The release of the independent film
Nasty Old People
at The Pirate Bay.

⁻Alternative (digital) distribution of an independent movie in a collaborative way.

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1.ABSTRACT

The core of our research has been based on the question about how to distribute independent film in a collaborative way. This short paper consists of our method, findings and experiences while distributing the independent film Nasty Old People on the Pirate Bay.

Keywords
Alternative distribution, Independent film, Collaboration.

2.INTRODUCTION

Film distribution has traditionally been managed by larger corporations, and the distribution of low budget movies has been forced to conform to this model even though it's not really a suitable form for this cultural phenomenon due to the dependence on larger amounts of money. Hanna Sköld, independent film maker from Sweden, wanted our help to distribute her first feature film Nasty Old People in a new way. The film was made by people volunteering, by investing their time and money to tell the story.

The director Hanna Sköld defined three main goals, in the following order of priority; to reach as many viewers as possible, to encourage participation and discussion with the viewers and to find a way to repay her bank loan as well as the people involved.

3.DEFINITIONS

3.1.Independent film

A film that is produced mostly outside of a major film studio with a low budget. [a]

3.2.File sharing

The exchange of files containing e.g. music or software, supported by an internet based file sharing program.

Every computer works as a small server so that different files can be downloaded from many places. [b]

3.3.The Pirate Bay (TPB)

Website where internet users can exchange information with each other through a file sharing protocol for example like BitTorrent. [c]

3.4.Doodle
A symbol, or doodle, is traditionally placed on e.g. the Pirate Bays front page displaying their own logo on it's own or combined with some sort of present time comment or announcement.

3.5.Blog
Personal and open diary or log on the web. [d]

3.7.Facebook
webpage for social networking. Consists mostly of user profiles, which includes contact information, CV and digital photo albums. [e]

3.8.You Tube
Webpage for distribution and consumption of video clips, started 2005 to give private users the opportunity to share personal produced video clips. Today, YouTube is dominated by music videos and video films, which gave origin to discussion about copywrited material. [f]

4.OVERALL METHOD

To achieve the overall goals, we chose to use a torrent site to release the film. And, in order to make the distribution continue in a collaborative fashion we needed ways of reaching the potential viewers as well as convincing them to redistribute the film. To achieve this we started off the promotion ourselves via already used channels and through cooperation with liaisons. To maintain the overall concept it was important that the look and feel of the movie still was to be reflected in the distribution.

5.HOW THE METHOD WAS APPLIED TO THE CONCEPT

5.1 Torrent site as distribution channel.
Since the Pirate Bay is a controversial site and has been the target of many debates regarding copyright[1], we started out by having thorough discussions with Hanna about pro's and con's about the concept. We discussed if this could affect Hanna's possibility of getting sponsors for the movie, since giving away the movie "for free" might not be approved. But we also highlighted the advantages using the Pirate Bay, since the publicity surrounding this torrent site might also benefit our cause and boost the distribution of the feature. Choosing the Pirate Bay, among all the other available torrent sites, was obvious from the beginning since it is one of the largest trackers in the world[2] and because there are possibilities to promote media on the front page of the site. The Pirate Bay is also surrounded by a strong community that shares a common viewpoint about free culture[3], ideas similar to Hanna Sköld's ideological views.

Internet file sharing, or, Peer-to-Peer (P2P) might not always be the best way to generate money, but for an unknown creator who lacks the support of large media corporations, the main problem isn't how to make sure everyone is paying, it's getting people to know that you exist, and to accomplish that, P2P is a great tool, and it's free. TPB provided us with advertising and a solid distribution channel, all for free, with the only demand that we have to release the control of the distribution and let it spread from user to user as a torrent.

5.1.1 Similar distribution projects
Other similar projects made by other artists are for example the release of a book by Unni Drougge and a single song by Timbuktu. Unni Drougge is well known for her authorship and controversial articles on different topics in Sweden[4]. Ever since the Pirate Bay trial went on, Drougge clearly stated which side she supported by making her book "Boven i mitt drama kallas för kärlek" accessible for download[5]. She focused more on political reasons when she released her book, while Hanna made the movie Nasty Old People available simply because she wanted it to reach out to as many viewers as possible. A common reason as to why they also wanted to use this type of distribution is that they both wanted to try new ways of making their material free and available for the public.

Fig.1.Timbuktu's doodle on the Pirate Bay.

