

Dear sir,

I wish to protest in the strongest possible terms about the proposed extension of Mechanical Copyright to 95 years and the possibility of this being made 'retrospective'.

This would have a devastating effect on archives of historically important recordings which are, despite their importance, of interest only to a small number of people. My own interest is in the traditional music and songs of England and there are many invaluable recordings which are certain to be lost if these proposals were to be made law.

Currently, small companies, even individuals, spend years collecting records (often sole remaining copies) and tapes relating to their own specialist interest which, thanks to modern technology, are now able to be published on CD or DVD for the small audience which values them. An archive copy of such re-issued material is also lodged with the British Library. Much of this CD re-issue programme involves material which is now out of copyright and has not been recently re-issued by the copyright owner. These recordings have sold in tiny quantities of typically under 100, just covering costs, but enthusiasts will continue to re-issue them if allowed to. This is a task which no commercial company will ever undertake.

However, if this proposed extension is granted, a recording that is extant in only one copy or in a personal recording would still be brought under the ownership of the major companies. They could - and probably would - demand fees, which would make amateur re-issue financially unviable, or simply refuse permission for such limited re-issues. To leave responsibility for these historically important recordings in the hands of concerns with solely commercial interests will be fatal. Enthusiastic amateurs have re-issued far more recordings than all the major companies have re-issued between them in the past 60 years.

To make any extension of Mechanical Copyright retrospective will be disastrous. Those major labels will not - could not afford to - re-issue the vast majority of their archive material. The only effect would be to stop enthusiasts from publishing it, as they currently do. What we have to consider here is part of our country's collective heritage. This decision will determine whether future generations will thank us for our efforts to preserve a disappearing part of our country's culture, or curse a short-sighted decision which will deprive them of that valuable resource.

Yours faithfully,

Mr Chris Bartram