

## THE GUILD OF INTERNATIONAL SONGWriters & COMPOSERS

Many songwriters and composers ask The Guild of International Songwriters & Composers questions relating to the music industry, songwriting, composing, lyric writing, music publishing and about music publishers. Below are a few examples of the many and diverse frequently asked questions that the Guild answers (**questions about music publishing are highlighted in red**)

**The Guild of International Songwriters & Composers - The home of songwriting, composing and music publishing**

**Q *Can the Guild of International Songwriters & Composers give advice on music publishing and on how to get my songs published?***

**A** Yes. many songwriters and composers are unable to gain a music publishing deal due to the fact that their song or instrumental theme has only minor or no commercial value and no amount of promotion or auditioning will make it succeed. The song or instrumental theme could be unsuitable for many different reasons, i.e. bad structure, weak lyrics on a good melody, good lyrics on a weak melody, badly recorded, or quite simply sent to the wrong outlet. Your songs may be singer/songwriter songs suitable only for your own use, plans, recording, gigging and exploitation in the first instance through any record deal you obtain and may, therefore, not have any commercial value for a music publisher to sign in respect to promoting and exploiting just the song. The Guild of International Songwriters & Composers can help its songwriting members in many areas of identifying weakness, lack of commercial value in their songs/compositions and advise on market direction. The Guild of International Songwriters & Composers Song Assessment service is free to all members.

**Q *What does a music publisher actually do?***

**A** Music publishers are your promotional vehicle for songs and instrumental themes if you are not retaining and exploiting your own copyrights. In some instances they will nurture and develop singer-songwriter-artistes to help them gain a record deal. Music publishers promote and exploit songs and instrumental themes which are signed to them under an assignment of rights publishing contract. Music publishers also register the copyrights as assigned to their catalogue with the relevant royalty collection organisations in the countries in which they operate. Music publishers take a percentage of the money being royalties that may be earned and these percentages are set out in the terms and conditions of the music publishing contract entered into with the songwriter, composer.

Music publishers also print sheet music. Music publishers collect and distribute money (royalties) to the contracted songwriter as received from the various royalty collection organisations within the music industry, such as the Performing Right Society (PRS) and the Mechanical Copyright Protection Society (MCPS), which are the UK organisations, etc. Songwriters and composers can of course elect not use a music publisher as the middle person for the promotion of their songs and instrumental themes to record companies and artistes, but someone has to be identified as the Music publisher and copyright owner of the song especially if it becomes successful, as credits on commercial record, video and DVD releases need to be identified even if the rights are solely retained and controlled by the writer. If you have a song which has been taken up by a record

company or artiste then it may be advisable for you as the songwriter to retain the music publishing rights by forming a music publishing facility, therefore, retaining all the royalties 100%. The Guild of International Songwriters & Composers can advise its members on how to set up a music publishing company and how to promote songs to record companies and artistes, help with market direction and advise on the right to receive money by way of royalty payments due.

**Q *Are all songwriters, composers and performing songwriters needs and ambitions the same?***

**A** The answer is, basically, yes. They are all looking for recognised success of their talent, publication of their songs and instrumental themes, and to receive money earned as royalties from the exploitation of their songwriting, composing and performances. The main difference is that songwriters and composers are seeking music publishing publishing deals, to have artistes record their songs and to see any instrumental themes succeed in television programmes and advertising, whereas performing songwriters are not only seeking music publishing publishing deals but also management deals and record deals.

**Q *Are there many cases of song theft in the music business?***

**A** Fortunately, copyright infringements are quite rare but they do happen-at all levels within the music industry. Care to safeguard and register your copyright is essential.

**Q *How can I protect the copyright to my songs and compositions?***

**A** The Guild of International Songwriters & Composers Copyright Service is free to all Guild members. From the moment you have conceived an idea and committed it to paper or tape then, if you are a United Kingdom citizen, under the 1988 Copyright Designs and Patents Act copyright automatically exists to you as the writer. Unlike some countries, there is no UK government legislation to help protect songwriters and composers in respect to proof of ownership of their copyright works, therefore, the problem arises in proving that you were the person responsible for its conception in the first place-that you are the rightful owner. The Guild of International Songwriters & Composers members FREE Copyright Service registers members' works in respect to their claim for copyright and the Guild issues a Copyright Certificate to the member. Obviously, if you have registered your copyright and the song is then plagiarised or stolen, you will be in a stronger position to sue for copyright infringement, to have any royalty payments made over to you and the credit for the work recognised to you, as the rightful owner. As a member of The Guild of International Songwriters & Composers you will be entitled to the members FREE Copyright Service. (See also Copyright information in the Members Services section.)

**Q *I have been told that posting a copy of my songs, lyrics or instrumental themes to myself will protect my copyright. Is this correct?***

**A** We believe this to be problematic. It may be worth doing as a secondary back-up but it cannot be relied upon, especially if your letter or packet has been sealed with sellotape, staples or in any other manner that would create doubt as to whether it had been opened and re-sealed. If you do have to seek legal redress to fight a copyright infringement case then it is advisable to have a third party responsible organisation, such as The Guild of International Songwriters & Composers to come forward on your behalf to help you prove the right to claim your copyrights.

