Radiohead To Prince: Unblock 'Creep' YouTube Vids

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After word spread that Prince covered Radiohead's "Creep" at the Coachella festival, the tens of thousands who couldn't be there ran to YouTube for a peek. Everyone was quickly denied -- even Radiohead.

All videos of Prince's unique rendition of Radiohead's early hit were quickly taken down, leaving only a message that his label, NPG Records, had removed the clips, claiming a copyright violation. But the posted videos were shot by fans and, obviously, the song isn't Prince's.

In a recent interview, Thom Yorke said he heard about Prince's performance from a text message and thought it was "hilarious." Yorke laughed when his bandmate, guitarist Ed O'Brien, said the blocking had prevented even him from seeing Prince's version of their song.

"Really? He's blocked it?" asked Yorke, who figured it was their song to block or not. "Surely we should block it. Hang on a moment." Yorke added, "Well, tell him to unblock it. It's our ... song."

YouTube prohibits the posting of copyrighted material. If the site receives a complaint from a copyright owner, it will in most cases remove the video(s). Whether the same could be done for a company not holding a copyright is less clear, but Yorke's argument would seem to bear some credence according to YouTube's policies. YouTube, which is owned by Google, declined to comment.

Prince also did not immediately respond.
to a request for comment.

The dispute was an interesting twist in debates over digital ownership, held between two major acts with differing views on music and the Internet. Radiohead famously released their most recent album, "In Rainbows," as a digital download with optional pricing. They also have a channel on YouTube.

When Prince performed at Coachella on April 26, he prohibited the standard arrangement of allowing photographers to shoot near the stage during the first three songs of his set. Instead, he had a camera crew filming his performance.

Prince, who founded NPG Records in 1993, has been innovative when it comes to music distribution, too. He released his 1997 album, "Crystal Ball," on the Internet and in 2006 was awarded a lifetime achievement award by the Webbys. In 2007, he gave away copies of his disc "Planet Earth" in a British Sunday newspaper.

But the Purple One has also shut down his official Web site and last September said he would sue YouTube and eBay for not filtering unauthorized content.

Prince fans have organized to urge him to relent in his legal fights to control images and photographs of himself. As of yesterday, the most popular YouTube clip about Prince playing "Creep" is an expletive-laden rant from Sam Conti Jr., who describes himself as a "former Prince fan."

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