

Japanese YouTuber convicted of copyright violation after uploading Let's Play videos

A Japanese court has convicted a man of violating copyright law after he uploaded gameplay and anime videos without publisher permission. Reported by Japanese paper *Asahi Shimbun*, the 53-year-old man, Shinobu Yoshida, was sentenced to two years in prison and assessed a 1 million yen fine (or about \$6,700 USD.)

Yoshida was arrested in May of this year after uploading gameplay videos of the visual novel *Steins;Gate: My Darling's Embrace* back in 2019. According to a press release from the Content Overseas Distribution Association (CODA), a Japanese anti-piracy trade group, the complaint apparently stemmed from the fact that Yoshida monetized the videos, which violated a Japanese law that prohibits making money off copyrighted material. Yoshida also uploaded videos summarizing episodes of the *Spy × Family* and *Steins;Gate* anime shows.

CODA characterized the complaint as “malicious cases of posting videos containing content and endings (spoilers) without permission from the rights holders, [...] and unfairly gaining advertising revenue through copyright infringement.”

Asahi Shimbun reported that the prosecution stated Yoshida's actions were, “a malicious act that tramples on the effort of content production.” They argued that because he uploaded videos that condensed and spoiled anime episodes and videos of gameplay from a visual novel – a style of game that focuses on reading to experience the story rather than through gameplay – consumers would be less incentivized to spend money on either.

According to *Shimbun*, this is the first time such a conviction has occurred in Japan.

According to CODA, Yoshida admitted to knowing that what he was doing was illegal. During the trial, he also apparently explained his actions, saying, "As part of my hobby, I wanted someone to see what I made."

<https://www.theverge.com/2023/9/7/23863271/japanese-youtuber-lets-play-copyright-infringement-steins-gate>