Does The AFM & SAG AFTRA Fund Have Royalties For You?

The AFM & SAG-AFTRA Intellectual Property Rights Distribution Fund distributes royalties to session musicians and background vocalists for their performance on songs that are played on satellite radio, webcasting, digital subscription services and other digital formats. This Fund is not a membership-driven organization. Unlike many other rights collectives, you do not “join” the Fund in order to collect royalties. Unlike other collectives this Fund has a research team that tries to find every performer who has worked on a song.

The Sound Recording Division became operational in 2000 and distributed well over $50 million in 2017. Sound Recording revenue includes Private Copy royalties generated from the U.S. Audio Home Recording Act (AHRA); and reciprocal Private Copy agreements with numerous foreign collectives in countries that also have legislation providing these royalties such as: Japan, the Netherlands, Hungary, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Germany, Latvia, and Estonia, just to name a few. The Fund also collects record and CD rental royalties from Japan, where sound recordings are rented in much the same manner DVDs are rented in the U.S. The largest share of royalties, however, is generated from the Digital Performance Royalty Act (DPRA) and the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) which the Fund collects from Sound Exchange on behalf of non-featured performers. The Sound Recording Division pays both union and non-union participants.

For Private Copy royalties, the Fund uses, in the U.S., sales data from SoundScan to determine each sound recording’s ranking and pro-rata share of the royalty pool, and data from the respective foreign collectives for such determinations. For Digital Performance Royalties, the Fund relies on performance data (such as play lists and similar material) supplied by Sound Exchange to make these determinations.

If you have performed on a song as a background vocalist, session musician or musical programmer, visit “Unclaimed Royalties” on their website. You can look up a song by artist or song title. By clicking on the song you can see who the Fund has credited on the title. You can also contact their Participant Services Department if you feel that you have not been credited on a song that you have performed on. Even if you’re not owed royalties by the Fund, if you’re reading this article chances are you know someone who is.

More info at: afmsagaftrafund.org

Songwriter, BG vocalist and Fund participant Sean Garrett with Fund Director of Participant Services Colin Gilbert