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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

An informant reveals himself

PUBLISHED: 06/02/2009

The article about the pirates of St. Paul was well-written and informative, but a key piece of information was left out: This bust for DVD piracy happened because an active and involved citizen repeatedly contacted the Motion Picture Association of America to get an investigation launched.

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Let me make it clear that I spoke to the reporter who wrote this article — a real top-notch journalist, definitely going places — and more or less tipped him off to this story. Though I was initially reluctant to have my name be part of the story because of worries about retaliation by the felons involved in this piracy ring, I ultimately told the reporter that I preferred to have my name published, along with the name of my blog, JohnnyNorthside.com.

I believe in “aggressively good citizenship,” and I promote it on my activist blog about North Minneapolis revitalization. While making trips every other week to visit my 11-year-old son, I often came upon the brazen video pirates at that dreary strip mall in St. Paul, selling their wares on the hood of a vehicle. So I began making small buys and contacting authorities, noting license plates and stuff like that. The process of getting an MPAA investigation and then a police investigation was arduous. I practically lobbied this raid into existence through constant contact with the MPAA.

Yes, I was the guy who bought and turned over the 007 “Quantum of Solace” DVD while the movie was still in theaters. (The DVD is mentioned in the article.) I say these things because I don’t think citizens should live their life in vague fear of unknown retaliation for cooperating with the police, and I also don’t think articles in the mass media should give the impression (even by inference) that police are able to do everything on their own, without help and cooperation from citizens.

Maybe the reporter, Andy Mannix, was being helpful and protecting me on his own initiative, or maybe space considerations were an issue. No matter. I’m writing this letter to say I WAS THE ONE WHO GOT THOSE NO-ACCOUNT THUGS BUSTED FOR DVD PIRACY, AND I’D DO IT AGAIN.

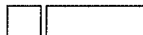
John Hoff

North Minneapolis resident

Former Minnesota Daily columnist

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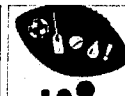
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Minneapolis Moving Companies 1 year ago

I give him credit for having the courage to go public regarding the piracy - hopefully it will contribute to lower prices for DVDs (at least that's what the manufacturers claim anyway). I doubt he made any friends from this act though - piracy is still practiced by numerous individuals for personal purposes.

LIKE REPLY



Anonymous 1 year ago

hey guys john hoff here again. just here to give you your JOHNNY NORTHSIDE FACT OF THE DAY:

when I find myself in print or posting online, there is a horn that I literally "toot" upon and I am never without this horn.

just your JOHNNY "FIVE ACES" NORTHSIDE fact of the day.

LIKE REPLY



Kate 1 year ago

"Even if it's just my ego which causes me to reveal my role in this matter, well, WHO CARES?"

Judging by the volume of comments that your letter to the editor has generated, I'd say that a lot of people care. Maybe if your letter made it apparent that you're selflessly dedicated to your community, people would be inspired to cooperate with law enforcement. Instead, your letter just makes you look like a conceited asshole who's only in it for the glory. Especially because there's little to no personal risk in turning in DVD pirates and everybody knows it. It's not like you brought down a drug cartel, okay? The people who were arrested as a result of your "vigilance" were harmless, just some people down on their luck who were trying to make a few bucks. If anything, you made things worse for them, their families, and their community.

LIKE REPLY



Anonymous 1 year ago

but really guys I am actually john hoff and what can I say...it owns being me.

j. north out

LIKE REPLY



Anonymous 1 year ago

" I WAS THE ONE WHO GOT THOSE NO-ACCOUNT THUGS BUSTED FOR DVD PIRACY, AND I DID DO IT AGAIN."

hey guys be sure to check out JOHNNYNORTHSIDE.com it's a little name I came up with for myself and my exploits...what can I say except that johnny northside is here to save the day!!!!

~*johnny northsider~*
jOhNnY nOrThSiDe

J TO DA NORTHsIDE

sincerely,
john "john hoff" hoff (johnnynorthside.com)

LIKE REPLY

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John Hoff a.k.a. "Johnny North" 1 year ago

Up here in North Minneapolis, I hear all the time about citizens who live in fear of retaliation for cooperating with the authorities. Even if it's just my ego which causes me to reveal my role in this matter, well, WHO CARES?

Citizens should not live in fear and, really, the only way to reduce that fear is for citizens who actually cooperate with the authorities to be open about that cooperation while simultaneously walking the streets alive and unharmed, day after day, setting an example of, well, BEING ALIVE DAY AFTER DAY.

Whether it's ego or good citizenship which causes me to reveal my role, it has the same result. Fear is reduced, cooperation with the authorities is increased.

