

# Celebrating 1978

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This year, we celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the current copyright law taking effect. The Copyright Act of 1976 was signed into law on October 19, 1976, and went into effect on January 1, 1978. Register of Copyrights Barbara Ringer spent many years—before and after becoming Register—writing the Act and pushing the legislation through Congress.

The year the law took effect was a big year for creativity. Many albums, songs, movies, television shows, and books that were registered with the Office that year are still popular today. Here is a look back at some of the first works protected by the new law.

Popular music in 1978 was a mix of rock, disco, and easy listening. “Shadow Dancing” by Andy Gibb topped Billboard’s Top Hot 100 songs of the year. Gibb wrote the song with his brothers Barry, Maurice, and Robin Gibb, and the sound recording was registered with the Office on June 21, 1978. Other top songs registered with the Office that year include “Three Times a Lady,” written by Lionel Richie and recorded by the Commodores; “Copacabana,” lyrics by Bruce Sussman and Jack Feldman, music and recording by Barry Manilow; “Life’s Been Good,” written and recorded by Joe Walsh; and “Baker Street,” written and recorded by Gerry Rafferty. Popular albums registered in 1978 include *52nd Street* by Billy Joel, *Some Girls* by the Rolling Stones, *Don’t Look Back* by Boston, *Blondes Have More Fun* by Rod Stewart, and the soundtrack from the movie *Grease*.

*Grease* also was registered as a motion picture in 1978. Other top box office hits registered that year include *Dawn of the Dead*, *Midnight Express*, *National Lampoon’s Animal House*, *Superman*, and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. The Library of Congress has added these last three titles to the National Film Registry.

Many popular television shows submitted their first registrations in 1978, including *Dallas*, *Taxi*, *Battlestar Galactica*, *The White Shadow*, *WKRP in Cincinnati*, and *Mork & Mindy*. Several classic shows sent in their last new episode registrations that year too, including *The Six Million Dollar Man*, *The Bionic Woman*, *The Bob Newhart Show*, *Maude*, *Chico and the Man*, and *Rhoda*. In later years, copyright owners of some of these shows registered re-releases on video or DVD.

1978 was a great year for books too. Best sellers registered with the Office that year include James Michener’s *Chesapeake*, Judith Krantz’s *Scruples*, Robert Ludlum’s *The Holcroft Covenant*, and Herman Wouk’s *War and Remembrance*. Ludlum’s story was later made into a movie, and Wouk’s was made into a television miniseries.

Barbara Ringer, center, and Librarian of Congress Daniel Boorstin, right, celebrated the signing of the Copyright Act of 1976 with a huge gala for all Copyright staff in the Great Hall.



The way these works are delivered has changed in the past forty years—we can instantly access most of them on our computers or mobile devices—but these classic works are still protected under copyright law. Forty years from now, we don’t know how customers will be listening to Ed Sheeran’s number one hit “Perfect,” watching popular movies and television shows like *Black Panther* or *The Walking Dead*, or reading Kristin Hannah’s current NY Times number one best-seller *The Great Alone*, but we do know these works are protected by their copyright registrations. ©

