

Dear Mr Gowers,

I am passionate about vintage recordings of the 1930s to the 1960s, especially music written for the theatre, and am very concerned that should the copyright be extended I may not be able, in future, to buy CDs from the smaller labels who release material over fifty years old.

For example: I recently bought a CD of an obscure 1955 London show called "The Jazz Train", which was previously only available as an extremely rare 45 rpm EP. Although I owned a copy of the record, it was scratched and played with clicks. EMI, who own the masters has never re-released it, nor would they, as the recording had clearly not sold well the first time around otherwise it wouldn't be rare today. Yet a small label took a gamble, had the recording cleaned up, and released it with other interesting tracks on a CD this year. The booklet is informative, the sound quality excellent, and above all, a rare show recording is once again available for all to hear, and at a reasonable price. This was only possible because the law is as it stands. It is unthinkable that we might have had to wait a further 45 years to hear "The Jazz Train" again.

This is only one example. There are many show recordings which have never been issued on CD, and will not see the light of day again in my lifetime if the law is changed. And not only shows. I imagine there are enthusiasts for jazz, classical music, and many other categories of music who are feeling equally scared by the proposals.

I feel very strongly that rights are protected for performers, but that a period of 50 years is quite reasonable. If a song was a hit, then the amount of money generated within that time will be considerable, and, surely, sufficient, as the company will have issued the recording many times during the period. But the big record labels will never issue the less popular material like "The Jazz Train" that are sitting in their vaults. It is down to the smaller companies to take the gamble and release this material, thus preserving it for generations to come and keeping the music alive. I imagine that if required to pay performer royalties as well as composer royalties they will be unable to survive financially, and this important rare material will be lost for a further 45 years.

Fifty years is reasonable. Ninety-five years is not.

I don't want to have to wait until I am nearly 90 years of age to hear an obscure 1958 show on CD.

And nobody will issue this material except the little companies that will probably be forced out of business if the law is changed.

I have very real concerns that Big Business will support the change to 95 years, but that the small companies will have only a tiny voice in the debate which will follow in the coming weeks, and that enthusiasts like myself will hardly be heard at all. Please consider freedom of information, and public access to rare music when weighing up the issues.

Simon Moss