Like Hanna and Unni, the swedish hip hop artist Timbuktu has also tried this way of distributing his material. Timbuktu had his single "Tack för kaffet" released on TPB which got 300 000 downloads last year[6].

In an interview he stated that he likes to share and express himself through his music and that he saw the opportunity to do this through TPB. He also confirms that he doesn't like to have anything to do with the "big music corporations" who run the music industry today[7].

5.2 Networking - reaching the audience
To start the chain reaction and not loose time we decided to make use of the platforms that Hanna was already using to promote the film. We tailored The Nasty Old People blog and the Facebook fan page to accommodate communication and dialog about the film as well as way's of sponsoring Hanna and the team.

The presence of the Nasty Old People doodle on The Pirate Bay's front page was of course a very strong promotion of the film to reach potential viewers. And already early on viewers started to use the possibility to comment. The aim was to let the communication work its own way via the viewers, in the same way as the distribution of the film, by starting a chain reaction. To reach our goal, we included a special support film

in the torrent so that Hanna could explain her reasoning about the making of the film, and also make people aware of the possibility to donate money. Traditional tools like press releases were also used to communicate about the release to mainstream media.

The TPB doodle is often replaced with a clickable one that takes the visitors to a specific torrent or a site that TPB wants the visitors to see, a site linked from this doodle gets a greatly increased amount of hits.[8]

5.3 The look and feel of the concept
Early in the process, when we were brainstorming concepts, one of the ideas that came up was the notion of making the setting for the physical premiere of the film resemble the setting and overall atmosphere in the movie. The whole concept about the distribution reflecting the film originated from this idea. Since the movie to a great extent was made by people volunteering, investing their time and money, we wanted this to be reflected in our distribution, alongside the atmosphere of the movie. We figured that if the audience could contribute somehow, they would also be involved in the film on a deeper level.

5.3.1 The Graphical profile
We wanted the whole concept to be consistent, and our first goal was to create a coherent and overall graphical profile. We chose to work with the platforms that were already used in communicating the film, and sharpened the visual profile to make it more continuous. At first, the blog was visually rather anonymous, and didn't really represent the movie(with the exception of a couple of photos from the set, posted in the feed). We wanted to keep the authenticity of the blog, and avoid bringing about an obvious makeover. Instead we decided to bring new, but subtle, change to the graphical framework of visual elements associating with the movie. It was important that the alteration was discrete and still did not diverge to much from the process of the low-budget making of the film.
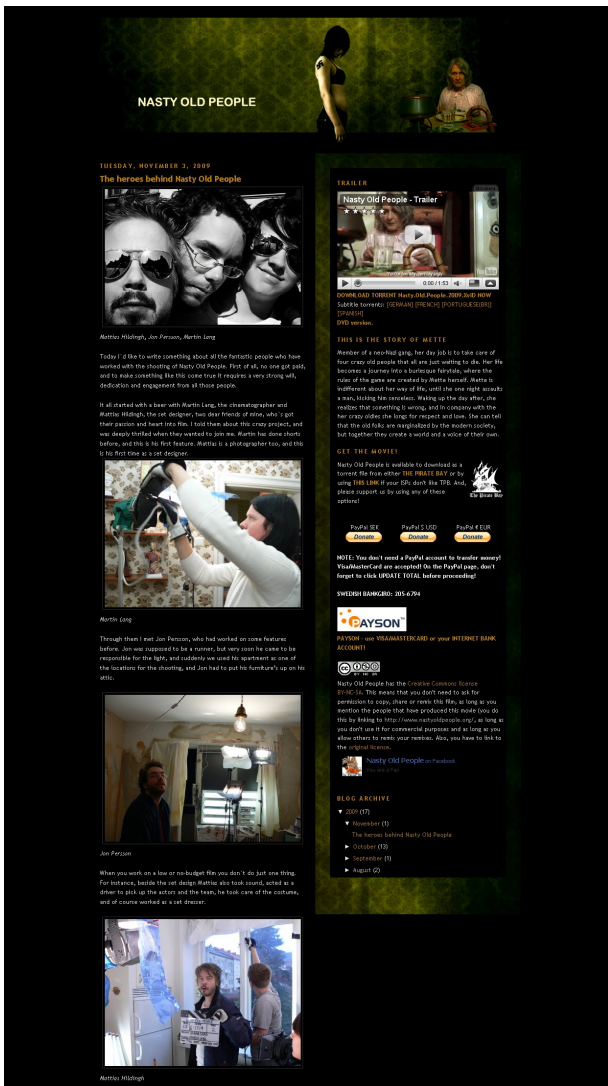
Fig.2.the new look of the blog.

