AFM & SAG-AFTRA
INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS DISTRIBUTION FUND
afmsagaafrafund.org

The Purpose of The Fund: The AFM & SAG-AFTRA Intellectual Property Rights Distribution Fund is a non-profit organization that collects and distributes royalties for non-featured artists (background singers and session musicians) for their performances on songs played on satellite radio, webcasting, non-interactive streaming services and other digital formats. The Fund was established with the passage of two important copyright laws. The Digital Performance Royalty Act of 1995 grants owners of copyrights in sound recordings an exclusive right “to perform the copyrighted work by means of digital audio transmission.” The Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) is a 1998 United States copyright law that implements two 1996 treaties of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). Now with the passage of the Music Modernization Act, pre-1972 songs will be included, which means many more artists are now receiving royalties for their musical performance.

The Breakdown: Distributing royalties on thousands of titles a year, the Fund, having grown significantly since distributing $13 million in 2014, distributed more than $60 million in royalties in 2019— and over $300 million to date. For every dollar Sound Exchange receives from performances, they pay 50 cents to the rights holders, 45 cents to featured artists and the remaining five cents to the AFM & SAG-AFTRA Fund to split between background singers and musicians. While the Fund does its best to contact every person entitled to these royalties, Colin Gilbert, Associate Director IPRDF/Participant Services, urges background musicians and singers to sign onto the website and see if their names are on a list of unclaimed royalties. Artists can look up a song by artist or song title. They can also contact the Participant Services Department if they feel that they have not been credited on a song they have performed on. There are three types of distributions: Sound Recording (non-featured session musicians and background vocalists), Audiovisual (musicians and vocalists on motion picture and TV programs exhibited in specific foreign markets) and Symphonic (featured symphony, opera and ballet musicians).

A Quote from Colin Gilbert: “There are many misconceptions about who we are and what we do. First off, despite our name, we pay all non-featured performers, both union and non-union. The burden of research falls entirely on our Fund for each title, so we are reliant on clear metadata, including liner notes, contracts and other documentation, so it’s very important for the performer to make sure that if they performed on the recording, they are listed on the credits. Although our primary mission is paying non-featured performers, many high-profile artists are considered non-featured when they perform background work on other artist’s tracks, so they get paid as well. We give out some large checks, but often it’s the folks who get the $50 and $100 checks that are impacted the most by what we do. Older and retired musicians and singers who dedicated their life to their craft but don’t have a 401k or retirement fund are especially grateful for what we do. For people like that, a $1,000 check can be life changing.”

For more information, visit afmsagaafrafund.org