

From: [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Copyright Alliance / Intellectual Property infringement
Date: Monday, March 22, 2010 8:33:35 PM

Dear Ms. Espinel

The Copyright Alliance and A2IM (the U.S. independent music label trade organization) have informed me of this welcome invitation from the Obama Administration to share my thoughts on my rights as a creator.

My name is John W. Edwards and I am the president of independent recording label Renaissance Records, which I founded in 1993, operating in Scottsdale, Arizona. Over the past 17 years I have represented recordings by artists of note (such as Yes, Asia, Juice Newton, Alan Parsons, Firefall, Amazing Rhythm Aces, Lynn Anderson, Pure Prairie League and many others) as well as many young, developing artists from the U.S. and many other countries.

In each case we are endeavoring to protect the rights of our artists and their recordings from illegal downloads and bootleggers. The bulk of our recording artists are fully independent, meaning that they support themselves through legitimate sales of their recordings and touring to promote their releases. While CD piracy has long been a problem for major name artists and large companies like Sony, Universal and Warner, the digital age has now passed down that effect to independent artists and labels through illegal download sites and file sharing. This directly takes money out of the pockets of these independent artists and the labels, like mine, that support their efforts.

What can the U.S. government do to stem the tide? I have three ideas to help alleviate this problem.

1. **Illegal download sites** - as soon as a site is discovered that is allowing illegal downloads of protected intellectual properties Federal authorities should move quickly to identify the site source location and site owners/directors. If the site is based out of the country Federal authorities should notify the country of origin for assistance and institute a blocking protocol that keeps internet users from accessing the site domestically. If it is a domestically hosted site it should be immediately shut down and the owners of the site prosecuted under criminal infringement laws. Additionally, any Internet Service Providers that knowingly support such a site should be prosecuted equally under the same laws.

2. **File sharing** - while it is impossible to stop everyone from sharing files or creating illegal CD copies to pass around to friends, sites that promote such activities should be reprimanded and fined by the U.S. Government. Federal authorities should use platforms such as MySpace, Facebook and other social networking sites to both educate the public about the criminal nature of such activity and what it does to struggling recording artists and encourage the promotion of legal downloads and CD purchases. CDs can be encoded in the same way as DVDs to prevent the copying of intellectual properties illegally. A system can be implemented that allows the owner one digital copy for backup and the ability to place their music on their PC or iPod, but not to enable the transfer to another user without a fee.

3. **Compliance and notification awards** - the U.S. government can offer some kind of system to allow citizens to anonymously report bootleggers, illegal downloaders and file sharers and illegal sites without fear of themselves being prosecuted, as is done by the RIAA through ISPs. This does not encourage compliance with the law, but rather finding ways to circumvent the law by those who will continue the illegal practice. Potential offenders can be swayed the other direction by a system of rewards and benefits, perhaps in partnership with legal download sites like iTunes. If their tip is proven valuable and accurate they can earn free downloads for themselves subsidized by a small tax on blank recording media.

While these are three very simple concepts, they are easily implemented and are cost effective. They should also produce the maximum positive results and encourage a generation of law-abiding music listeners to keep their music flowing without compromising the artists they love to listen to.

I would be happy to discuss these and other ideas with you at any time.

Sincerely

John W. Edwards
President
Renaissance Records