

Dear Mr Gowers

I just learned (via the Musical Traditions website - <http://www.mustrad.org.uk/editor.htm>) of the proposal to extend retrospectively mechanical copyright to 95 years. I can see that there may be good reasons to make this extension for new recordings, but I must oppose making this extension retrospective.

I am a fan of various obscure musical genres, especially British traditional music and song. Musical Traditions is one of several small companies (well, one-man bands usually, working very much part-time as a record label) who have released, and continue to release minority-interest, out-of-copyright material which would otherwise never see the light of day. Often these releases are made on CD-R, in tiny quantities. They are not, strictly speaking a viable economic proposition - certainly they would not be for "proper" commercial record labels, and those labels almost certainly would never release the material. Look at the recordings of traditional British singers and musicians made by Peter Kennedy and others for the BBC in the 1950s. These are key recordings in the nation's folk heritage. Yet very few have ever been released - and those that have been, have been licensed by other companies; I'm not aware of the BBC itself ever releasing any (and only very rarely do they use the recordings in current programme-making). So the only way one could hear the recordings is by visiting Cecil Sharp House or the National Sound Archive in London.

But once the copyright has expired, small minority-interest labels will undoubtedly step in and gradually make the recordings available. This won't harm the BBC (they've shown no inclination to release them so far, so are unlikely to start now). But it will make enthusiasts like me very happy; it will allow singers to learn the songs and help keep them alive; and it will allow scholars to study the songs more easily, and generally add to our understanding of British musical traditions.

No doubt similar situations apply re. other genres e.g. British jazz.

For the benefit of music lovers and the health of musical traditions in this country, I very much hope you will not implement this proposed extension.

Yours

Andy Turner