

JOHN L. SIMSON

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John L. Simson has been involved in the music industry since his 1971 signing with Perception Records as a singer/songwriter. Simson was recently named a Special Consultant for Artist Relations and Business Development by Kobalt Music Publishing, to assist them in building a “neighboring rights” business (collecting artists’ royalties around the world).

His career has included a ten year partnership in Studio One Artists, managing country superstar Mary Chapin Carpenter (1988-1995), Steve Forbert (Geffen), Jonell Mosser (MCA), Mike Henderson (RCA), and others. Simson has practiced entertainment law since 1980 and recently joined the firm of Lommen Abdo in an “of counsel” role. He was also of counsel to the firm of Berliner, Corcoran & Rowe from 1990 through 1999. Simson was hired by the RIAA in March of 2000 to help create and launch the organization that became known as SoundExchange. Simson, originally in charge of Artist and Label Relations, was named its Executive Director in June of 2001 and ran the organization until December 31, 2010.

SoundExchange is the first performing rights organization in the United States formed to collect digital performance royalties for recording artists and sound recording copyright owners. Beginning with \$3 Million in collections in 2001, SoundExchange has undergone explosive growth collecting \$203 Million in 2009 and \$263 Million in 2010. Responsible for the organization’s outreach to artists and independent labels, Simson increased SoundExchange membership from the major labels and about 100 independent labels when he started in 2000, to over 45,000 recording artists and 5,000 independent labels today. Simson has also spearheaded SoundExchange’s international work partnering with the UK, Spain, Brazil, Mexico and the Netherlands for the exchange of international royalties. Simson’s role in international royalty collection was highlighted by his election to the SCAPR Board in 2009, his invitation to speak at the WIPO General Assembly in 2010 and his continuing involvement in efforts to create a Global Registry of works and to streamline the collection and distribution of international royalties.

Simson, SoundExchange’s first full-time employee, supervised a staff of over 60 with an additional 20 temps and consultants at the time of his departure. Over the past decade he became one of the leading spokespersons for the value of music and the importance of ensuring that artists receive fair pay for the use of their work by digital services. He testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee in July of 2007 on this issue.

Simson served as Executive Producer of the PBS television special, "Mary Chapin Carpenter Live At Wolftrap" and received an Emmy nomination for his music supervision on the PBS “American Roots Music” television series. Simson’s other television and motion picture credits include “Pete Seeger: The Power of Song”, Harry Belafonte’s “An Evening With Harry Belafonte and Friends” Earl Scruggs, Doc Watson and Ricky Skaggs’ “Three Pickers” and a network special of the April '97 Presidential Summit, “Keeping America’s Promise”.

Simson serves on the Library of Congress’ National Recording Preservation Board and was recently named Chairman of the Board of the newly created National Recording Preservation Foundation of the Library of Congress. Both organizations seek to help preserve the nation’s recorded history.

Simson has been very active in the Washington, D.C. Arts community and received the "Outstanding Volunteer Attorney Award" from Washington Area Lawyers for the Arts during its 10th Anniversary celebration. He was one of the founders of the Washington Area Music Association and served as its first President (1985-1990). Simson has also served as Vice President of the Steering Committee of the D.C. Bar's Arts, Entertainment and Sports Law Section and is currently its Finance Officer, and as a Board member and Legal Counsel to the Songwriters Association of Washington.

Simson was elected to the Recording Academy Board of Governors in 1997 for the Washington, D.C. Branch, and served three years as a National Trustee of the Academy (1997-2000), served as Chapter President from 2003-2004 and finished another term as National Trustee (2006-2010). He serves on the Advisory Board of the New Music Seminar and has also served on the Board of the Alliance of Artists and Record Companies ("AARC"), the Washington Area Music Association (WAMA), Institute For the Arts In Science Education, Inc., Video Culture, Inc. the Takoma/Silver Spring Thunderbolts and the 21st Century Consort. He is a member of the Folk Alliance, the Country Music Association and an alumnus of Nashville's "Leadership Music".

Simson currently teaches music business classes at the Kogod School of Business at The American University in Washington, D.C. and was previously an adjunct professor of Entertainment Law at American University's Washington College of Law. Simson has lectured on entertainment law, intellectual property and business issues at Harvard University, Berkley, Belmont, Berklee School of Music, McNally Smith School of Music, Loyola, WIPO, and many other colleges and universities. Media appearances include NBC Nightly News, CNN, BBC, Fox Business News, MSNBC and Marketplace. Interviews include the New York Times, LA Times, Billboard Magazine, Washington Post and Wall Street Journal.