

Back of the book

Palpitations Weblog



by Anuvab Pal

There is a particularly annoying kind of person emerging in the modern world. It is a kind of person who says, to whatever piece of music or television show or film you're discussing, "I've already downloaded it on Torrent".

This does not mean he/she was downloading in a thunderstorm. To a pre-social networking generation (which is anyone born into a virtual world before Facebook), "torrent" refers to a piece of technology that allows for sharing and downloading of

media illegally put up on websites. Now, I use the term "sharing" as recklessly as say the gangster Abu Salem would use the term "persuading" when he means extortion. Simply, it enables stealing movies, music, television shows and video games online and is appealing to anyone with internet access, the ability to stay up all night, an interest in Western entertainment and the experience of living dangerously without any real danger. That is, every urban Indian teenager.

This, however, is a global phenomenon, about which we're just more show-offy because it is technology and we enjoy leading the world in geekdom. To people from the Paleolithic age, ie, anyone over 27, you may still remember going to shops and buying CDs and DVDs and paying a legitimate price for them. This is apparently now an archaic practice, with young people all over the world resorting to the internet

and downloading all kinds of movies and shows and music for free. This is, of course, helped by websites like YouTube.com which allows anyone to put up video clips of anything, so one has an assortment ranging from British singing sensations to midgets dancing for Rajnikanth.

Torrent doesn't have anything to do with a thunderstorm.

Philosophically though, it alters how much and what we watch, thereby altering the entire business model of the TV and film industry. If one is downloading shows or pieces of shows or films, there is no place for advertising. Or buying movie tickets. Someone leaked a portion of the blockbuster *X-Men Origins: Wolverine* even before the editing had begun and put it up on a web-

site. Almost a million people downloaded it and reviews were up even before the director had seen the raw footage he shot. A Chinese website illegally streams episodes of *Desperate Housewives* at exactly the same time the show airs in America, forcing some advertisers to actually move their dollars from the legal channel known as NBC, to this illegal website.

This year, Virgin Megastore and HMV, the two largest retailers of CDs and DVDs in the world, went out of business. We are not far from a time when a director or a writer will say, "I am thinking of a story about..." and someone will answer, "I've already downloaded it". If we can download unedited film footage, it won't be too long before we can download stuff from creator's brains directly. It will save everyone money and time to have to shoot and film and record things. Write to Anuvab Pal at letters@timeoutmumbai.net.

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