**Q *If I only write music or I only write lyrics, what can I do to get my songs finished and suitable for music publishing?***

**A** There are ways of solving this problem. The Guild of International Songwriters & Composers operates a register of collaborators, some are melody writers and some are lyric writers. Collaboration is a proven method for most writers who require a partner to do what they cannot do themselves. Most songwriters and composers know of successful collaboration partnerships, such as John Lennon and Paul McCartney, Elton John and Bernie Taupin, Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd-Webber, Mick Jagger and Keith Richard to name just a few. There are also occasions when artistes themselves collaborate with songwriters. Music publishers also sometimes put songwriting teams together. In most cases, however, music publishing companies require complete songs and will only take lyrics alone under exceptional circumstances. Members of The Guild of International Songwriters & Composers can use the Collaboration Service, which is free to Guild members.

**Q *What if a collaborator writer lives in a different country to me? Does this cause a problem?***

**A** No, not at all. Modern technology allows songwriters to collaborate over vast distances. The Guild of International Songwriters & Composers collaborators can work with each other on a split percentage of the copyright of works and share accordingly in any money earned through royalties, which would be paid directly to each individual writer by a music publisher through any music publishing agreement entered into, or payment of royalties direct from any royalty collection organisation of which the writer is a member, therefore, safeguarding each collaborator's interests. No fees whatsoever should be paid or asked for by collaborators. (See also Collaboration page.)

**Q *What should I do if I am asked to pay a fee for any lyrics or music?***

**A** The Guild of International Songwriters & Composers feels that under no circumstances should a songwriter, composer or lyricist part with any money to anyone offering to put music to lyrics (a melody to lyrics service) or lyrics to music (a lyric to melody service). The Guild of International Songwriters & Composers believes that you will never have any success or a hit song by paying for a melody or lyrics. If those offering this type of service were any good then they would be successfully writing hit songs on their own and would, therefore, not have to resort to making money this way.

**Q *I am interested in songwriting. Can I learn how to write a successful or hit song?***

**A** The Guild of International Songwriters & Composers can give practical advice on the issues of songwriting. Songwriters and composers can learn how to structure a song and present the song in a recognised format but the definition of a hit song is extremely subjective. The commercial value of a song to non-performing songwriters and composers is important, but it is not necessarily as important to performing songwriters who are capable of exploiting their own works through their own performances and any record deal they gain, which may produce a hit song for them through their popularity as an artiste.

A hit song may come about because an artiste is popular, therefore, the song has become a hit through the artiste. Certain influences may give you that inspirational ingredient to write a hit song but only your own ideas and imagination can give you the talent that is recognisably your own. Some songs are so incredibly strong they are destined to become a hit. The Guild of International Songwriters & Composers believes that you can learn to write

successful hit songs by studying what is currently successful and by learning format, style and content combined with the use of your own ideas, imagination and any inspirational ingredient you possess. Acquiring a market direction to bring your songs, instrumental themes and talent to a wider audience may see you rewarded with the success you feel you deserve.

**Q *When I have written a song or instrumental theme, what do I do next?***

**A** When a song has been written, that is where the melody and lyrics are combined, the next step is to promote the song to music publishers, record companies, management companies, artistes, etc to gain interest for obtaining a publishing deal, record deal and/or recording of the song by an artiste. When an instrumental theme has been written, which may be suitable for the television, radio, audio-visual, film and advertising industries worldwide, the next step is to promote it to publishers, production companies and producers to gain interest for obtaining a music publishing deal and for use in programming, broadcasting and advertising.

To promote your songs and/or instrumental themes to music publishers, record companies, management companies, agencies etc you will need a suitably produced and arranged demo recording to a studio standard. Demos can be recorded in your own home studio, by a local studio close to you, or non-performing songwriters who are unable to produce their own demos can use The Guild of International Songwriters & Composers Demo Service. When your demos are ready for promotion they can be sent to publishers, record companies, management companies, artistes, etc.

**Q *How can I get my songs and/or instrumental themes to music publishers, record companies, management companies, artistes, producers, etc, and how do I get contacts within the music industry?***

**A** Market direction is important, as is having contact information available to you. Every songwriter, composer, lyricist, performing songwriter, singer, group, musician, artiste etc needs to know how to contact music publishers, record companies, management companies, music industry personnel, recording artistes etc.

The Guild of international Songwriters & Composers has a comprehensive music industry reference library and the Guild can assist you in your own research for the artistes, companies and people you wish to contact, work with and deal with in the music industry. You may wish to locate artists such as Robbie Williams, Beyonce, James Morrison, Keane, Razorlight, Justin Timberlake, Lilly Allen, Pink, Missy Elliot, Jane MacDonald, Martine McCutcheon, Charlie Landsborough, Cliff Richard, Britney Spears, Tom Jones, Whitney Houston, Ricky Martin, Christine Aguilera, Michael Ball, Mariah Carey, Ronan Keating, , Eric Clapton, Celine Dion, Westlife, Snow Patrol, Daniel O'Donnell, Dominic Kirwan, Scissor Sisters, Nelly Furtado, Madonna, Coldplay, KT Tunstall and many more to numerous to mention.

