

## **Song Summit Sydney: Opening Address**

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Good afternoon.

What do monkeys, Internet Service providers and Swiss Music Box Manufacturers have to do with a conference about songwriting? I think quite a lot ... and I'll give you my theory in a moment.

In the meantime, welcome to our inaugural Song Summit; an event that we hope will inform, stimulate, motivate, amuse and infuriate you. For those who believe that the music industry is dead as we know it, you'll hear information that might surprise you – like the fact that last month's number one selling song in Japan sold 4 million digital downloads, generating nearly \$10 million in single sales alone. For those of you who take heart from that story, you'll hear in the next breath that peer to peer traffic – mostly of unlicensed music files – accounts for nearly 60% of all internet traffic in Australia – or nearly 300 times the volume of all email traffic.

Mostly, I think you'll hear two things: firstly, you'll hear about change, and the fact that the industry is changing as never before and that we'd better adjust to it or be swept aside. And secondly, you'll hear about the importance of the song; you'll hear that commercially, a good song is just as in demand as ever, that, as the character in "Garden State" says of one of our speaker's work, songs will change your life – as they always have.

These two themes illustrate what we believe is important and probably unique about this summit....and that is that business and creativity are given equal weight. You'll hear about *the* important business and technology developments from people like Andrew Jenkins, Steve Porter, Luke Bevans and Kenny MacPherson....but you'll also hear about the art, craft and pain of songwriting from a staggering array of talented people. We hope that wherever your interest lies as a writer, you'll accordingly take something of meaning away from this event.

Which brings me back to the monkeys, swiss music boxes and ISPs. And no, this is not about the simian characteristics of *anybody* in the industry.

Firstly, the swiss music box makers. When the diplomatic conference to establish the first international copyright convention was held in Berne in 1886, the framers of the convention were so intent on not

offending the music box industry – which happened to be centred in Switzerland – that they created an automatic statutory right for musical compositions to be incorporated into “mechanical contrivances” for playing them, ie music boxes and piano rolls. This became the forerunner of what became known as the statutory mechanical licence. As a direct legacy of that decision, now 122 years old, you as a writer only receive about 6% of the retail price of a CD and 8% of the price of digital sale of your song. The latter compares with the 60% plus received by the record label. It’s time that paradigm changed – and we are in the process of *trying* to change it through the Copyright Tribunal at the moment. The absurdly low commercial value placed on the song is one of the themes on which we’d like to shed some light at this summit.

Secondly, monkeys. Or more particularly, *The Monkees*. Like many people in this room I saw the riveting television documentary about the rise and disintegration of the great 60s manufactured pop act last week. Now, you can look at the story in many different ways: as a tale of hubris, personality clashes, drugs, the 60s, whatever – but from one perspective it’s an astonishing illustration of the importance of the song. Neil Diamond, Boyce & Hart, Harry Nilsson, John Stewart.....great, great songwriters feeding songs to 4 out of work actors who became promptly became the biggest act in America, and then crashed and burned when they started rejecting those songs. I don’t say there’s a moral lesson, and I don’t say that Mike Nesmith can’t write, but there sure was a business lesson about the importance of the song. Again, one of the key themes of this event.

Thirdly, Internet Service Providers. Forgive me if I bang my head on the podium for a few minutes. Let me remind you of the statistic I gave earlier: nearly 60% of all internet traffic in Australia is p2p traffic. At night, it peaks at 95%. Our questions are: at what point exactly will the ISPs accept that they have some control over and responsibility for the content to which they provide access? Leaving aside the legal arguments – which could no doubt occupy us for years in the Court system – is there not some aspect of social responsibility or corporate citizenship involved? All we want is a system under which the ISPs actually cooperate in warning and eventually disconnecting persistent infringers. Why do we want it: so that writers, publishers, artists and distributors can actually re-build their business in the digital environment and get reasonable payment for the use of their works. This also, will be a theme of this summit.



We are hugely fortunate in this country to now have a Federal Arts Minister who understands writers, artists and the Music Industry – because he *is* a writer and an artist. It is my great pleasure and honour to introduce the Minister for Heritage, the Environment and the Arts, Mr Peter Garrett.