

I am sorry not to have time to check the bureaucratic procedures to comment on the Gowers report.

First, the accessibility of the present UK copyright and related law is much impeded by the referential nature of many amendments to the 1988 Act and the fact that some highly important law (eg about springing copyrights) is hidden away in statutory instruments. It is frankly urgent that a consolidated version of the act and at least the main statutory instruments made under it (or affecting it) be published at least electronically.

Second there is legitimate cultural concern that important recorded works become locked up by the absence of consents and remain unavailable.

Record

companies do not make works available, and when they do they have been repackaged so the original album sequencing is lost. Alternative versions (including some recordings the Rolling Stones made for the BBC) are never issued. This will get worse if the copyright in sound recordings is extended to 95 years.

The problem is even more marked in relation to folk and contemporary music where there is a notorious folk music entrepreneur who has bought the rights in a large number of artistically important recordings by respected artists, and the works are not released, to the pecuniary impoverishment of the performers and composers, and the cultural impoverishment of the nation.

It is not just a problem of copyright as such. Performers' consents can stultify cultural dissemination too. For decades the seminal recordings of "The Young Tradition" were unavailable here partly because of the record company and partly because of the estate of the late Peter Bellamy.

If rights of increased duration are to be granted it is very important that compulsory licences be available together with compulsory access to master material.

Finally, it is overdue that the law be reformed on the basis that if royalties due to licensors, particularly artists and composers, are not paid, the rights they assign or licence automatically revert, whether or not the rights were assigned or licensed and whether or not to individuals or companies. This lacuna caused great hardship to many of the groundbreaking bands of the 1960s and 1970s, including (notoriously) the Small Faces. The Bankruptcy Act 1907 may not be the best model, but at least it was a try to solve this problem.

Yours etc

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