

## Oh...and I OWN My Music!

I've written a half dozen of these things now. In each one, I've tried to just keep it about me. This is what I do. This is what works for me. This is what doesn't work for me. If anything I do is helpful to you, great! If you think I'm out of my mind...that's ok too! I have deliberately avoided saying "you should do XYZ" because frankly, I don't believe I am qualified to tell anyone what they should or shouldn't do.

That said, I want to make this as clear as possible. **If you steal square dance music...you are lowest of the low, and you are destroying any chance of getting quality music in the future.**

We square dance callers are supposed to hold ourselves to a "higher standard". Sadly, the piracy of square dance music is commonplace. If I had to make a conservative estimate, I would say at least 75% of callers using digital music today do not own all the music they perform. (This number based on my own personal experience with callers I know.) This is not just a local or low level issue. This is an issue that goes from the newest of newbie callers to the most popular callers in the activity, and it is DESTROYING the square dance recording industry.

Look around you at your next callers association meeting. If you're not stealing music, there's a better than average chance that the guy on either side of you is. Oh, and by the way...if you've digitized your record collection and then sold or given away your records, you no longer own that music. Your right to perform that music ended when you transferred the ownership of that original copy. You are entitled to make as many copies as you need to keep your music safe, but you must retain the original for it to be legal.

While ALL piracy is illegal, there are shades of grey that I personally can justify. If a song is no longer in print, and the producer is unwilling to make it available again...yes, I'd make a copy. I know that is not the correct answer...but I can live with myself. Sadly, the examples of piracy I have seen firsthand have not been requests for a particular piece of music. I've seen entire catalogs of thousands of pieces of square dance music exchange hands. Before I had the nerve to stand up for myself, I even had one caller come up and ask to copy my music catalog...and I LET HIM. That will never happen again! (So don't ask!)

The rampant piracy of square dance music has put nearly every square dance label out of business. Even the top labels have had to resort to forming "members only" music clubs to finance their music or they would be out of business as well. It won't take long before the only square dance music produced will be a techno-beat from a drum machine off of somebody's home computer.

Before you get ready with your rocks...I know I live in a glass house. I have had my share of issues over the years. I've screwed up plenty...and will likely screw up again, but this is different. When we steal square dance music, we are cannibalizing our own activity. We are killing our own activity one illegal download at a time, and we've only got ourselves to blame.