# Sir Elton John fiercely criticises government for endangering artists’ rights in AI copyright laws



Sir Elton John's recent comments on copyright laws have ignited a fiery debate over the government's willingness to placate tech companies at the expense of artists' rights. His strong condemnation of ministers, whom he called “absolute losers,” highlights a critical betrayal to the creative community, particularly with the government’s alarming suggestion to exempt tech firms from copyright responsibilities. This move, John argues, amounts to “theft, thievery on a high scale,” a notion that resonates deeply among artists fearing for their livelihoods.

The controversy stems from the government's dismissal of the House of Lords' proposals, which aimed at enforcing transparency requirements on AI companies concerning the materials used for their models. Despite a significant majority in the House of Lords advocating for amendments to the Data (Use and Access) Bill to ensure that creators' consent is necessary before their works can be appropriated, the Commons disregarded these amendments. This refusal raises serious concerns over the security of artists' rights under the new Labour administration.

Alongside John, over 400 influential figures in the creative sector—including renowned musicians and playwrights—are rallying for robust protections against the systematic appropriation of their works by AI. Their call for amendments to the Data Bill insists that AI developers should be obligated to disclose the specific copyrighted materials they siphon during training. As many see it, the stakes are high for the future of the UK’s artistic landscape, which would be imperiled by an unchecked corporate agenda.

In a striking protest against this encroachment, more than 1,000 British musicians have contributed to the silent album *Is This What We Want?* featuring recordings from empty studios. This symbolic gesture underscores the potentially devastating effects of relinquishing creative control to AI technologies. Proceeds from the album are earmarked for Help Musicians, drawing attention to the precarious economic conditions artists may face if the government’s proposals are enacted without vital protections.

Experts are sounding alarms that, without explicit regulations, the very essence of the UK's music and creative industries is at grave risk. Tom Kiehl, the chief executive of UK Music, warned that the government appears intent on sacrificing the music industry to appease American tech giants. Sir Paul McCartney has echoed these sentiments, stressing the necessity for solid copyright laws to ensure fair compensation for artists, voicing fears that only tech businesses will emerge victorious in this new landscape.

Despite government assurances that it aims to strike a balance between the needs of creators and AI developers, many artists and advocates see this balance tilted dangerously in favor of the latter. The current proposals suggest that creators must actively opt out of having their works used in AI systems, a deeply flawed approach that fails to safeguard the rights of artists and underscores the lack of genuine commitment to their welfare.

As the debate escalates, profound questions linger about creativity's future and the sustainability of the UK's cultural landscape. Figures such as Simon Cowell and Kate Mosse caution that if allowed to proceed unchallenged, these legislative changes could foster an environment where creators' rights are not only neglected but actively subverted.

As the discussion unfolds, the imperative remains clear: reconciling the rapid advancements in AI technologies with the essential need to protect the livelihoods of those who provide the backbone of the UK’s artistic community. The outcome of this clash between technology and creativity will undoubtedly shape the future of the nation's cultural heritage.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c8jg0348yvxo> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/5a6601f7-a9c9-4f3b-a205-b4f8fe3e688d> - Over 400 leading UK musicians, artists, and media executives, including Sir Paul McCartney, Elton John, Dua Lipa, and Richard Curtis, have signed a letter urging Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer to support stronger copyright protections against unauthorized AI usage. They advocate for an amendment to the Data (Use and Access) Bill, proposed by Baroness Beeban Kidron, which would require AI developers to disclose which specific copyrighted materials—such as music, books, and films—have been used to train their models. The amendment aims to ensure transparency and prevent what is described as the mass theft of creative works by AI firms. Although the amendment was recently defeated in the House of Commons, it faces another vote in the House of Lords. While the government has proposed its own amendments and insists that all options remain on the table, many creators fear that without explicit legislation, tech companies will bypass copyright protections. The letter cautions that neglecting creators’ rights could undermine the UK’s global standing in the creative sector and damage long-term economic prospects. Advocates argue that the proposed measures are vital to foster a robust licensing market and maintain the UK’s leadership in both creative and AI industries.
3. <https://apnews.com/article/dc80620c1c226a816048b87fb30309c4> - A silent album titled 'Is This What We Want?' has been released by over 1,000 British musicians, including notable artists like Kate Bush and Elton John, to protest proposed changes to U.K. AI laws that could allow tech firms to use copyrighted material to train AI models without creators' consent. The album's 12 tracks are recordings of empty studios symbolizing the potential loss of creative control. The protest aims to protect the interests of musicians and preserve the integrity of Britain's creative industries. Profits from the album will support the charity Help Musicians. The consultation on these law changes closes on Tuesday, with strong opposition from artists and media companies. The UK government insists the new approach will favor both AI developers and right holders.
4. <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2025/feb/22/elton-john-calls-for-uk-copyright-rules-rethink-to-protect-creators-from-ai> - Sir Elton John has called on the government to rethink proposals involving the relaxation of copyright rules in the hope of protecting creative talent from AI. The singer and songwriter is among a growing list of public figures to express concerns about plans that would allow tech firms to use online material, including creative work, for AI without permission. Under current government proposals, creators would need to opt out of their work being used, however some of the campaign’s advocates, including Simon Cowell and the author Kate Mosse, have called for an opt-in system to be put in place. 'We only achieved that success with the backing of our longstanding copyright protection – the world’s gold standard,' John told the Daily Mail, while highlighting the industry’s impact on creating jobs and economic growth. 'The music community has always been quick to adopt new technologies … but adoption of this copyright exception would destroy the UK’s leadership that has been hard won, and what’s worse, it would give it all away. For nothing.'
5. <https://www.reuters.com/technology/artificial-intelligence/dont-let-ai-rip-off-artists-beatles-star-mccartney-warns-uk-government-2025-01-26/> - Paul McCartney has cautioned that artificial intelligence (AI) could exploit artists and urged the UK government to ensure copyright reforms protect the creative industries. He expressed concerns that AI models could produce content based on popular works without compensating the original creators. In December, Britain proposed a way for artists to license their work for AI training but suggested an exception for large-scale use where rights aren't reserved. McCartney emphasized that proper copyright protection is essential for creative people, warning that only tech giants might benefit otherwise. He cited his own experience using AI to recreate John Lennon's voice, illustrating the risk of artists losing control over their work. The government is reviewing copyright laws, seeking to clarify legal ambiguities to support AI investment while protecting creators' rights.
6. <https://apnews.com/article/b260a4c6f0fdf732fb4994cdeb1710a4> - Paul McCartney has expressed concerns over potential changes to UK copyright laws that may allow artificial intelligence (AI) companies to use copyrighted materials unless creators opt out. McCartney argues this could lead to artists losing control of their work and damage Britain’s creative industries. The UK government is consulting on new copyright laws intended to balance creators’ control and compensation for AI use of their works, while supporting AI development. McCartney insists that the government should protect artists’ rights to their creations, preventing tech companies from profiting unfairly. Many organizations, including The Associated Press, support maintaining strong copyright protections under the Creative Rights in AI Coalition.