5.3.2 The Doodle for TPB

Since we had decided to launch the movie as a torrent, free for download on TPB it became important to us to take the opportunity to reach out with information about the film there. Our goal was to display a doodle that would represent the movie, announce relevant information about the film and visually work as a logo but still fit in to the overall graphical profile.

Fig.3.Nasty Old People doodle on the Pirate Bay.

6.RESULTS

The project was planned and executed in less than ten days, and since it was the first officially released full length film

through a torrent site we didn't really know what kind of result we could expect. The film spread quickly during the time that the doodle was on TPBs front page, most of this traffic decreased without the displaying of the doodle. But there was still some traffic, as word about the film spread from people who saw it in the first wave.

So far(20 /11/0209), over 30 000 people from all over the world have downloaded the film, watched it and passed it on to others. People with no previous connection to the film has translated the subtitles to a number of different languages, including portuguese and german. Hanna Sköld, the director, has recived over 28 000 SEK up to this date(20 /11/0209). A great number of people has also shown interest in creating their own movie premieres and showing the film in their respective countries[9].

The film has gotten a lot of attention and recognition from the blogging community. Unni Drougge, who released a sound book on The Pirate Bay, was one of the first to post the movie-trailer on her blog [10]. Like Unni Drougge's blog, the Nasty old people website has a donate button where people can choose to donate little or a lot of money.
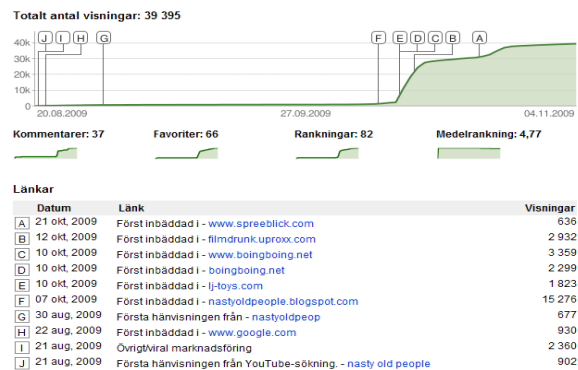
Fig.4.You-tube trailer view statistics. For larger picture and detailed statistics, see Appendix 1.

7.REFLECTIONS

One of many important reasons as to why so many different people downloaded the film and showed their appreciation and support through donating money, we believe is the fact that there is a large number of people out there who has been waiting for something like this to happen. People who believe that there shouldn't be just one way of distributing and making movies and support the idea that art and culture should be available to everyone, regardless of the size of their wallets.

We are aware that we took advantage of a special situation in a time of copyright controversy, and that this specific distribution model involving TPB might not be favourable to repeat for other independent movies. Although, our result shows that the basic idea of our method regarding networking and the fact that people can pay the amount of money they can or choose is a model that many people have been, and are still, waiting for. The collaboration among people in the audience has been the key to make this distribution work. This collaborative way of development in projects has been widely used in software development, based on ideas of the 70's hacker culture [11]. Softwares such as GIMP, OpenOffice, VLC and the web based encyclopedia Wikipedia have been developed and are being maintained in this collaborative fashion.

8.CONCLUSION

Our method shows that there is an alternative to the traditional form of film distribution, suitable for independent film. We believe that the basic principles of our method is something

worth taking further to develop new distribution platforms.

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[10] Nasty Old People trailer posted on Unni Drougge's blog. Retrieved 5 november, 2009 from unnidrougge.com:http://www.unnidrougge.com/2009/10/07/film-fur-alle/

[11] Free software movement. Retrieved 20 november, 2009 from wikipedia.org: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_software_movement

Appendix 1.

