

Lettres/Letters

My name is Nuno Morna and I'm a radio producer from Madeira Island, Portugal. I work with R.D.P. (the Portuguese national radio), where I run a program called Dança do Lobo (something like "The Wolf Dance") three times a week. The playlist of the program accepts only traditional, world, fusion and folk music.

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Nuno Morna
Madeira, Portugal

How long ago did you write your editorial? [33.4, p. 2] Digital Tradition hasn't been at the Parc/Xerox site for *YEARS!* They moved to <<http://mudcat.org>> following the copyright brouhaha sometime around 1996 ... maybe even earlier. The URL you included at the end of your piece is very old and no longer works.

That said, I'll add to your comments with the following: You're right that Digital Tradition is riddled with attribution errors and copyright omissions ... but Greenhouse's "allusion" that this is merely due to the greed of artists who "claim a copyright on anything" is downright laughable. Though he won't admit it, Dick is an activist working toward the eradication of copyrights. He flat out brags that he has *no* intention of even *trying* to include attribution because he's "too busy adding new lyrics to the database" (which he adds and posts without checking/correcting) *and* that he'll only respond to fixing attributions or adding copyrights if the copyright holder seeks *him* out. *THAT* attitude is what got the database kicked off the Xerox site and why there is a disclaimer (which I wrote at the Mudcat webmaster's request, BTW) with every search result.

I'll give Dick credit for living up to his own claim that he *will* correct attributions when the writer/publisher contacts him (or remove a song if requested), but there's no running away from the overall damage that projects like Digital Tradition do to legitimate and legal efforts because of his flip attitude regarding intellectual property. DT *could* be a great resource if it included solely trad and PD material and only added composed material *after* the consent of the publishers. As someone who has

poured sweat and blood into trying to make sure that was done with Rise Up Singing (and continue to do so with Sing Out!), I believe that DT is an insult to the very artists whose work it pretends to celebrate. In this electronic age, is it *really* that hard to make sure the correct attribution and © is included with any posted lyrics? Is it *really* that hard to ask permission *before* adding stuff to the database? No and No.

And note that I'm not suggesting that publishers make a bunch of money on this ... I'm simply saying that 1) DT has no right to damage their copyright by publishing the material without correct attribution and notice, and that 2) a composer/ publisher should be asked *before* their material is used ... it's *their* choice, not Dick's.

Dick would be welcome to ignore those responsibilities if he was keeping a personal database at home, but once he publishes it on the web his *responsibilities* change. It's high time he lived up to them.

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[Actually, my comments were written some time during the fall, & the out of date web address (pointed out by several people) is probably an index of how rarely I use the DT. As I think I indicated last issue, I regard it as more of a device for the lazy than as an esthetic savior. (C'mon, you can't work out the chords to "Barbara Allen"? or hear the words in Joan Baez's version?) I'm still not sure that the folksie movement doesn't demonstrate its bourgeois roots and mentality when it confuses convenience for a cultural revolution.

My own musings on the value of copyright are in the editorial itself. It might be worth noting that I'm pretty certain that I read Pete Seeger's doubts about copyright in one of his Johnny Appleseed Jr. columns in Sing Out! Martin Scherzinger delves into some contemporary complexities of the subject in the 1999 Yearbook for Traditional Music: "Music, Spirit Possession and the Copyright Law: Cross-Cultural Comparisons and Strategic Speculations." Recommended! —GWL]