AI Protections for Artists, Songwriters, and Producers

Jamie Rigg

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Recorded music has always been shaped by technology. From wax cylinders, multitrack tape recorders, digital synthesizers and the recent democratisation of music production with the advent of affordable digital audio workstations (DAWs), every generation of artists, songwriters and producers have incorporated new tools to advance live and recorded music production.

The pace of recent advances in generative AI technology has been rapid and at times disconcerting for music creatives. When used for good, GenAI is unlocking new ways for artists to create music and for listeners to discover it. When used for malevolence, AI can confuse or deceive listeners, push "AI slop" into the digital ecosystem, and disadvantage authentic artists working to build their careers.

'The Velvet Sundown' and Spotify's Response

A simulated band created entirely by GenAI, *The Velvet Sundown*, racked up millions of streams on Spotify, sparking a fierce debate about how music platforms should handle synthetic content. Recent incidents involving AI-generated music have also heightened concerns about platform governance.

The Velvet Sundown appeared on streaming services in June 2025. Wheeler (2025) notes that it presented itself as a regular folk rock band with polished photos and a carefully crafted sound. Within weeks, the group had notched up millions of listens on *Spotify,* but subscribers noticed something unusual about the whole setup. The band's promotional photos had that slightly unsettling quality that's become the hallmark of AI-generated images.

Initially, the "band" as reported by Bakare (2025), claimed to be a "synthetic music project guided by human creative direction", denied they were an AI creation, and released two albums in June called *Floating on Echoes* and *Dust and Silence*.

Things became more complicated when someone describing himself as an "adjunct" member told reporters that the Velvet Sundown had used the generative AI platform Suno in the creation of their songs, and that the project was an "art hoax".

The admission has triggered a backlash from across the music industry and raised awkward questions about how streaming platforms police their content. Elizabeth Moody, Partner & Chair of the New Media Practice at Granderson Des Rochers, explains how payment structures create incentives for fraudulent activity: "The DSP (digital service provider) models today compensate artists and songwriters based on their share of monthly playcounts."

"This sometimes incentivises bad actors who may choose to work with streaming promotion services or other fraudulent means to boost stream counts." Moody (2025) concludes: "Some fear that the ease of creation of AI music will mean that fraud will become more prevalent. There are means of preventing this activity, through monitoring and business model adjustments, but they will take time and commitments on behalf of DSPs and rightsholders."

Spotify (2025) recognises these issues and has released a statement, "AI technology is evolving fast, and we'll continue to roll out new policies frequently. Here is where we are focusing our policy work today: Improved enforcement of impersonation violations, A new spam filtering system and AI disclosures for music with industry-standard credits"

Improved Enforcement of Impersonation Violations

Unauthorized use of AI to clone an artist's voice exploits their identity, undermines their artistry, and threatens the fundamental integrity of their work. Some artists such as Grimes, choose to license their voices to AI projects. (Spotify 2025)

Milmo reported back in 2023 that already nine artists, Alec Benjamin, Charlie Puth, Charli XCX, Demi Lovato, John Legend, Sia, T-Pain, Troye Sivan and Papoose authorised the use of AI-generated versions of their singing voices as soundtracks for creator videos with experiment, called 'Dream Track'.

Zeitchik (2025) recently noted that several Hollywood celebrities such as Matthew McConaughey Michael Caine, Liza Minelli and Art Garfunkel or their estates of deceased actors such as John Wayne, Lana Turner and Judy Garland have released their IP to tech company ElevenLabs' *Iconic Voice Marketplace.*

In contrast with this, A group of more than 200 high-profile musicians signed an open letter calling for protections against the predatory use of artificial intelligence that mimics human artists' likenesses, voices and sound. Robins-Early (2024) reported that the signatories span musical genres and eras, ranging from A-list stars such as Billie Eilish, J Balvin and Nicki Minaj to Rock and Roll Hall of Famers like Stevie Wonder and REM. The estates of Frank Sinatra and Bob Marley are also signatories.

