

Sir, although I live in the United States, I wanted to write to you about the push to extend copyright on sound recordings from 50 years to something greater.

I have bought music from England reissue companies and have also helped compile reissue releases with the Jasmine label. I don't make money at this (a small amount), but it is merely a hobby. As a side note, my specialty is to contact the artist being re-released, if they are still alive, many are in their late 70s and early 80s, and are still sharp and interesting people, glad to help. I began with my own aunts (who performed as the Bell Sisters), on the RCA label in 1952-1953 and had three or four chart hits. RCA has forgotten them and of course will not sell back the master recordings to the artist either. It all was gathering dust; until I met the folks at Jasmine, who did a lovely job restoring the vinyl and making it available on a CD. I get so many fan letters, which I pass on to my aunts, from those who buy the CD and are so glad to hear this music again, and to hear MORE of the Bell Sisters than they ever did - some of the music never released, some of it unreleased for 50 years.

I've interviewed a dozen neglected pop stars (folks with a dozen charting hits in the late 40s and 50s; names of Richard Hayes, Toni Arden, Eileen Barton, Karen Chandler, to name a few) who are thrilled someone cares enough about their music to make it available. They don't worry about their "cut." Because their own U.S. labels have long since forgotten them, except for occasionally dropping their top hit onto a "Best of" collection. Often, their record contracts reflect no way for them to receive royalties for these sales - as re-licensing and reissuing was never a provision of the day.

Thanks the U.K. and other European labels, some GREAT music and a big piece of musical heritage is retained. That a U.K. label can put out a 50 track 2-CD set, can really help fans realize the scope of an artist career.

There are a few who lose funds because of the sound recording licensing fees, but I would be certain that 90%+ of the artists represented by reissue labels are neglected, forgotten or under-represented by their labels.

What I would really like to see, if a copyright extension must be considered, is an "orphaned work" clause. If a label or owner hasn't made a recording commercially available for, say, 20 to 25 years; then it should be fair game. They are failing to exploit their own catalog; effectively "locking the vault" on music that may not make them the megaprofits they want to see. In this digital age, it's almost unbelievable that nearly every song in a back catalog isn't available for quick and easy legal download.

My thoughts; I appreciate the chance to air them.

Yours, Rex Strother