February 24 was a banner day for the Copy Left, a loose network of computer activists, intellectuals, forward-thinking musicians and zealous fans who continue to go toe-to-toe with the music business over intellectual property. On that day, hundreds of websites posted free downloads of the now infamous Grey Album, a mix by Los Angeles DJ Danger Mouse of the vocals from Jay-Z's Black Album and the Beatles White Album that emerged in the underground a few months ago. But Grey Tuesday, as it was dubbed, was an equally important moment for music journalism, for music fans of all stripes and, indeed, for popular music as we know it. Because that day made screamingly obvious what has been brewing under the surface for quite some time.

Something's gotta be done about the Beatles.

By now, the gig on the Fab Four is up -- they've long been relinquished of their mythical status as The Band That Did It All, and happily reside in more comfortable, realistic territory as an Important Band That Did Something, But Not Everything. Despite this defrocking, though, the Beatles continue to live in a sphere of greatness-omnipresent on classic rock and oldies radio, adored by millions and continuing to sell strongly, the 40th anniversary of their arrival in the States a few weeks back garnering magazine covers and news coverage galore.

Yet curiously, there's also a deafening cultural silence around the Beatles. Despite being one of the most influential recording acts in history, the Beatles do not allow their music to be sampled. Even if they did, the largesse that licensing and other fees demands would make their music far too pricey for most artists to use, a trend that has mirrored in licensing for film and television. (Ever wonder why there's so much indie rock in commercials and movies? You've got your answer.) And the Beatles aren't the only act; the collusion of exorbinant fees and copyright censure has made many of the musicians with the loudest cultural resonance into those whose music is only heard today as an echo from the past.

There's an argument to be made that says maybe this is for the better -- a logic which argues that the fortification created by the nexus of intellectual property provisions allows musicians to maintain important hold on their creative output, and reap just benefits when that output becomes woven into our social fabric. One could also say that this pushes developing artists to challenge their imagination and truly innovate, and promises them protection if and when they do.

But a truer argument takes a realistic -- not idealized or antiquated -- view on how
music functions as a social force. Where would Dylan be without Robert Johnson, George Harrison without the Chiffons, Zeppelin without Willie Dixon? And where would the rest of us be without them? These artists -- all of whom learned and borrowed from other musicians -- have pierced our collective heart, and their music is a living presence among us. They encourage musicians, and filmmakers, and writers, and creative people of all types to continue do what they love. They still soundtrack our precious, ridiculous, and inspired moments. And they do so not from a position in history, but in the here and now.

Maybe it's time to let go of the clout granted to Beatles, and all these rock legends -- that issue is one that's up for debate. But to me, it is beyond question that it is certainly time to free ourselves of the cultural nostalgia and legal stagnation that have allowed their music to fossilize. Music journalists must -- and important writing in Rolling Stone, New York Times, and other prominent publications already has -- applaud Danger Mouse's astounding artistic accomplishment, and let their critical praise become part of the discussion about what's at stake as copyright goes awry. And for all of us who hold music dear, we owe it to ourselves to not only let our musical past footnote our musical present, but also allow that past to live and breathe, change and reform, disappear and reappear in unexpected ways. Performers from Dylan to P. Diddy, Little Richard to Lil' Kim has depended on this system of borrowing, thrived through the creative license such activity lends when gives birth to originality. And February 24 displayed emphatically that it's high time that the Beatles got in the game. La, la, la, la, life goes on.

BY DEVON POWERS

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man who would end up
bringing politics back into
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renaissance.

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references to Ireland on
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traditional air to be heard, yet
the album exhales Ireland in
all its rain soaked sweet
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Behavior changes are
reminiscent of psychosis and,
biochemically speaking,
passionate love closely
imitates substance abuse.

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America is tobacco friendly in
the same way that
Afghanistan is opium friendly.

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Twenty-five years later, the Revolution in Iran still reverberates; sending shockwaves through the bones of the exiled.

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Disregard the "windshield cowboy"’s twangy tough talk, and remember the disturbing realities being perpetrated by the guy who's really in charge.

BY DAVID SIROTA

Demogogue:
Number Three
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Jon Garrett weighs the merits of Las Vegas' The Killers who offer an unlikely amalgam of '80s Britannia and the current New York post-punk renaissance, as well as a host of other musical hopefuls.

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