

Why no movies on NZ iTS?

Written by Darryn Lowe

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It's easy to blame Apple or the movie industry for not having movies on the iTunes Store despite having it for a year or so. It's a little more complicated than that and I think it's a shame because it's forcing the movie industry to make very very bad movies.

The real reason that movies aren't on iTS in New Zealand is actually because of the cinemas. This is something that I don't understand. The last movie that I went to see at the movies was Transformers, before that Spiderman 3, before that something, before that Orange State with my ex. I don't go to the movies that often. If I wanted to go to a place that isn't cleaned properly, has food over the floor, and has people talking over the movie I'd stay at home... oh wait, I do.

That's not to say that I don't enjoy watching movies. I have a decent DVD collection, but I just can't stomach paying \$15 to go see a movie once when for twice that I can get the DVD and watch it as many times as I want.

Here's the kicker. The movie industry would make heaps more money off a movie if they sold it in all formats at the same time and released it around the world at the same time and didn't cripple their DVDs for each region (ever bought a DVD from the States and seen the DVD released here in New Zealand only to find the DVD from the States has way more features? Why does that happen?).

Look at it this way, say a movie is released today but at \$15 in the cinemas. 100 people may want to see that movie but there may be only 20 people who want to see it at the cinema. The others may feel cinemas are a rip off, may not have the time to go to the cinema, may not have access to a cinema, can't be bothered going to the cinema. So already the movie industry has lost 80% of the possible sales simply by limiting the distribution of the movie.

Now, let's say that the movie was released at the cinema today and say next week they release the DVD, iTS download, iTS Rental, other purchasing/renting methods. Those who want to see it at the cinema can, those who want the better value of a DVD can get it at the same time (well relatively anyway), as can be those who just want the movie, as well as those who may just want to see what the movie is like then possibly purchase it either as a download or as a DVD. So instead of selling to 20% of the potential viewers you're selling to the 100% of potential viewers. You've made your money, you've got more money on hand to make new and hopefully better movies, and the customer gets what they want when they want.

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Who loses here? Cinemas? Come on, if people wanted to go see it at the cinema they would, the rest wouldn't have gone anyway so the cinemas shouldn't have the power to hold the industry to ransom. It's the same with DVD rental stores. Why should they dictate the release schedule of the DVDs? How owns these movies anyway?

By releasing movies on all platforms around the world at the same time you remove the need for region encoding of DVDs, there's no licensing issues for the likes of iTunes, and people can all talk about the movie at the same time.

How does it stand at the moment? Take me for example (as it is I who is writing this entry). Currently I like to talk about films at the same time as everyone else but I dislike the model set for the cinemas so I don't go to the movies that often. As such I tend to download it from BitTorrent and if I like it then I buy the DVD. The movie industry hasn't really lost out because while I do view it illegally initially I do do the right thing anyway. If I don't like the movie well then they were never going to get my money anyway. But here's the kicker, if I had the option for renting it from iTunes at the same time the movie is released at the cinemas the movie industry would have made money off me anyway. Remember, the reason that I download is to talk about it with those who have seen it at the cinema. If I can stay at home and watch it legally then while they have made less money than if I went to the cinema they'd have actually made more money because I wasn't going to go to the cinema anyway but having it at the same time as the cinema as a rental on iTunes means that my conscience would be clear as well because I'm not doing anything illegal.

This is something that the industries never understand. By limiting people's options they create a market for stealing, give people the options then that market reduces exponentially as most people are law abiding most of the time. To cry foul at pirates is to fail to understand that YOU are the problem. This is the biggest problem with capitalism, try to make money by doing the least damage to the bottomline and you actually lose money because your potential customers see you as seeing them as nothing more than income. Give them what they want and they see you as someone who listens to their needs. Why do you think iTunes and Apple are doing so well lately?

Ultimately the movie industry needs to grow a pair and tell the cinemas and rental stores that their reign is over. They need to give everyone the option at the same time if they are to survive as an entity. Everyone eventually wins which is really what it's all about isn't it?

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