# British artists unite against proposed copyright changes



Thousands of British musicians, artists, authors, and journalists have united in protest against proposed government changes that could ease the use of their work by technology companies for training artificial intelligence models. This wave of protests coincides with the closing of a government consultation on Tuesday regarding the future of copyright law and its interaction with artificial intelligence.

The government's proposals include a “rights reservation” system which would require every artist, author, or company to actively opt out of having their works utilized and copied by technology firms. This approach has sparked significant backlash within the creative sector, leading to a coordinated campaign under the slogan “Make it Fair.” Publications such as The Guardian and The Times are participating in the campaign, featuring the slogan across their front pages to highlight concerns over potential threats to the livelihood of creative professionals.

Over 1,000 musicians are involved in the protest, with high-profile figures including Kate Bush, Damon Albarn, and Hans Zimmer. They aim to draw attention to the issue through the release of a unique “silent” album titled *Is This What We Want?* The album, which features recordings from unoccupied music studios and performance spaces, serves as a metaphor for the silence that could envelop the music industry if the government proceeds with its plans. In a statement regarding the protest, Ed Newton-Rex, a British composer and one of the individuals behind the album, remarked, “The government’s proposal would hand the life’s work of the country’s musicians to AI companies, for free, letting those companies exploit musicians’ work to outcompete them.”

The release of the silent album comes at a pivotal time, as the government seeks to balance its ambitions for the UK’s tech industries against the interests of its thriving creative sectors. Concerns have been raised that the proposed changes would result in a significant loss of rights for artists and complicate their ability to protect their work. Bush highlighted the stakes in her contribution to the album, questioning, “In the music of the future, will our voices go unheard?”

Other notable figures, including Paul McCartney, Elton John, and the authors Mark Haddon and Michael Rosen, have voiced their opposition to the government’s stance. They argue that the proposed opt-out system is impractical and detrimental to the creative industries. A letter published in The Times, signed by 34 leading cultural figures, warns that the government’s proposal constitutes a wholesale giveaway of rights and income from the UK’s creative sectors to major technology companies.

As the consultation draws to a close, the government maintains that the current copyright regime is hindering the creative and media sectors as well as the AI market from achieving their full potential. A spokesperson stated, “That’s why we have been consulting on a new approach that protects the interests of both AI developers and rights holders and delivers a solution which allows both to thrive.”

Meanwhile, tech industry representatives, such as TechUK, have urged for a version of the opt-out mechanism to be considered, suggesting it could serve as a compromise, provided implementation challenges are addressed.

The ramifications of this debate extend beyond the UK, with ongoing lawsuits and licensing agreements indicating a broader conflict between creative rights and technological advancement globally. As the protests escalate, the creative community remains vigilant in their campaign to ensure their rights are not subsumed in the quest for technological innovation.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

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