In November 2025, Spotify introduced a new impersonation policy that clarifies how they handle claims about AI voice clones (and other forms of unauthorized vocal impersonation), giving artists stronger protections and clearer recourse.

Spotify has also introduced protections against impersonation tactics, where uploaders fraudulently deliver music (AI-generated or otherwise) to another artist's profile across streaming services.

Spotify's Music Spam Filter

Total music payouts on Spotify have grown from $1B in 2014 to $10B in 2024. But Spotify recognises that big payouts entice bad actors. Spam tactics such as mass uploads, duplicates and other forms of AI slop have become easier to exploit as AI tools make it simpler for anyone to generate large volumes of music.

Left unchecked, Spotify acknowledges that these behaviours can dilute the royalty pool and impact attention for artists playing by the rules. The proposal is that the music spam filter will protect against this conduct and help prevent spammers from generating royalties that could be otherwise distributed to professional artists and songwriters.

Artificial Intelligence Disclosures

This standard gives artists and rights holders a way to clearly indicate where and how AI played a role in the creation of a track—whether that's AI-generated vocals, instrumentation, or post-production.

The rise of artificial intelligence (AI) presents both exciting opportunities and serious challenges for musicians. While AI can create new sounds and tools, it also raises questions about copyright, fair remuneration, and creative control.

Spotify claims to be strengthening protections against Artificial Intelligence in the music industry. The streaming giant supposedly envisions a future where artists and producers are in control of how – or if – they incorporate AI into their creative processes. As the Spotify Newsroom states, it believes that aggressively protecting against the worst parts of Generative AI is essential in enabling its potential for artists and producers.

Australian Government Copyright Legislation

Australia's Attorney-General, Michelle Rowland**,** has publicly ruled out introducing a new broad *text and data mining (TDM) exception* or any other general copyright exemption that would give AI companies free rein to use copyrighted material to train their models. That means the government will not change the Copyright Act to allow AI developers to legally mine Australian creative works without permission or payment.

Under current law, using copyrighted material (text, images, music, films, etc.) to train an AI model usually requires permission/licensing from the rights holder. Australian copyright law does *not* currently include a general training exception like some other countries' "fair use" or TDM rules. (Johnson 2025)

Existing copyright law still applies — and creators have rights

As per the Copyright Act (1968)**,** there is no automatic free use for AI training. AI developers don't get a special carve-out to copy or "scrape" copyright works. Those activities are generally treated as reproduction and would require permission/licensing under existing copyright rules.

There is also no "fair use" exception like in the U.S, Australia does not have a broad fair use regime. Instead, it has narrow "fair dealing" exceptions for specific purposes (e.g., research, study, criticism) — which rarely cover large-scale AI training.

Copyright protection for AI-generated works remains unsettled. Works created wholly by AI likely aren't protected unless there's sufficient human input ("independent intellectual effort").

Since this technology is so new, it is not clear that works created with the help of AI will be protected by copyright. As a general rule, a work can only be protected by copyright in Australia if there is a human author who contributed 'independent intellectual effort'. Because of this, it is possible that works generated by AI which don't have enough human input won't be protected by copyright.

What might happen next?

While the government has so far said no to a blanket AI training copyright exemption**,** discussions are underway that could lead to: New licensing frameworks to ensure creators are paid when AI uses their work. (Burrows 2025) and the clarification of how existing copyright rules apply to AI outputs and whether special provisions should be adopted. (Attorney General's Department 2025)

The outcomes of these proposals are yet to be seen. If they indeed do come to fruition, the AI Protections for Artists, Songwriters, and Producers may be a step in the right direction within the digital musical landscape.

The next step is for Spotify to review its royalty payments to artists, which are currently between only $0.003 - $0.005 per stream, rather than the CEO Daniel Ek's current investment in *Helsing*, an AI military tech company…But that's a story for another article.

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Adjunct Professor Jamie Rigg is a Fellow of the *Centre for Entrepreneurship* and is currently the Chair of the Academic Board at the *Australian Academy of Music and Performing Arts (AMPA)*