

To the Copyright Office

I have been teaching songwriting at Berklee College of Music for 40 years. During that time many of my students have gone on to become proficient and successful songwriters, including multiple Grammy winners John Mayer, Gillian Welch, Paula Cole and Tom Hambridge. Many others have made writing their profession across the US and internationally.

Each year, for the last 30 years, I've taken a group of 120 students on a Spring Break trip to Nashville for 5 days of clinics, panels, tours and performances. They see the top writers, producers, managers, A&R and record company heads. The results have been overwhelming, and to date, more than 1,500 former trippers have chosen Nashville as their place of work. Of course, the competition is stiff, but they were well trained and many moved successfully through the ranks to become strong and successful writers.

The last few trips have been disheartening to me. Even the best and most successful writers there are struggling to earn even a token percentage of what they earned in the past, before the miniscule royalties from streaming began decimating their incomes. Their livelihoods are threatened.

I'm faced with a moral dilemma: my students are eager to enter the songwriting profession, yet, if the current system remains in place, what prospects do they have if even the top writers are struggling to keep their lives intact? What do I tell my students, to cut and run, or to soldier on into a profession that offers little hope of success?

Some companies are making a great deal of money streaming music, while the creators of the music get mere pennies from millions of streams. I strongly encourage you to level the playing field. So many creative lives depend on you.

Sincerely,

Pat Pattison
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