LIKE REPLY



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Dave T 2 months ago [in reply to John Hoff a.k.a. "Johnny North"](#)

JOHN HOFF IS AMERICA'S FAVORITE DOUCHEBAG

LIKE REPLY



Anonymous 1 year ago

Hoff managed to write something that doesn't mention his "army medic days." I actually read the whole thing, probably because I didn't get so angry at the stupid cell phone clipped to his shirt in his picture. I was so happy when he was out of here; we really don't deserve more of him.

LIKE REPLY



Anonymous 1 year ago

Wow! I'm gonna have to completely recalibrate my definition of useless, self-important ass.

LIKE REPLY



Anonymous 1 year ago

john hoff owns because I'm pretty sure he is just trolling us IRL.

LIKE REPLY



Jack C 1 year ago

John Hoff's sole purpose of living and doing things that he does is to get recognition for himself. I was extremely happy that he would finally be moving on from the U of M after last school year, as his "columns" (if you really could call them that) were ostensibly self-serving and never anything more.

From his crusade of trying to get a fence put on the Washington Avenue Bridge (to stop the one suicide attempt that seems to happen each year there) to his new one-man urban renewal project in North Minneapolis, he is just full of useless garbage. Never underestimate the ego of one John Hoff. Thanks for continuing to be the douchebag we all came to know and loathe.

LIKE REPLY



Anonymous 1 year ago

Jeez, do you want a medal or something John? Most good citizens will do things to help out their community without expecting something in return. I guess you wanted publicity for being such a good guy. Thanks for your service. Please let us know when you let a little old lady have your seat on the bus or you hold the door open for someone. That way we can send you a thank you card.

LIKE REPLY



Anonymous 1 year ago

sven makes a good point, we should have already given john hoff an award/accolades for living in north minneapolis.

I regret that we are so far behind on your ceremonies man :(

LIKE REPLY



Sven 1 year ago

you live in North? OMG that must be so scary. And you're white too. Wow.

Seriously? Do you really live in North Minneapolis? That's amazing!

LIKE REPLY



Kate 1 year ago

I think it's a good idea to let people know that they shouldn't be scared of going to the police. However, that's not the purpose of this letter, as evidenced by its length and all of the unnecessary information provided. This unnecessary information includes the fact that Hoff not only called the police, but The Daily; an aside regarding the "top-notch journalist" who broke the story; two mentions of Hoff's blog; Hoff's biweekly visits to his 11-year-old son; etc. Furthermore, I think it's interesting that (1) Hoff had to call MPAA several times to get them to investigate, implying that the MPAA didn't think it was as big a deal as Hoff apparently did (and it's not), and (2) Hoff actually bought some of the pirated DVDs. If you buy pirated DVDs, you're committing a crime, even if you were only doing it to "help the police".

DVD piracy is not the issue here - and not just because DVD piracy is small potatoes, certainly not worth several calls to the MPAA and a "raid". The issue here is poverty, and someone who lives or spends a lot of time in North Minneapolis - and blogs about it - should be aware of that. This is not to say that crime is somehow justifiable if you're poor, just that Hoff doesn't seem to see the bigger picture.

LIKE REPLY



Anonymous 1 year ago

Helping his neighborhood?

Where does he live N MPLS or St. Paul??????

You can download these movies fairly easily yourself, selling a bootleg DVD is really just circulating money between people without the knowledge to do it themselves....

LIKE REPLY



Anonymous 1 year ago

We can all breathe easier now, knowing that we get to pay full price for DVDs. Maybe you can put your crime-fighting superpowers to good use and set up a sting to put an end to file-sharing or jaywalking. Or, better yet, take on those criminal masterminds who tear off those "do not remove" mattress tags.

LIKE REPLY



Anonymous 1 year ago

the point of his letter was not to let people know that going to the police is a good idea. the point was to let people know that he's been waiting for his key to the city for a week now and, you know, just LETTING US KNOW. who else would end that letter with "I WAS THE ONE WHO DID THIS AND I'D DO IT AGAIN?" that has absolutely nothing to do with being a good citizen.

"being a good citizen" is good advice but maybe not some I'd take seriously from someone who named a victim of a terrible violent crime.

LIKE REPLY



Anonymous 1 year ago

Johnny does a great job of helping his neighborhood.

The point of his letter was to let people know that going to the police is not as risky as all those tv shows and movies make it out to be.

Just chill a little. Going through life that angry isn't worth it!

LIKE REPLY



Anonymous 1 year ago

jesus, what a windbag. no one cares who the informant was, you oblivious dolt. and no one would call you an "informant." this isn't the bourne identity. it was dudes selling burned dvds of current release movies.

LIKE REPLY

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