

Title:

Copyright and music, the right way to protect your rights.

Word Count:

699

Summary:

If you enjoy writing and recording your own music then you probably just want to concentrate on that, but it is worth taking a few steps today that can save a mountain of trouble later on.

Keywords:

music, songwriting, protect, copyright , advice, copyright notice, music copyright, songwriter

Article Body:

If you enjoy writing and recording your own music then you probably just want to concentrate on that, but it is worth taking a few steps today that can save a mountain of trouble later on.

Register your work:</h2>

If you want to get published, or even if you self publish your work, you will be sending copies to your agents, record companies, or other individuals.

Can you trust those who get hold of your work to respect your rights, or will you discover one day that your music is being passed off as someone else's work, while you miss out on the royalties.

Having seen my own work turn up in the hands of plagiarists who have claimed it as their own, I am an advocate of copyright registration, as a means of protection, and would recommend Copyright Witness as being a very fast, efficient and secure registration service.

By registering, you place on record verifiable proof of your copyright, and this means that you can prove your copyright should the person copying your songs claims they wrote them first.

I find the cheapest and most convenient way to register is to send a whole album as a single 'work' (i.e. a CD containing all your songs). Registering on-line can be a little cheaper, but be sure to convert your songs to mp3s, otherwise uploading will take an age!

Mark all your work with copyright notices: </h2>

A copyright notice is simply a piece of text that states that the work is

subject to copyright and the authors name, it is often followed by the phrase 'all rights reserved' which simply means that you withhold all rights to that work as is your right under copyright law.

A copyright notice is not required under law - the work will still be subject to copyright without one, and the 'all rights reserved' statement adds nothing, (this is assumed unless you explicitly state that you relinquish some rights). So why use them? Simple: It's a deterrent. It makes it clear to everyone that your work is subject to copyright, and that you take your rights seriously.

The standard format for copyright notices is 5 elements:

- 1.The word 'copyright'.
 - 2.The internationally recognised copyright symbol '©'.
 - 3.The year of publication.
 - 4.The name of the copyright owner.
 - 5.An optional statement of intent, (not required).
- For example: ' Copyright © 2006 J. Bloggs. All rights reserved.'

The © 'C in a circle' is the normal copyright symbol and can be applied to most types of work. It can be found in most word processor programs under the 'insert' menu.

<h2>Band member agreements:</h2>

If you write songs within a band, you need to plan for the day when you will be earning royalties from your songs, and be clear what will happen if a member of the band leaves or if the band splits up.

The best way to deal with this is to all agree what is fair, and then put this in writing as a formal agreement which you all sign. This way there is little chance of any comeback if the band splits for less than amicable reasons.

Here are a few specific points you should consider:

1. If a member of the band leaves, do they forfeit all rights to the songs, and the songs remain the sole property of the band?
2. Are the songs written by one person, or a few principal writers, who wish to retain all rights?
3. If a band member leaves would both he and the band both retain a claim to the song, (this is probably the most likely option).
4. How do you determine each persons share? Do you base it on a song by song basis ranking each members input, or use the same formula for every song.
5. Do you simply divide everything up equally, (i.e. 5 members each own 20% of

all the songs and therefore receives 20% of the proceeds/royalties), or do you rank each individuals input?

6. If a member leaves, can he/she perform or profit from the music outside of the band. As a example of this in 'real' life, Ozzy Osbourne still performs songs he co-wrote during his time with Black Sabbath.