

Sting nets music piracy guilty plea

A store owner charged with selling counterfeit Michael Jackson CDs has pleaded guilty in the Manukau District Court.

On 30 September 2009 Police raided a Manurewa store and arrested its proprietor for selling pirated copies of Michael Jackson CDs.

Acting on information from a member of the public passed on to the Recording Industry Association of New Zealand (RIANZ), the police executed a search warrant at Indian Sweets & Snacks, Videos & Spices.

As well as about 20 Michael Jackson and Eminem CDs believed to contain pirated material, the Police also seized a computer with optical disc burning capabilities.

A 30-year old man was arrested and has now pleaded guilty. He is due to be sentenced on May 12.

A member of the public reported the shop to RIANZ in July 2009. During a joint operation with the police, RIANZ investigators visited the store and bought pirated copies of 'Thriller' and 'Bad' among others.

"Pirate CD sellers are thieves," says RIANZ CEO Campbell Smith. "Not only are they stealing from artists and songwriters, they are also taking sales from legitimate CD retailers and removing cash flow for reinvestment in NZ music."

Mr Smith says RIANZ believes by enforcing the law it is highlighting the scale of the problem.

"Piracy is an enormous problem for our industry. We prosecute in order to educate about copyright, to get the message out that it's wrong to make or sell pirated material."

Mr Smith says RIANZ is actively monitoring the sale of pirate CDs nation-wide.

“The police are right behind us on this and they really have done a great job in supporting our investigations and taking action against those infringing the law.”

The penalty for offending is for a fine up to \$150,000 and / or up to five years imprisonment per offence.

RIANZ has recently launched a Report Music Piracy website where the public can submit music piracy concerns. It's at www.reportmusicpiracy.co.nz.