

MPA AGM 2011

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen, and thank you both members of the MPA and invited guests for joining us here today for the MPA AGM.

Assuming that the rest of today's meeting runs to time, I have roughly 30 minutes remaining of a three year term as Chair of the MPA. It has been an honour to serve as the Chairman of such an august organisation, and I wish my successor the very best.

Much has happened in the past 36 months, although it often seems a case of "the more things change, the more they stay the same". Certainly the soothsayers and prophets of doom, who have made much noise (and in some cases a nice living) from predicting the apocalypse of the music industry have so far been confounded. The appointed hour arrives and passes without cataclysm, forcing the eschatologists to re-examine the scriptures and revise their predictions.

All of which isn't to say that we haven't faced some major challenges over the past 3 years. One of the most often cited of the signs of the end-times is of course the continuing decline in sales of CDs. The decline of physical media and the con-commitant drop in mechanical licensing revenues has affected all publishers, and poses a serious threat to the MPA's subsidiary company the Mechanical Copyright Protection Society. An enormous amount of work is taking place to ensure that the business improves efficiency and reduces costs and this is an issue that will continue to exercise me in my ongoing role as MCPS Chairman. The partnership with the Nordic Copyright Bureau (NCB) announced during 2010, which will see the two societies co-operate on back-office functions, is an important initiative in this regard. I am pleased to report that this project is on time and budget to go live in January 2012. Our business is a global one, and the future must involve greater co-operation [and consolidation] between the national collection societies.

Which brings me neatly to PRS for Music. The business has undergone a period of great upheaval recently and [during] my time as MPA Chairman we have witnessed a great number of changes, some of them cosmetic, others more fundamental. Broadly speaking

the society we see now is leaner, more efficient and more nimble, as indeed it needs to be in order to continue to deliver a [cost effective and] good quality of service to its members, both writers and publishers.

When Robert Ashcroft arrived at the start of 2010 he brought with him a fresh perspective and a vision for the future of our collection society on a global scale. I believe that he is a tremendous asset to PRS for Music, and we look forward to hearing from Robert shortly, as he shares with us some of that vision.

Robert's arrival took place at the beginning of the ICE age, and of all the issues we have faced over the past 3 years, the introduction of the ICE system has been the one with the most immediate bearing upon publishers' day-to-day activities. The implementation of the ICE system was, as we know, not without its difficulties, and this in turn placed a significant strain on the Member Services department at PRS for Music. In this connection, I will give an honourable mention here to Mark Lawrence and the plan he has embarked upon to re-shape this area of the business. We also welcome Pete Uglow's recent appointment as Head of Publisher Development. The role of a Publishers' Champion within PRS for Music had long been argued for by the MPA and we welcome this as a very positive step. Despite the difficulties experienced, and the pain that we all have shared, the vision for ICE is sound and its necessity is clear.

No one would argue that we did not need new systems to accommodate the complexity of territorial licensing on a worldwide scale and to process the millions of micro-transactions taking place in the digital marketplace. From a wider perspective our collection societies must continue to seek back office efficiencies through closer collaboration and more effective joint working. ICE represents the first tentative but vital step in this direction.

Another significant development has been the development of the Independent Music Publishers' European Licensing (or "IMPEL"), providing a convenient one-stop shop to licensees for Anglo-American independent repertoire. Such multi-territory licensing solutions benefit rights holders and music users alike, and it has been heartening to see the volume of repertoire represented by IMPEL grow over the course of the year.

In the background to these various initiatives it has been good to see real progress made towards the vision of a Global Repertoire Database – a publisher led initiative which addresses the needs of music users whilst, again, promising to deliver benefits to rights holders at the same time.

Amongst the recommendations made by Professor Hargreaves arising from the Independent Review of Intellectual Property and Growth was the establishment of a Digital Copyright Exchange – “a network of interoperable databases to provide a common platform for licensing transactions”. It is pleasing that our own industry’s response to this recommendation can be to point to initiatives that are already underway.

The Hargreaves review has of course been the latest in a seemingly endless parade of reviews, investigations and reports into copyright and intellectual property. We have at least been promised that it will be the last under the current government. The passing of the Digital Economy Act was a significant moment for us – although implementation of its measures remains a work in progress – significant not least because the Act brings together rights holders with ISPs and music services in a joint effort to secure the long term sustainability of the digital market.

At the forefront of our efforts in this area has been UK Music. It seems odd to think that when I became MPA Chairman 3 years ago UK Music had not yet been fully formed, so firmly has it established its position as representing the collective interests of the commercial music industry. We thank Feargal, Andy and the team at UK Music for their work on our behalf. Few would argue that our industry has not benefited from speaking to government with a single voice. The difficult part of course is coming to an agreement on what that single voice should say, but in the most part this has been achieved by the Board of UK Music in a sense of cooperation and with good humour. Equally, where an issue is of particular or unique relevance to the publishing community it is important that we maintain, via the MPA, our own distinctive and individual voice.

Your trade body, the MPA, plays a vital role in promoting and safeguarding your interests, representing those interests to government, the media and the general public, and in promoting and celebrating the role of the music publisher and the importance of copyright. The strength of any association is derived from its members, and it has been encouraging to witness both the number and the diversity of MPA members increase during my chairmanship. Increased attendances at the MPA's programme of training events, principal amongst them being the Induction Course, is testament to both the quality of the events offered by the MPA, and to an increasing level of interest in our business.

I have been lucky to have met and worked alongside a tremendous number of talented and dedicated individuals during my time as MPA Chairman, and I must mention just a few of them here.

Tom Bradley preceded me directly as MCPS Chairman, and preceded me indirectly as Chairman of the MPA. He has been a tremendous servant to our industry over the years, and continues to be a valued member of the MPA through his perhaps aptly named Quiet Man Music. Tom has now taken on the role of Chairman of the Copyright Licensing Agency and given his experience in this industry I think he will be a tremendous asset to the authors and book publishers.

I wish to thank my Deputy Chairman for the past three years, Chris Butler, and I congratulate him on his elevation to MPA Chairman. I am pleased to be delivering the position into such safe hands. I would also like to thank the members of the MPA Board for giving so generously of their time and expertise over the course of the year, and would like to congratulate those new Directors elected to the Board today.

Finally I would like to thank the chief executive of the MPA. Over 3 years of AGMs and Christmas Lunches I have seen him dress as Mozart, a football referee, and Dr Spock, and have heard him address a variety of audiences in at least two dozen different languages, including French, Latin, and Geordie. This will give you some idea of the immense fun and total confusion I have had to endure under this man's stewardship! He and his team do a

terrific job running the MPA for, and on behalf of, you, its members. With that, I hand you over, to the irrepressible Stephen Navin.