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culture, debate [<http://howtonotsuckatgamedesign.com/?p=3069>] , June 20, 2011

[<http://howtonotsuckatgamedesign.com/?p=3069>] by Anjin Anhut.

This article is filed under [game criticism](#).



As far as I understand the ideals of Anonymous, I agree with them wholeheartedly. Freedom of information, freedom of speech, net neutrality, important stuff. And I understand that there needs to be some way to enforce this ideals against corporations and corporate funded politicians and governments, who make laws. Laws that may be broken to preserve this freedom. Okay, I get that. Hacking websites, just because you're pissed is not that.

So what happened?

GEMA is a german organization controlling usage of music. When you are a music publisher (major label, or indy) and you register a certain track, the GEMA collects money whenever this track is publicly played, in clubs, on the radio or on websites. This money, via a kinda flimsy system, gets redistributed to the music artists and copyright holders. I, being a former musician myself, don't support the GEMA as it functions right now. Their systems and regulations are antiquated and often work against the musicians they try to protect. I stopped registering songs at the GEMA when I found out that I had to pay fees for playing my own music on my own website. Yeah, that's right once I let the GEMA take care of my intellectual property, even I needed to pay for publicizing it. Stupid.

Now the GEMA and Google were negotiating about the fees for making GEMA-protected songs available on youtube.com. GEMA insists on 13 euro-cents per view. Per view! This is of course way too high for google to be a justifiable business decision. So because google and GEMA don't come to terms with each other, we in germany get barred from watching many music videos on youtube.com. Even music officially released on youtube by the copyright holders gets blocked. "Not available in your country" often messes up, what could have been a nice playlist of music video clips.

Anonymous now threatens GEMA with their trademark cyber-terrorism. Yeah, cyber-terrorism, it's a harsh word, but that's what it is, even in situations I agree with. German self-proclaimed members of Anonymous basically blackmail GEMA now to lower the fee for views or else. This is pushing the own agenda via force and threats of retaliation. Do I need to get clearer? Now, as stated in the opening paragraph, I can imagine situations, where this terrorism is appropriate. But only in self-defense or in defense of the stated ideals. Is this the case here?

We got four parties in this conflict:

- The GEMA blocking the distribution of music to collect money for the copyright holders (and themselves obviously).
- Google/youtube.com having content unavailable for a big chunk of their audience so lose traffic and miss out on potential ad revenue.
- The copyright holders, who willingly made their music available for free, having their publicity cut by GEMA against their own intentions.
- The german visitors of youtube.com who want to watch music videos and listen to songs for free.

I go out on a limb, that the Anonymites are not hacking gema.de on orders from Google. And when the copyright holders want to pressure GEMA, they only need to threaten to stop registering their songs in the future. The GEMA doesn't just take music and blocks it. It's voluntary for the publishers, a business agreement. And if they don't find the terms of that agreement to their liking, they can basically walk away from it. Yeah, already registered songs a complicated issue, but the GEMA needs future releases to stay relevant.

So who does Anonymous represent here? The visitors? Assuming that's where they are coming from, Anonymous tries to bully GEMA into allowing music to be available for free. Listening to music without pay is not freedom of information or net neutrality. It's wanting stuff for free which is available for money. GEMA is not blocking radio stations to play the songs and the music is widely available on iTunes and hard copy. You know, like back in the days.

The information Anonymous is trying to make available is available. You just have to pay for it. Which in this case basically is also the intention of the creators of said information. There is no information withheld from the public, no voice silenced or secret buried. So what except being annoyed to have to pay for it are we fighting here?

A Bit More Complicated.

Of course here we have publishers having their publication rights infringed by GEMA, since they cannot publish their own music for free in Germany. (Which is also a revenue source for the publisher, since he gets paid a share of YouTube.com's ad revenue) You know, exactly what happened to me. Stupid system by stupid stubborn people. I'm as pissed as anybody wanting to check out a music video recommended by a friend from the states only to find a black screen with an annoying note. And I understand that the copyright holder granted me the right to watch his clip for free and GEMA is a cock-blocking prick here.

So yeah, GEMA in my opinion is totally wrong on that issue, but are they wrong and detrimental enough to stop them by force? I don't think so. I also don't think that the GEMA can hold its position for ever anyway, just due to available technology and shifts in culture. There is no need to strike against them in an illegal manner. We have to be careful not to play Robin Hood, just because we can. And we have to be careful to do it for the right reasons and to do it measured.

Anonymous truly has the possibility to be a true Robin Hood or V or if necessary trigger a virtual French revolution, but to make this happen it needs the people's support. Not the support for egoistic reasons or out of gullibility. If Anonymous hacks organizations just because they are pissed about something or for the LOLs, it becomes a gang of thugs, extortionists, mafiosi, cyber-terrorists, etc. I can't admire or support that.

Also illegal retaliation and treats are dangerous measures that easily can hurt the wrong people. Criminal and harmful actions must remain a desperate measure, a last line of defense. You need to think before pushing the red button. We can't let hacking and cyber-bullying, cyber-attacks become a short cut for debate. If we allow that, we can replace courts with Thunderdomes, if you get my drift. Guns, knives and bombs have no place in conflicts of interest and neither have show-trials or cyber-bullying. Oh and don't start with "Nobody gets hurt, it's only computers and stuff". There are more forms of hurt than physical harm.

So Anonymous, remember:

From great power, comes great responsibility. If you do what's right, I'm with you.

2 THOUGHTS ON "ANONYMOUS – BECAUSE WE CAN?"



Rolpege

on **July 6, 2011 at 9:56 pm** said:

I agree. Their ideals are really cool and I'm with them, but imposing them is not the way (and it's a contradiction)



Betti Gefecht

on **June 20, 2011 at 11:23 am** said:

Amen!