

Dear Andrew Gowers,

I didn't know that the 50 year copyright rule was under discussion until I heard Cliff Richard on Radio Four's Today programme, and I hope I'm not too late to add my own "take" on the subject.

There are one or two points I'd like to make.

As a record buyer, mainly of material from the forties, fifties and sixties.. I've frequently contacted the big record companies, asking if they had plans to re-release this or that particular item or album... Invariably, when they even deigned to reply, was always the same - and I paraphrase - "It would not be an economic proposition, as the sales generated would not warrant the cost". End of story.

Thankfully, with the advent of the little independent re-issue companies, many of what I call the "little gems" which I once enjoyed have been dusted off and restored and made available again, under the fifty year copyright law.

Now, I feel that if the fifty year rule is extended to ninety five years, those same "gems" and many others like them will languish in the dusty vaults of one of the major companies, never to be heard again. And I feel that it would be a sad day for record buyers like myself if the fifty year copyright rule was extended.

Cliff Richard, and others who have done very well out of the record business through well worded contracts in the first place, claim that the "lesser stars" (my words) who are now in, or coming up to retirement need the royalties that an extension of the fifty year rule would bring them to supplement their state pensions.. CR referred specifically to the "stars" who arrived on the "scene" shone briefly and then faded into obscurity... Many of these "stars" (young at the time) went on to find work in other professions and will no doubt enjoy the pensions they saved for in those other professions and jobs. Also, many of those "stars" had contracts which gave them a diminishing scale of royalty fees..... never very much in the first place and reducing to little or nothing within at most, twenty years. The actual musicians who backed these "stars" received only a flat session fee and no royalties.. so the extension of the copyright period would not benefit them either.

The only losers in all this, would be the families or estates of the actual songwriters..... and of course the buyers of -let's call it- "nostalgia recordings", like myself. For if the copyright period is increased, so will be the reluctance of the major record companies in making available material from their vaults - at a price older buyers like myself could afford.

Also, what artists like Cliff Richard seem not to appreciate is the fact that the "nostalgia" market is decreasing year on year as those who would buy this kind of material pop their clogs.!

Let's face it, the small independent re-issue companies, who carry no extra baggage in the way of excess staff have been willing to take a chance with what they press and sell... the major companies who made the original discs surely would have well and truly recouped their initial outlay tens, maybe thousands of times over during the fifty year copyright period... and I feel that this push for an extension is fired by these companies via folk like the high profile Cliff Richard simply for some sort of greed.

Let's face it, we can only choose to buy from what is offered... if the major players decide to keep the original recordings in their vaults and not re-issue them.. then we, the public lose out, as do the songwriters and their families.

For the sake of people like me, and many more who eagerly look forward to hearing the latest releases from the small independent re-issue companies.. (maybe re-living our youth. ... one way to remain forever young perhaps..!!)

Please, please keep the fifty year copyright limit in place.

We all know that our Prime Minister, his family and Cliff Richard are good friends... but in this instance I hope that their friendship will in no way affect the outcome of your review .

Yours Sincerely

Geoffrey Wilding