Totalt antal visningar: 39 395

Kommentarer: 37   Favoriter: 66   Rankningar: 82   Medelrankning: 4,77

Länkar

	Datum	Länk	Visningar
A	21 okt, 2009	Först inbäddad i - www.spreeblick.com	636
B	12 okt, 2009	Först inbäddad i - filmdrunk.uproxx.com	2 932
C	10 okt, 2009	Först inbäddad i - www.boingboing.net	3 359
D	10 okt, 2009	Först inbäddad i - boingboing.net	2 299
E	10 okt, 2009	Först inbäddad i - lj-toys.com	1 823
F	07 okt, 2009	Först inbäddad i - nastyoldpeople.blogspot.com	15 276
G	30 aug, 2009	Första hänvisningen från - nastyoldpeop	677
H	22 aug, 2009	Först inbäddad i - www.google.com	930
I	21 aug, 2009	Övrigt/viral marknadsföring	2 360
J	21 aug, 2009	Första hänvisningen från YouTube-sökning. - nasty old people	902

Fig.4.Nasty Old People trailer views on youtube.com.

Det här videoklippet är mest populärt i:

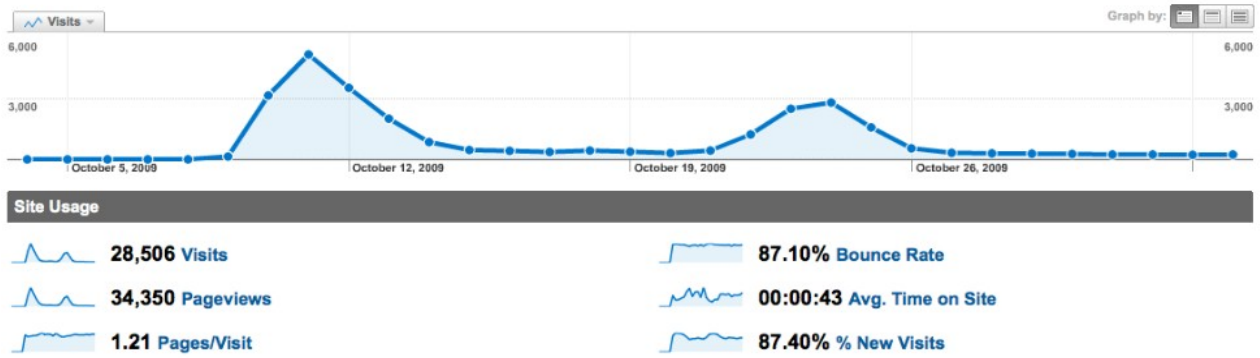**Fig.5.World map representing Nasty Old People trailer views on youtube.com.**

Fig.6.Blog visits. The peaks are the result of the doodle being displayed on the Pirate Bay. It was removed once in between the peaks.
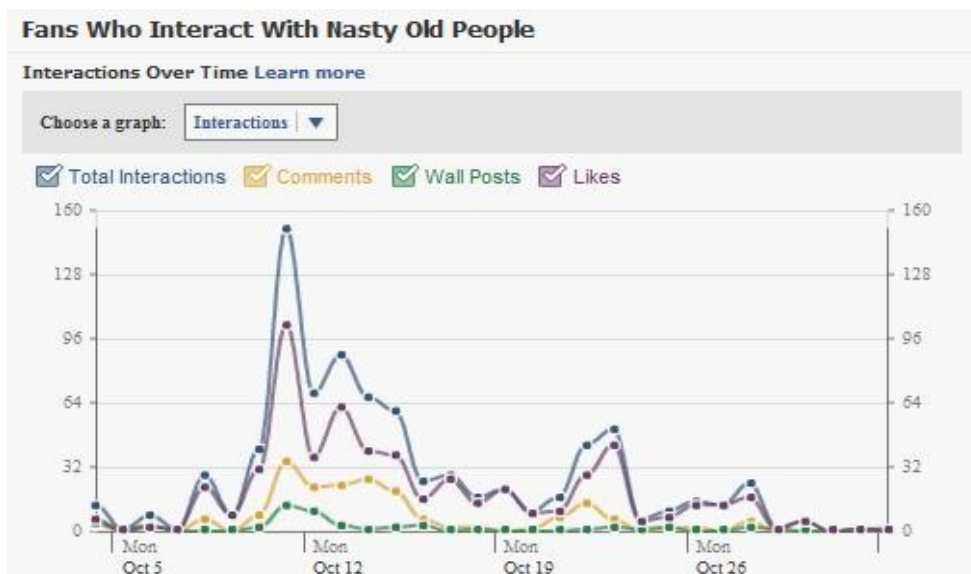

Fig.7.Facebook fanpage fans.

Fig.8.Interactions on the Facebook fanpage.