

Major movie studios said they won a \$23.8 million judgment against a California company and its Malaysian owner for operating a Web site that charged customers to download illegally copied movies.

The company, MasterSurf Inc, is owned by Tan Soo Leong, and it operated a site called Film88.com, according to a statement by the Motion Picture Association of America, which represents the studios in governmental and industry matters.

The award was handed down earlier this week in U.S. District Court in Los Angeles as a default judgment, meaning the defendants never responded, according to the MPAA.

The defendants could not be reached for comment, according to Reuters.

The studios want to amass legal rulings against Web sites offering illegal copies of films for downloading as they press their campaign against copyright piracy.

The studios claim illegal copying and distribution of movies on videos and DVDs cost them more than \$3.5 billion annually, and they are concerned that distributing illegal film copies on the Internet will cost them billions more.

They have mounted educational and legal efforts aimed to end copyright piracy, and are now suing individual users who copy and share digital copies of movies via the Web.