

Article link:

<https://www.theverge.com/2021/7/1/22558292/police-officer-video-taylor-swift-youtube-copyright>

Accompanying twitter thread: <https://twitter.com/cfiesler/status/1412071879188357129>

This article is about how police officers, when confronted by citizens legally recording them, are playing popular music in a pre-emptive attempt to thwart the videos being posted on Youtube. Their thought is that Youtube's copyright flagging algorithm will recognize the song in the video as a copyright violation and prohibit the video from being posted. Since people do have a right to record interactions with authorities, this seems to be an unethical usage of what this algorithm is meant to be used for. In the article, it does say the police officer being recorded makes the point that "recording was fine — but posting it online wouldn't be." I am not sure as to the legalities of what you can and cannot do with a recording of a Police officer, so the officer may have a point in that regard.

However, beyond the wide range of implications of this in regards to abuse of authority and police finding ways to avoid being held accountable for their actions, acting in defiance of the rights of citizens and breaking the law with impunity, my analysis of this lies more in the automated nature of this copyright flagging algorithm and, while it may help expedite the process of addressing copyright claims, it can be often be too aggressive in serving the rights of copyright holders or, as we saw in the article, be abused. There are even scammers who file false copyright claims to public domain music and more to monetize other peoples videos (See [this article](#)) Because of this, it places an undue burden on those who are flagged as violating copyrights in their video even if done unintentionally or within legal boundaries of fair usage or public domain. This image shows a flow chart of how navigating a dispute with this algorithm can payout: <https://pbs.twimg.com/media/E04AJu3VEAEm-FX?format=jpg&name=large>

I have personal experience with this issue. When we first went into lockdown and teachers were scrabbling to make resources for their students during remote learning. Because I am not a core subject teacher, most of my lessons were being taught asynchronously. I was making several Youtube video trying to teach musical concepts and subject matter. But when I would try to include even a short clip of some musical examples, my videos would get flagged for copyright violations and the video would not be posted or the musical example would be omitted from the video. I know that I was within the realm of fair use since they are being used for educational purposes, but the process of disputing these claims are 1.) lengthy to resolve (I was making these videos at best a week before the lesson was distributed) and 2.) risky because if your claim is denied, you could run the risk of losing your account (that would have been detrimental to my ability to teach remote at that point).

The ethical issue at hand here, to me, is that this type of algorithm offers too much opportunity for abuse and can disenfranchise the content creators that are vital to a platform like Youtube or for people looking to use this platform for educational purposes.