

Is Your Favorite Fight Song Under Copyright Protection?

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Just about every sports team has its own fight song. Some teams wrote fight songs or had them commissioned specifically for the team. Others adopted previously written songs as their own. Some have been around since the 1800s, and some are relatively new. Are they free for anyone to play? Samantha Levin, 2019 spring law clerk in the Copyright Office's Office of Public Information and Education, researched the copyright status of ten famous fight songs. Remember, this status only refers to the registration of the song (lyrics and/or music). Arrangements and sound recordings of songs in the public domain could still be under copyright protection.



The 1934 Notre Dame football team runs through plays to the music of the Notre Dame University band.

“Victory March”

Notre Dame Fighting Irish

Brothers and Notre Dame alumni John and Michael Shea composed “Victory March” in 1908. The song was registered for copyright that same year and first played in 1909. It is now in the public domain.

“The Victors”

Michigan Wolverines

University of Michigan student Louis Elbel wrote “The Victors” in 1898 after Michigan's loss to then-rival University of Chicago. In 1899, John Philip Sousa first played the song publicly. It is now in the public domain.

“Rocky Top”

Tennessee Volunteers

While it's not the school's official fight song, “Rocky Top” has come to be associated with the Volunteers. The story told is that married songwriting duo Boudleaux and Felice Bryant wrote the song in ten minutes in 1967 as a diversion from writing slower songs. University of Tennessee has a perpetual license to play the song at games, but “Rocky Top” is under copyright protection until 2062.

“Boomer Sooner”

Oklahoma Sooners

This fight song began with a tune borrowed from Yale University's fight song (itself a borrowed tune). University of Oklahoma student Arthur M. Alden wrote “Boomer Sooner” in 1905. It is now in the public domain.

“Glory, Glory”

Georgia Bulldogs

The Georgia Bulldogs fight song has been played at football games as early as the late 1800s. Renowned pianist Hugh Hodgson arranged the song in its current form in 1915. It is now in the public domain.

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