

**Nigel Elderton, Chairman, MPA**

**to MPA AGM, 24 June 2010**

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen, and thank you both members and invited guests for attending the MPA AGM in this, our one hundred and twenty ninth year.

As Chairman of the MPA this platform allows me the opportunity to look back at the past year, as well as to take stock of our current position, and to peer into the future.

2009 was a tumultuous year of course, not just for our industry but for the national, and indeed international economies. The recovery would seem now to be under way although the long term forecast is not yet set fair and the macro-economic climate remains uncertain. What is clear from Tuesday's emergency budget is that we face a prolonged period of austerity.

Belt tightening alone though will not be enough to see us through tough times, and it is more important than ever that we, as a country, continue to create. This is at the heart of what publishers do – the creation of value – and it is something that we in the UK do rather well. At the global level the UK continues to punch well above its weight as the source of much of the world's favourite music, and the creative industries as a whole remain a vital contributor to UK plc as one of our most successful exports.

Of course, the ability of songwriters and publishers to share in the reward whenever and wherever their works are exploited has been significantly eroded, not least by technologies which have rendered the making of perfect copies trivially simple and completely free. The debate on these issues, which has raged on in one form or another for as long as the MPA has been in existence, coalesced during 2009 around the Digital Economy Bill. At times the sound of this debate was like the noise of ten thousand vuvuzelas. There were as many different opinions as there were voices, even around the MPA Board table. We are therefore thankful to Feargal Sharkey and to Andy Heath at UK Music for cutting through the din and orchestrating a harmonious response on behalf of the commercial music industry. The Digital Economy Act may not be a perfect piece of legislation – what piece of

legislation ever was? – and in fact the real hard work started the day the Bill became the Act. Significant questions remain around its implementation, not least on the subject of costs, but we trust in the various constituents of our industry to work assiduously and collaboratively towards their solution. Whatever the final outcome, one victory has, I think, already been secured – that 300 years on from the Statute of Anne our legislators have sent out a clear message: the value of our endeavours must not go unrecognised, nor unprotected. This is a message to individual consumers, but also to the ISPs that their undivided attention to this process is required.

The other issue which most exercised us during 2009 was the future of our MCPS. The business faced, indeed still faces, a tremendous challenge from the erosion of its core revenue. Members of the MPA Board, along with directors and senior management of MCPS put in an enormous amount of work over the course of the year in order to identify an appropriate response to this very real threat. I would particularly like to record our thanks to Jeremy Fabinyi, for the role that he has played in this process, and also for his stewardship of PRS for Music as acting CEO during the year.

We have started to fashion a re-modelled collection society: more cost-effective; more flexible; more responsive to the needs of its members, and to the requirements of its customers. This project remains a work in progress, and demands a unity of purpose from publishers if the collective is to thrive.

Amidst all of this uncertainty and upheaval, it is good to remind ourselves every now and again of the reason we all do what we do: the music. I hope that you will all stay with us this afternoon, after the conclusion of the formal business, for our informal event, and take a moment away from talk of bandwidth throttling and copyright databases to celebrate great songs and great songwriters.

I wish to thank my deputy chairman Chris Butler, along with the members of the MPA Board for giving of their time and expertise so generously. I also would like to thank Stephen Navin and his team at the MPA for their hard work during the year.

Tough times these may be, but we have the crew on board to navigate them on an even keel.

Thank you.