

## **From Silent Film to *YouTube*:**

### **Musical Identity, Music Copyright, and Film Music**

The wish of academics to study film music is thwarted by copyright protections that favor the entertainment industry. To be fair to the industry, though, part of the problem lies in the relative recency of film as an art form. Silent film was barely nascent when the US copyright Act of 1909 was adopted. At that time copyright subsisted for 28 years. Now it can endure for a maximum of 95 years. It will be another generation before early sound tracks from films (a staple only from the 1930s onward) fall into the public domain. That the Digital Millennium Copyright Act of 1998 does not mention film (much less film music) causes one to suspect that further copyright extensions addressing digital video (and its associated music) will eventually appear. For now, the researcher seeking access to materials that permeate our culture is reduced to a pastiche of residues from cue-sheets, sheet music, and the video encapsulations of film on DVDs and YouTube film snippets. This presentation surveys that many states in which film music of earlier eras resides and advocates a middle ground for consultation and study.

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