

[IN BRIEF]

GUEST POST: ARTIST REVENUE STREAM SURVEY -- THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING DATA

(The following is a guest post from John Simson, former executive director of SoundExchange now operating as an independent consultant for the Future of Music Coalition's Artist Revenue Stream project.)

Our industry is full of colorful characters and wonderful stories. When you break bread with a "lifer" you can pretty much guarantee that you'll be regaled with incredible tales of their career in music. But when you ask them to quantify, to be specific in detail about how they make their living, which revenue streams are growing, which are shrinking and where their future lies, you get silence. We've not been good in compiling this data.

Perhaps this failing is inevitable in a business where competition around who gets the highest royalty rate or the largest-grossing tour is intense. But think about how SoundScan revolutionized our industry 20 years ago. Suddenly, we had really good data on where a record was selling and how it was selling. We had a tool to show us the spike in sales after a major television performance or a marketplace bump around a tour date, which helped inform the promotional activities conducted by an artist and their label.

But we've yet to collect and analyze information around artist revenue in the 21st century to determine which streams are most significant and where the growth or decline is occurring. We've all felt the pain of the last 11 years as we've transitioned from analog to digital, felt the effect of filesharing and CD burning and the shift from CDs to single tracks on iTunes and eMusic. Wouldn't it have been fabulous if we'd done a survey of artist or songwriter revenue streams in 1995 and could now compare the difference in mechanical royalties? Performance royalties?

We can certainly look at compiled statistics from various trade associations and garner certain assumptions, but we don't have the empirical evidence from the artist's perspective. When artist advocates are fighting on Capitol Hill or overseas for greater protections for songwriters and recording artists, having these numbers would be a huge benefit. To be able to quantify the damage suffered (if any) would become a significant part of the conversation. Yes, we have anecdotal stories, but we've had little in the way of hard facts.

That is the primary reason I signed on to assist the Future of Music Coalition in a massive undertaking: to measure artist and songwriter revenue streams in the United States. They've identified 29 different distinct streams for composers and performers, and, while we can probably parse them to make more or combine a few to have less, it is quite stunning in its breadth and scope and ambition.

Now, we need you. The project staff has already interviewed dozens of musicians in the jazz and classical world. We are now in process of building some case studies of professional songwriters, who are not recording artists, to ensure that the songwriter community is also represented in the study. We want to include composers, studio musicians, touring musicians, recording artists (both indie and major) and more. We're hoping that any lawyers, managers, business managers reading this will share word of this important survey with their artists.

We'd love to hear from you if you or an artist or songwriter you work with would like to be counted. To protect all artists and songwriters, these results are anonymous and the identification of individuals in the survey will be nearly impossible given its breadth. Obviously, the greater the number of participants, the less likely the survey will be biased or skewed in any

manner. But, we need you now to step up and be counted. Not only is it important for your career and understanding of how you are making money, but it is equally important to those who will follow you hoping to make a living from their creative efforts.

—John Simson

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The Telegraph story went on to claim that intruders attacked the building using specialist cutting equipment to dismantle a high security fence. They then overwhelmed on-site security staff before summoning a fleet of vans, into which thieves loaded electrical stock and tech hardware, the report said, with quotes it claimed were from eyewitnesses and sources in the security industry. The Telegraph additionally stated that once the original robbers had left the scene, a crowd of youths poured into the ransacked building and helped themselves to stock, including game consoles before the building caught fire.

"There is absolutely no truth in the Telegraph story," Peter Thompson, MD of PIAS U.K., told Billboard.biz. "The Sony warehouse does not even store any hardware such as TVs and Playstations," he continued, categorically denying any allegations regarding a professional gang targeting the Sony DADC building.

Following the blaze, Sony DADC quickly established a new distribution centre in Hoddesdon in Hertfordshire, England. PIAS has also implemented a new distribution system, which has seen it partner with London-based Proper Music to service specialist and catalog titles for all independent retailers in the U.K. Sony DADC continues to handle distribution to mass merchant retailers, such as British supermarket chains Tesco, Sainsbury's and Asda, as well as HMV bulk orders.

—Richard Smirke, London



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