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Maria Pallante
Register of Copyrights
U.S. Copyright Office
101 Independence Ave. S.E.
Washington, DC 20559-6000

RE: Notice of Inquiry, Copyright Office, Library of Congress
Copyright Protection for Certain Visual Works (Docket No. 2015-01)

Dear Ms. Pallante,

I would like to comment on the affects of copyright law on my career as an artist and illustrator. I was brought up in a poor family, my father was a coal miner and we never owned a car. I studied, got an education, and worked hard to become the artist I am today. I have been illustrating book jackets, posters, and magazines twenty seven years and this is my full time job which pays my bills and taxes. My clients are Random House, Tor Books, Warner Books, Bantam Books, Dell Books, Penguin Books, Avon Books, Ballantine Books, Daw Books Pocket Books, Harper Collins, DC Comics, Dark Horse Comic, the IBM Corporation, Sony, and Universal Studios. I have exhibited throughout the United States and England, and have been awarded at exhibitions, Best Artist, Best in Show, and Best Professional Artist. My art has been exhibited at the Illustration House in Manhattan, the Smithsonian, and the Science Fiction Museum in Seattle, Washington. Numerous magazine articles have been written about my work in Art Scene International, Film Fanaddict, Realms of Fantasy, Science Fiction Age, and Airbrush Action. Barnes and Noble picked me to represent the “Best Science Fiction Artist’ for their on-web interviews.

My career as a illustrator has relied on the protection and licensing of intellectual property and the careful managing and control of copyrights. I rely on the protection of the government to help me as the individual to fight others who would steal my art work, and profit from it’s appropriation. In todays computer world it’s become easier to scan the art, and remove signatures from images to reproduce and sell it. I rely on not only doing the work for a client, but also selling the same art for second rights, for different products (book jacket art goes from hard cover jacket, to trade to paperback, to audio, to ebook, and then there are foreign rights to other countries), all of which helps to support myself and my family. Artists live a very unpredictable life, never knowing when the next job will come in and a second rights fee is important.This is all part of my job. This is how I make a living.

Even many years later, a book might come out from a whole different company than it was originally with and the new company has come back to me for my classic cover that went with it. If this art has been stolen or ‘orphaned’ by a third party, they could potentially demand payment and claim ownership of the image when they did not do the actual work, and changing the art slightly by altering a color should not make the image theirs either. The only person that should have control and copyright is the artist that created the work. It’s logical and fair.

I can safely say that the Copyright Law of 1976 is extremely important in giving the artist protection to prevent mass theft by unscrupulous individuals and corporations that are looking for a loop hole that enables them to freely steal. The whole idea of having an artist having to copyright every piece of art, or sketch that he or she has done is preposterous and completely unrealistic. As an artist that has been producing art for years it would be unwieldly and much too expensive. While there are a few wealthy artists out there the bulk of the artistic community is not rich. Most artists work in a small corner of a room, not in the giant lofts that you might see in a movie film.

Artists have to pay for their own medical insurance, and they must pay for their own retirement. There are no sick days or vacation days unless they pay for them. Many a time I have worked on a deadline to finish a piece of art while having a fever...there are no assistants here to take over my work and get it done. Becoming an artist is to take a huge risk, the work is very hard, the deadlines are killers, the fees are steadily going down, and the frustration of trying to get paid for your work (in one case it took me a year to get a check) can be unbearable. And I do all this because artist's love to do art.

Please consider all this as you are pressured by third parties to alter the copy right laws we have now. I think about all the young of today who are wanting to be the artists of tomorrow...what will you tell them? That their country does not value them and they shouldn't even try to be artists? I'm asked that question a lot and it's getting to the point that I'm going to be telling them 'don't bother'.

Sincerely,
Stephen Youll