

Title

Legal Issues in Using Musical Content from iTunes and YouTube for Music Information Retrieval

Authors

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Abstract

Music Information Retrieval (MIR) is comparatively new a field with almost a decade of intense research activity [1]. Nevertheless, its results affect a wide variety of people ranging from music scholars to everyday music lovers. MIR research has, so far, provided means to extract new, not easily found and interesting information from musical corpuses of some to tens of millions of songs as well as methods to define similarity and identify such similar songs in the aforementioned corpuses [2]. The application of MIR methods ranges from personal musical collections to web-based services to interactive virtual environments [3].

One of the key requirements of MIR in order to provide for its methods is access in musical content. The need for such an access is twofold: (a) to analyse content and identify pertinent features the methods will rely on and (b) to test developed methodologies. The need is further intensified by the fact that music, being an artistic form of expression, does not always abide by a set of rules that researchers could rely on in order to avoid the necessity for access to content in order to draw conclusions.

In legal terms, musical data, such as sound recordings and sheet music are the products of creative endeavour and as such are protected by copyright law. Accordingly, their reproduction, performance and distribution, to name a few, are rights that remain exclusively with their owners [4]. It is thus obvious that the function of MIR on the musical content is subject to the application of copyright law provisions and accordingly MIR researchers require relevant legal knowledge in order to confirm whether their research actions require the rights' owner permission so to be lawful.

Nevertheless, there exist two prominent, of many, cases where access to copyrighted musical content is widely possible. In our work we examine the cases of iTunes [5] & YouTube [6] web-services that offer such content and aim at informing MIR researchers of the legal implications of using the musical content found therein.

References

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