it also makes its users susceptible to joinder.
22

23 **BACKGROUND**

24 14. BitTorrent is a modern file sharing method (hereinafter “protocol”) used for
25 distributing data via the Internet.

26 15. Traditional file transfer protocols involve a central server, which distributes data
27 directly to individual users. This method is prone to collapse when large numbers of users request
28

1 data from the central server, in which case the server can become overburdened and the rate of data
2 transmission can slow considerably or cease altogether. In addition, the reliability of access to the
3 data stored on a server is largely dependent on the server's ability to continue functioning for
4 prolonged periods of time under high resource demands.

5
6 16. Standard P2P protocols involve a one-to-one transfer of whole files between a single
7 uploader and single downloader. Although standard P2P protocols solve some of the issues
8 associated with traditional file transfer protocols, these protocols still suffer from such issues as
9 scalability. For example, when a popular file is released (e.g. an illegal copy of the latest blockbuster
10 movie) the initial source of the file performs a one-to-one whole file transfer to a third party, who
11 then performs similar transfers. The one-to-one whole file transfer method can significantly delay
12 the spread of a file across the world because the initial spread is limited by the bottleneck associated
13 with one-to-one transfers.

14
15 17. In contrast, the BitTorrent protocol is a decentralized method of distributing data.
16 Instead of relying on a central server to distribute data directly to individual users, the BitTorrent
17 protocol allows individual users to distribute data among themselves. Further, the BitTorrent
18 protocol involves breaking a single large file into many small pieces, which can be transferred much
19 more quickly than a single large file and in turn redistributed much more quickly than a single large
20 file. Moreover, each peer can download missing pieces of the file from multiple sources—often
21 simultaneously—which causes transfers to be fast and reliable. After downloading a piece, a peer
22 automatically becomes a source for the piece. This distribution method contrasts sharply with a one-
23 to-one whole file transfer method.

24
25 18. In BitTorrent vernacular, individual downloaders/distributors of a particular file are
26 called peers. The group of peers involved in downloading/distributing a particular file is called a
27 swarm. A server which stores a list of peers in a swarm is called a tracker. A computer program
28

1 that implements the BitTorrent protocol is called a BitTorrent client. Each swarm is unique to a
2 particular file, a file that is also unique in and of itself.

3 19. The BitTorrent protocol operates as follows. First, a user locates a small “torrent” file.
4 This file contains information about the unique files to be shared and about the tracker, the computer
5 that coordinates the file distribution. Second, the user loads the torrent file into a BitTorrent client,
6 which automatically attempts to connect to the tracker listed in the torrent file. Third, the tracker
7 responds with a list of peers and the BitTorrent client connects to those peers to begin downloading
8 data from and distributing data to the other peers in the swarm. When the download is complete, the
9 BitTorrent client continues distributing data to other peers in the swarm until the user manually
10 disconnects from the swarm or the BitTorrent client otherwise does the same.

11
12 20. The degree of anonymity provided by the BitTorrent protocol is extremely low.
13 Because the protocol is based on peers connecting to one another, a peer must broadcast identifying
14 information (i.e. an IP address) before it can receive data. Nevertheless, the actual names of peers in
15 a swarm are unknown, as the users are allowed to download and distribute under the cover of their
16 IP addresses.

17
18 21. The BitTorrent protocol is an extremely popular method for transferring data. The
19 size of swarms for popular files can reach into the tens of thousands of unique peers. A swarm will
20 commonly have peers from many, if not every, state in the United States and several countries
21 around the world. And every peer in the swarm participates in distributing the file to dozens,
22 hundreds, or even thousands of other peers.

23
24 22. The BitTorrent protocol is also an extremely popular method for unlawfully copying,
25 reproducing, and distributing files in violation of the copyright laws of the United States. A broad
26 range of copyrighted albums, audiovisual files, photographs, software, and other forms of media are
27 available for illegal reproduction and distribution via the BitTorrent protocol.
28

1 entered into the same exact BitTorrent swarm particular to the File containing the Video, and
2 reproduced and distributed the Video to numerous third parties.

3 30. Plaintiff observed the Defendants' activities in the same exact torrent swarm specific
4 to the File containing Plaintiff's Video and created a log of IP addresses identifying each Defendant
5 and the date and time of the Defendant's activity, attached hereto as Exhibit A.
6

7 **COUNT I – COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT**

8 **(U.S. Copyright Act – 17 U.S.C. §§ 101-1332)**

9 31. Plaintiff hereby incorporates by this reference each and every allegation contained in
10 the preceding paragraphs as though fully set forth herein.

11 32. Defendants' conduct infringes upon Plaintiff's exclusive rights of reproduction and
12 distribution that are protected under the Copyright Act.

13 33. Each Defendant knew, should have known, or had some constructive knowledge that
14 their acts constituted copyright infringement.
15

16 34. Defendants' conduct was willful within the meaning of the Copyright Act:
17 intentional, and with indifference to the Plaintiff's rights. Defendants' active participation on the
18 same BitTorrent swarm relating to the unique File containing the Video make this fact abundantly
19 clear.

20 35. Plaintiff has been damaged by Defendants' conduct including, but not limited to,
21 economic and reputation losses. Plaintiff continues to be damaged by such conduct, and has no
22 adequate remedy at law to compensate Plaintiff for all of the past, and possibly future, damages
23 stemming from Defendants' conduct. In fact, further irreparable harm to Plaintiff's copyrights and
24 exclusive rights is imminent without Court intervention. Without restrictions, these infringers will
25 run rampant.
26

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28

DEMAND FOR A JURY TRIAL

Plaintiff hereby demands a jury trial as provided by FRCP 38(a).

By: /s/ Brett L. Gibbs

Brett L. Gibbs, Esq. (SBN 251000)

Attorney for Plaintiff