

Presenting the series
Readings from a Sideways Manner

Bulletin 1 *Sideways*
by Laura Martens on 1.11.2023
Bulletin 2 *Intox is text and the other way around* by João Pedro Nogueira on 2.11.2023

Additional bulletin in support
for Palestine on 3.11.2023
Bulletin 3 *Creative stuttering*
by Tina El Khammas on 6.11.2023

Bulletin 4 *You couldn't steal a car, torrent a film or reproduce a book* by Linnea Lindgren on 7.11.2023

Bulletin 5 *(Untitled): Paris is in, iii, iii*
by Hannah Gazali on 8.11.2023
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Bulletin 7 *Self-still-life at 24*
by Archi Tsereteli on 10.11.2023
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1920: Prohibition in the United States becomes a nationwide law restricting the sale of alcohol. It was at this time that the word "bootleg" was coined to refer to the smuggling of illegal bottles of alcohol in the leg of one's boot. Those who took part

in creating and distributing this moonshine were deemed "bootleggers."
— "An Incomplete History of Bootlegs,"
Unlicensed: Bootlegging as Creative Practice,
Edited by Ben Schwartz



YOU WOULDN'T STEAL A CAR, TORRENT A FILM OR REPRODUCE A BOOK

2007

"You wouldn't steal a car" is the slogan of an anti-piracy advertisement that was shown internationally from 2004 to 2007 in cinemas and on commercial DVDs. It was created by the Federation Against Copyright Theft and the Motion Picture Association of America. In the campaign, pirating films was compared to the stealing of commodities existing in a more physical form, such as a car or a handbag. In 2007, I was 8-years-old and the upbeat song that played in the commercial was stuck in my head. I remember visiting a friend, where I witnessed her father burn films to empty discs for hours. Five years later I was filling my tiny MP3 player with the help of a Finnish website called Download YouTube. Without thinking twice about it, pirating became a key tool to access culture, entertainment and pleasure.

2023

As part of a student run film screening series at the Estonian Academy of Arts, Tallinn, my classmate Tima and I screened *Persepolis* (2007)—which we of course had torrented—in our school's auditorium. In the auto-fictive film, the main character Marjane is seen walking through the alleyways of Tehran, in search of a tape by Iron Maiden. She walks past a line of men dressed in long dark jackets, hiding contraband while they whisper the names of American music considered illegal. Western music, film and TV was prohibited during the Islamic Revolution of 1979 in Iran. Illegal vendors would frequent specific streets to sell bootlegs. Iranian-American music journalist Lily Moayeri describes the gradual lifting of the travel ban during the '80s after "bootleg audio and videotapes began circulating through an underground network, via the pilots of the Iran Air flights who would smuggle back albums on cassettes they had bought in Europe and videos of programs they had taped off European television."¹ Moayeri was also involved in making mixtapes and circulating them amongst friends. The sideways access to certain music created the soundscape of Marjane's bedroom in *Persepolis* and the atmosphere of Moayeri's high school parties during both of their teenage years in Tehran.

The day before the film screening, Andrew Beltran, a second year student from the graphic design department, launched a bootleg copy of James Langdon's *A School For Design Fiction* (2014). The book has been in demand between the graphic design master students, but it's currently out of print. During the past month I had seen Andrew working on it tirelessly, using the risograph machine based in our studio. He scanned, printed with three colours and perfect bound the final reproduction. In the book launch invite Andrew mentions James Langdon pursuing obsessive fidelity to content when designing books. This created a need to make the bootleg as close to original as possible.

Before this, pirating and bootlegging had been synonymous in my mind. Author Clinton Heylin separates the two in the book *Bootleg: The Secret History of the Other Recording Industry* (1995): "Unlike pirates, bootleggers are required to seek out arcane, long-lost recordings."² While the act of bootlegging is mischievous, it serves as a homage to the original maker, entering a grey area in the world of publishing and distribution. Entering this area makes it possible to gain access to culture and knowledge that would otherwise be unattainable to one's financial situation, restrictions implemented by the government or being outside of the general canon. The act of obtaining access to knowledge in a sideways manner serves as a way to question how knowledge is being produced and limited.

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Bootlegging can be understood in multiple different ways depending on the medium. Bootleg book is usually a reproduction of an already existing book that is not easily accessible, for example it has run out of print. Bootleg recording is often audio from a live concert or unreleased studio material which is then made

into an artefact by the bootlegger. In comparison to piracy, bootlegs can be seen more as a collector's item rather than something made for profit.

Pirating is using, copying and distributing material without paying the holder of copyrights. For example downloading films from an unauthorised site.



Reproducing is making a copy or close imitation of the original item.

1 Lyndsey Parker, *How one Iranian-American teen's bootleg mixtape circuit 'allowed us to mainline Western entertainment once again'* (Yahoo, 11.7.2023). <https://www.yahoo.com/entertainment/iranian-american-teens-bootleg-mix-tape-circuit-223528756.html>

2 Clinton Heylin, *Bootleg: The Secret History of the Other Recording Industry* (Great Britain: Penguin Group, 1995), p. 34.