

THREE DEAD RATS

Written by Tim McKeon

Based on the Case Study by Jane Ginsburg

EXT. PICKET LINE - DAY

Several men and women are outside of a record store protesting. They are holding signs depicting the band The Brutish Boys with a red mark through them. Our host, JOYCE MILLER, stands in the foreground with a microphone.

JOYCE (V.O.)

The new Brutish Boys CD, "Straight from the Sewer" was released today but instead of rushing to record stores to buy it, many fans rushed to stores to protest, calling this popular group, "a pack of thieves."

A MAN approaches the camera. Joyce holds the microphone out to him.

MAN

My name is Kevin Willis. I coined the phrase "a pack of thieves."

JOYCE

Why do you consider the Brutish Boys thieves?

MAN

Because all their music is sampled. They don't write new stuff. It's totally stolen from 3 Dead Rats. "Totally stolen," that's my phrase too. I coined that.

INSERT SHOT: The Brutish Boys Album, "Straight from the Sewer," next to the 3 Dead Rats single, "Greed is Awesome."

JOYCE (V.O.)

Brutish Boys are taking the most criticism for sampling music from a song, "Greed is Awesome," by 3 Dead Rats. Both bands are represented by Death Jam records.

CUT TO:

INT. STUDIO A - DAY

Joyce is sitting down with three men in their twenties, MIKE E., SALAMANDER, and COKIE, all of whom are dressed like the Beastie Boys in jumpsuits etc. Underneath them is the title: "The Brutish Boys."

MIKE E.

We did sample from the 3 Dead Rats mostly in our song, "Brutish Boys in the House," but it's totally legit. We took pieces from their song that we liked and put it in ours.

SALAMANDER

The vocals, the guitar part.

COKIE

I played the flute.

MIKE E.

It's not like we re-did the whole song.
(Pause.)

What's wicked dumb about this scandal is that the message in "Brutish Boys in the House" and "Greed is Awesome" is the same. People should support small businesses, not big corporations.

SALAMANDER

We may not actually spell that message out in our song, but it's definitely inferred.

JOYCE

But doesn't the fact that your song appears in a Spepsi Cola commercial undermine that message?

MIKE E.

Spepsi Cola is a drink. It's not a corporation. You drink it.

COKIE

It's like juice but fizzy.

CUT TO:

INT. RECORDING STUDIO - DAY

Three black 20-somethings, ROBERT RODENT, VICTORIA VERMIN, and MELVIN MOUSE, who look suspiciously like "The Fugees," rap into a microphone.

JOYCE (V.O.)

I caught up with Victoria Vermin, Melvin Mouse and Robert Rodent of Three Dead Rats to find out their reaction to The Brutish Boys' comments.

CUT TO:

INT. STUDIO B - DAY

Joyce is now sitting with Three Dead Rats.

VICTORIA VERMIN

We don't care what they say, that (BLEEP) is lifted. And me and Rob and Mel, we are getting a lawsuit suing Brutish Boys, Death Jam records, everybody who bought the record, downloaded that song, or saw that commercial with it playing in the background.

MELVIN MOUSE

That actually includes us. We were watching TV and accidentally saw the commercial.

VICTORIA VERMIN

We don't care. We're suing everyone. If that means we lose a lawsuit and have to pay ourselves cuz we won that's what happens. It's our right as artists.

INT. ERWIN CHEMERINSKY'S OFFICE - DAY

Erwin Chemerinsky sits at his desk. Underneath the picture is the title, "Erwin Chemerinsky, Law Professor at USC."

JOYCE

Do 3 Dead Rats have a case?

ERWIN

I've always thought that Three Dead Rats is a terrific band and personally, I hope they do have a case. It's a bit complicated however, because Death Jam records is claiming the contract the band signed categorizes their record as a "work for hire". If this is true, it's going to be an uphill battle for the Rats. If the record isn't considered a "work for hire" however, and the band didn't give permission for songs to be used in a commercial... Well, then they may have claims under copyright law, trademark law, and even a California law claim for theft of their musical identity.

