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One Anti-Piracy System to Rule Them All

By BRAD STONE

TAGS: AUDIBLE MAGIC, DIGITAL FINGERPRINTING, MPAA, VOILE

Hollywood appears to have a preliminary winner in its bake-off of anti-piracy technologies.

For the last year, the film industry, through its Palo Alto-based R&D joint venture MovieLabs, has been testing a dozen so-called "digital fingerprinting" technologies. The technology purports to scan file sharing sites, Internet providers and peer-to-peer networks to identify copyrighted material.

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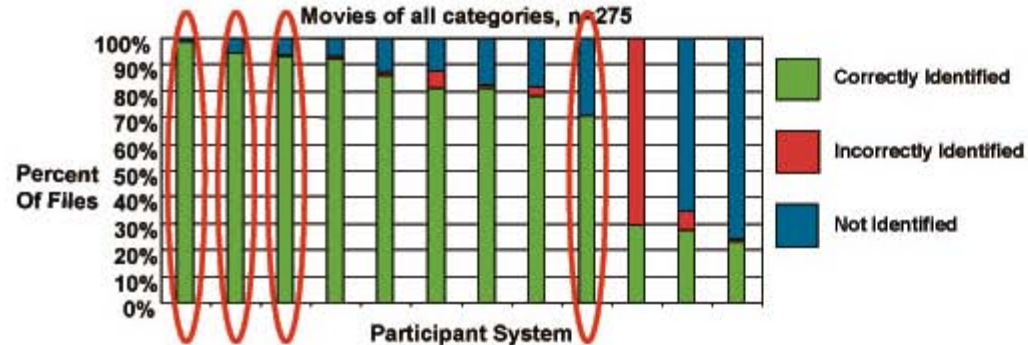
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"Fingerprinting Performance" (Leonard Kleinrock, 2007)

Yesterday in Los Angeles, people affiliated with the Motion Picture Association of America talked about the ongoing tests at a day-long [anti-piracy workshop](#) that the MPAA co-hosted with the University of California. In his introductory keynote at the event, UCLA professor and Internet pioneer Leonard Kleinrock showed a single slide that suggested that one of the anti-piracy filtering companies had outperformed the other 11, with the highest number of matches of infringing content and lowest number of false-positives. But professor Kleinrock and MPAA execs declined to name the participating companies or who had scored best on the test, saying that secrecy was a precondition for their participation in the tests.

Nevertheless, afterwards, executives from Santa Clara, Calif-based [Vobile](#) were crowing in the hallways of the Universal Hilton Hotel.

The two-year old company's technology, called Video DNA, has apparently bested others from the Royal Philips Electronics, Thomson Software & Technology, and the highest profile digital fingerprinting company, the Los



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Gatos, Calif.-based [Audible Magic](#), which has deals to filter video sharing sites like YouTube and Microsoft's Soapbox.

The MPAA told Business Week in the spring that Vobile was doing "[very well](#)" on the tests.

Movie Labs stress-tested the anti-piracy systems by loading hundreds of hours of copyrighted video content into the databases of the various filters, and then by flooding them with thousands of video files, some distorted, darkened and cropped, to try to scuttle their ability to find matches.

In the next phase of the ongoing tests, MovieLabs will see if the systems can handle ever larger quantities of copyrighted works. Theoretically, adding more songs, TV shows and movies in their databases could slow down these systems—and the Internet video sites that use them—since it could take longer to find possible matches.

MovieLabs has been sharing tests results with its member movie studios since the summer. MovieLabs chief executive Steve Weinstein says the technology is ready for prime time. "In a year you're going to see many Internet companies using it. This technology has shown its viability."

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