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Copyright Your Song

Copyright is one of those things that artists really don't want to have to deal with but you need to know that it is *crucial* for copyright to be part of your thinking as a songwriter.

I want you to know three things about copyright by the end of this chapter and then I'll share some resources at the end which you can check out for further reading.

01 Make copyright an issue before it becomes an issue
What do I mean by this? If you are involved in collaboration when it comes to songwriting, nobody thinks copyright is an issue at the beginning. Copyright usually only becomes an issue when there is money involved. There are countless horror stories of copyright gone bad and relationships are often the collateral damage.

Solution? Make copyright an issue before it becomes an issue.

If you are working on a song with someone, agree before you begin on an ownership split. Generally, if you are starting from scratch, the copyright will be split evenly between everyone involved. Two people writing? Each owns 50% of the copyright. Three people? 33% each, and so on.

If one of the writers is bringing an idea or a mostly finished song to the writing time, there may need to be a discussion about percentages being skewed to reflect the increased ownership. At the same time, the original writer is bringing in a collaborator to get the song finished so maybe that is worth a 50/50 split rather than 60/40 or some other breakdown.

Because there is no *rule* on how this split should be done, make it an issue before it becomes and issue and agree on how copyright will work.

I promise you that the first time this conversation happens it will be very awkward but better to have the awkward conversation among friends than among lawyers.



02 Get it in writing
This doesn't mean you need a lawyer to write up a legal document outlining every last details and protecting your interests in the case of any legal action but it does mean you should have something in writing before you begin which is signed by each person involved in the collaboration.

At the very least, this will acknowledge that everyone is on the same page when it comes to percentages or shared ownership and can be used as a starting point if there is any kind of disagreement in the future.

As your songwriting increases and you have more opportunities to write with other people, you will begin to lose track of verbal or handshake agreements with different people on different songs. Having something simple in writing makes sure that everyone has a copy of what was agreed to.

By all means, if you think legal advice is needed and you would like to have a proper legal document in place, nothing wrong with that. *I'm not a lawyer so please don't take anything in this chapter as legal advice.* To start, you could join either ASCAP or BMI as a songwriter and have access to some of their member resources or search online for a quality copyright lawyer who can help you with this.

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03 Copyright protects you
Nobody wants to think poorly of people they are collaborating with - you wouldn't have wanted to write that song with that person if you thought they were a jerk or didn't trust them. Unfortunately, people change, circumstances change and even ethics change. If that should happen with your co-writer you've got something in writing which can be used to protect you if the end result is a legal situation.

Of course nobody wants to begin a creative relationship by thinking about all of the things which could go wrong but by simply playing out some of the "what if..." scenarios in your head you can very quickly see why having a copyright agreement in writing will be very valuable.

One simple piece of paper with an agreement on how the ownership of the song is split could save you endless amount of money, stress and heartache.

Copyright Resources

You'll need to check on regulations in your own country but if you are a citizen of a country which is part of the **Berne Convention** then copyright is automatic once the song has been produced in a physical form. Got a song ready to copyright? Type up and print a lyric sheet with the names of the authors and the date of completion. Make a quick audio recording of the song and capture it on CD, USB, online storage, etc. Copyright is now in effect.

Registering copyright is a whole other kettle of fish and here are some links which may help you learn more about copyright registration and how to do it. Again, check with regulations in your own country but these should be a good start:

United States Copyright Office - **www.copyright.gov**
Canadian Intellectual Property Office - **www.cipo.gc.ca**
UK Intellectual Property Office - **www.ipo.gov.uk**
Songwriter Associations (USA) - **www.bmi.com/associations/listing**
ASCAP - **www.ascap.com**
BMI - **www.bmi.com**
SOCAN - **www.socan.ca**

Congratulations! You made it through.

So what now? Now you write. Now you take action. Now you pull out those ideas you stashed away for *someday*, you pick up your guitar, you sit at the piano, you grab a pencil and you begin to write.

If the only thing you accomplish from reading this ebook is *reading this ebook* we have both failed. I have failed in providing you a resource which inspires and motivates you to actually spend time writing and you have failed in allowing that inspiration and motivation to actually work itself out as some new creative work.

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Write.
Worship.
Songs.

God is with you.

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"Write Worship Songs" is an ebook of original content originally published at www.chrisfromcanada.com
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