

COPYRIGHT AT THE DIGITAL MARGINS

WP 4C.2

10/12/12 - 6/12/13

Deliverables:

- (1) One/two academic articles
- (2) Dissemination via blogs and/or popular media
- (3) Conference paper



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RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What are the attitudes towards copyright of unsigned musicians, those working on the 'digital margins' of the music industry?

How do their views differ from what we know about the attitudes of consumers, the industry and established musicians? Is it that they care too about copyright and its abuse? That they are entirely indifferent? Or that they know nothing about copyright?

What might be the implications for policy and/or education of these attitudes to, and views of, copyright?

RESEARCH CONTEXT



Unsigned musicians have access to the press, articulating their views to a large audience. Their views tend to reflect the organisations to which they are affiliated.



Lee Edwards et al (2013) have revealed consumers' knowledge of copyright issues, and how this informs their complex practices.



The industry has access to media forums and to policy initiatives, such as Ian Hargreaves's *Digital Opportunity: a review of Intellectual Property and Growth* (2011)

PROGRESS TO DATE

An online survey completed that asked musicians - for whom music was not their main source of income - to reflect on how they viewed their music; their music practices; their knowledge of, and attitude to, copyright

The survey was followed up by 20+ semi-structured interviews with a cross-section of respondents, in which we investigated further their routine music practices; their knowledge of copyright and how it was obtained; their views on copyright in an era of digital technology

Two journal articles drafted:

- 'Copyright at the Digital Margins: The Attitudes and Values of Unsigned Musicians'
- 'Intellectual Property Values: What Musicians Talk About When They Talk About Copyright'

Presentations given at:

- MusDig - Music, Digitization, Mediation: Towards Interdisciplinary Music Studies
- PCWP6: Popular Culture and World Politics Conference
- Norwich Sound and Vision 2013
- MeCCSA 2014

FINDINGS

Attitudes to Copyright

50% felt copyright was 'Quite' or 'Very' important to their music
Copyright was generally less important to younger respondents

56% felt illegal downloading or 'piracy' was 'Quite' or 'Very' important
Illegal downloading was considered the most severe form of copyright abuse

Copyright was less of a consideration for classical musicians
Uncredited sampling was considered a greater form of abuse by jazz musicians

Singer/songwriters tended to a keener interest in issues of copyright than those with any other role

Copyright Education

Conversation with other musicians was the main way that musicians learned about copyright

Only around 20% of those affiliated with an organisation (e.g. PRS, PPL, Musicians' Union) said that they learned about copyright from those bodies



Copyright and Cash

Musicians tended to worry about copyright only when there was a real prospect of making money. Until then, an email address or tracking data was as valuable as a royalty statement:

'My attitude is like a start-up ... you build up a community and then you monetize it ... Give it away free, remove all the obstacles that would normally be there ... I never actually gave music away free, I would swap it for an email address.'

'I didn't feel wronged by the website re-uploading it. I thought it was quite nice to an extent, because ... they'd actually obviously listened to it ... and compared it to [The Pixies] ... I think it'd be more of an issue if they were selling it, cos if it's free on my website and they're making a profit ... that is an unfair use of it. ... To me they've stolen that tracking data, there's like 200 hits there that I don't have any information about. On the other hand if it wasn't posted there then they wouldn't have downloaded it.'

And without money or income from music, higher principles have to be put on hold:

'Well I know that if I was making more money I would be more inclined to pay for [samples] like that ... I don't like the idea of everybody just nicking everything, it's just at my level I feel sort of justified I suppose.'

Policy and Politics

Formally, musicians felt that illegal downloading could most effectively be dealt with by educating users on copyright and the introduction of cheaper forms of downloading, but their discussion of copyright revealed a complex (and sometimes contradictory) set of political attitudes.

The same musician said this:

'If they copied my music and it cost me money, that would make me livid'

and this: 'In terms of copyright, ... my [attitude] is isn't it just great that we can hear anything and that we can share'

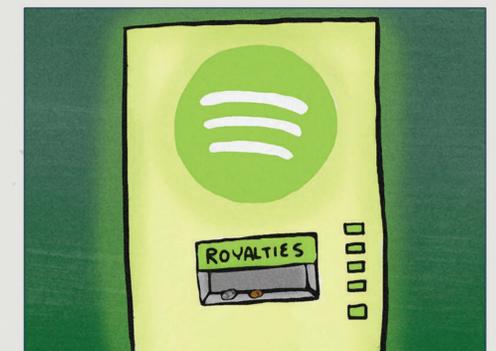


Illustration by Brad Jonas

CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED

Difficulty in gaining respondents for online survey, when target participants cover such a broad demographic.

Some genres underrepresented in our interviews.



NEXT STEPS

Publication of two articles; in *Media, Culture & Society* and one other journal.

Further dissemination of research.