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Copywrong: A Glance at Media Conglomerates, Copyright Legislation, and Their Impact on the Music Industry

Samantha Chilli
Northeastern University

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Copywrong

A Glance at Media Conglomerates, Copyright Legislation, and Their Impact on the Music Industry

Samantha Chilli
Year IV – Northeastern University

The legislative clout of powerful media conglomerates has a direct effect on the music industry and on the creative minds that comprise it. Taking advantage of the current political situation, large media firms—such as Disney—actively lobby American lawmakers who then agree to legislate for copyright term extensions. These extensions serve to protect the corporations' assets from becoming public domain. In the process of protecting their own copyrights by adding extra years to terms, these media powerhouses hinder the creative processes of those who seek to legally create derivative works. This tailored legislation forces musicians such as DJs and mash-up artists to create works that illegally sample other musicians' content.

In this paper, I use case examples to examine how a musician can edit samples, remixes, mash-ups, and similar creations in the comfort of his or her own home. Even though their samples create an entirely new work, these artists are often sequestered to the confines of anonymity, as they are unable to secure legal record contracts. Since many of the major labels are owned by the media corporations that fight to extend copyrights, the labels frustrate the artists' endeavors further. I also examine artists who have found a way to circumvent legislation altogether and address the possibility of cessation of this legislative tension

to allow musicians to legally formulate and manipulate their derivative work.