INSERT SHOT: As Joyce is speaking, graphics appear which show several computers attached to one another with lines. Poorly animated musical notes travel from one computer to the next, demonstrating how Prankster works.

JOYCE (V.O.)

In addition to filing several hundred lawsuits, 3 Dead Rats is also attacking the website Prankster which disseminates music across the Internet without permission from artists or record companies. In order to seek revenge, 3 Dead Rats have released several virus-ridden MP3's of their music which, when downloaded, will erase an entire hard drive.

INSERT SHOT: A poorly animated rat travels from one computer to the next. As the rat reaches each computer, the computer blows up.

CUT TO:

INT. JACK RIPPER'S BEDROOM - DAY

JACK RIPPER, a teenager wearing a Prankster T-shirt and ripped jeans, sits in a chair in a cluttered bedroom. Underneath the picture is the title, "Jack Ripper, Founder of Prankster."

JACK RIPPER

What 3 Dead Rats has done is way uncool. I downloaded their cover of Nirvana's cover of the David Bowie song, "The Man Who Sold the World" and it erased my whole history paper. I bought it off this website historypapers.com. Now I gotta shell out like 6 more bucks.

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

MRS. ROSKINS, a teacher at Winslow High, stands in front of a blackboard. Underneath the picture is the title, "Mrs. Roskins, Winslow High History Teacher."

MRS. ROSKINS

I don't care what the excuse. If a student doesn't turn in homework on time, it's 5 points off his final grade.

CUT TO:

INT. DEATH JAM RECORDS OFFICE - DAY

LYAR CONMAN a white businessman in a suit, and HUSTLA CRIMMONS, a black man businessman, both sit behind a desk. Behind them could be framed gold records, posters of Three Dead Rats and The Brutish Boys etc. Underneath the picture the title reads, "Lyar Conman and Hustla Crimmons, founders of Death Jam Records."

LYAR CONMAN

The whole mess with 3 Dead Rats and Brutish Boys is very unfortunate. First and foremost Death Jam cares about making money, but 6th or 7th - we're concerned about our artists rights.

HUSTLA CRIMMONS

That's why we're sinking millions of dollars into developing technology to stop people from downloading and distorting music illegally. The only

people who should be allowed to do that
is us.

CUT TO:

INT. DEATH JAM LABORATORY - DAY

A SCIENTIST in a white lab coat looks at the camera.
Behind him, TWO OTHER SCIENTISTS are sitting at a computer
with a TEENAGE GIRL. The title appears, "Death Jam
Laboratory."

SCIENTIST

We're currently working on a device
that lets people download MP3's
legally. Now the real trick here was
figuring out a way to make sure only
the person who's paying the monthly fee
to record companies can use it. One
way we've safeguarded this device from
being loaned out is by having a retinal
scan...

The teenager is sitting in front of a computer has her
retina scanned.

SCIENTIST (O.S.)

...voice recognition...

The teenager speaks into a box near the computer.

TEENAGER

My name is Jenny Thompson.

COMPUTER VOICE

Repeat.

TEENAGER

My name is Jenny Thompson.

SCIENTIST (O.S.)

...and by having the computer constantly
confirming that the user is indeed the
same person who initially logged on.

The teenage girl types something into her computer.

SCIENTIST 2

You can listen to a song now.

The teenage girl puts on a pair of headphones and sways her head to the music.

TEENAGER

This isn't bad...

She stops swaying.

It shut off.

SCIENTIST 3

5 seconds passed.

SCIENTIST 2

That's enough time so that another person could have switched seats with you and started to listen.

SCIENTIST 2

If you want to hear more, you can do another retinal scan...

SCIENTIST 3

And voice recognition...

The first scientist turns back to the camera.

SCIENTIST

While these devices may seem restrictive, I think in the end consumers will thank us for creating technology, which is legal and safe for all parties involved.

The teenage girl behind the scientist yanks her hand away from the keyboard.

TEENAGER

Ow! It shocked me.

A scientist looks over her shoulder.

FADE TO BLACK.