Perhaps your musical preferences are different to some of those mentioned but this does not matter as The Guild of International Songwriters & Composers can give members contact information for artistes working in all styles of music from country/MoR artistes such as Daniel O'Donnell, Dominic Kirwan, Charlie Landsborough, Foster and Allen, Shania Twain, Dixie Chicks, Trisha Yearwood, Reba McEntire, , LeAnne Rimes, etc, etc, to R&B artistes such as Gabrielle, Eminem, Honeyz, Craig David, to dance artistes, to publishers, artistes, record companies etc who work in and require all styles of songs and music, from rock to

reggae, R&B to dance, house to drum'n'bass, grunge, techno, TV, film and audio-visual, gospel, jazz, folk, Christian, heavy metal, contemporary and mainstream pop-chart material, high energy dance, rap, club, ballads, funk, soul, instrumental, middle-of-the-road (MoR), easy listening, novelty, Latin American, indie-pop, underground, roots, world, ethnic-to singer-songwriter, etc, etc, etc, etc.

The Guild of International songwriters & Composers can advise as to the correct procedure for promotion of your songs or instrumental themes to music publishers, record companies, artistes, producers, managers, agents. As a member of The Guild of International Songwriters & Composers you will be entitled to the free Advice, Consultancy, Information and Contact Service along with all the services The Guild of international songwriters & Composers offers to Guild members.

**Q *What happens if I am offered a contract by a music publisher?***

**A** If you are offered a contract by a music publisher, obviously, they like your song or instrumental theme and are reasonably confident that they can secure a recording or exploitation. Music publishers' contracts will state a split percentage deal but you are advised not to accept less than 50% on your behalf. Terms are negotiable, i.e. 60/40, 70/30 in your favour. All members of The Guild of International Songwriters & Composers are entitled to free advice and information regarding contracts, terms and clauses to ensure they are fair and reasonable.

**Q *Can The Guild of International Songwriters & Composers help me to set up my own record label and/or publishing company?***

**A** Yes, The Guild of International Songwriters & Composers can take you through a step-by-step procedure to set up your own record label and/or publishing company and how to join the relevant organisations in respect to protecting your rights and identity, through to the right to receive money by way of royalty payments from the many sources where royalty income is generated.

**Q *If I am not an experienced songwriter would I be considered less favourably than an experienced songwriter if I became a member of The Guild of International Songwriters and Composers?***

**A** Absolutely not-all members are treated equally. The Guild of International Songwriters & Composers has members of all ages and all nationalities, all with different levels of ability and knowledge. As a Guild member you will be entitled to all the benefits, information and services that are available, no matter what level you are working at.

If you are not an experienced songwriter/composer/performing artiste then your membership to The Guild of International Songwriters & Composers will immediately safeguard your interests against unfair practices and policies that exist within the music industry.

The Guild of International Songwriters & Composers helps all songwriters, composers, lyric writers, performing songwriters, bands, etc, and maintains a united voice for all those who are trying to establish themselves and who may already be established in a competitive music industry environment.

Many Guild members who were inexperienced songwriters and composers and who were struggling to understand the complexities of the music industry and

songwriting before they joined The Guild of International Songwriters & Composers, have benefited enormously from their membership to the Guild.

The Guild of International Songwriters & Composers continues to be of immense benefit to those who are inexperienced songwriters and composers and indeed to all songwriters and composers regardless of the stage they are at with the progression of their songwriting, composing, performing and pursuit of their ambitions to succeed in the music industry-from the hobbyist songwriter, composer, lyricist, performer-to the amateur, to the semi-professional, to the professional through to those with modest home recording facilities through to more comprehensive recording / studio facilities to music industry personnel.

The many services The Guild of International Songwriters & Composers provide to inexperienced amateur songwriters, composers and performing songwriters provide them the opportunity to gain a wide understanding of songwriting, composing, performing and the many other aspects of the music industry. Through this understanding, progression, development and the gaining of knowledge, and along with continuing to support and guide those Guild members who work at a semi-professional and professional level, those inexperienced, amateur songwriters, composers and performers will soon gain the knowledge and experience to compete in the music industry to try to gain the deals they seek.

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### **The Guild of International Songwriters & Composers - The home of songwriting, composing and music publishing**

#### **The Guild of international songwriters & Composers Publishers of Songwriting & Composing Magazine since 1986**

Over £545m of songwriting and publishing royalties were paid to PRSforMusic songwriter, composer and publisher members in 2010. For the first time PRSforMusic's revenue has topped £600 million, which is an amazing achievement. PRSforMusic's record results have seen: Licensing revenue growth of 8% on 2009. Double digit growth in three of our four licensing areas effective licensing of new online services Growth of 9% in net distributable revenue on 2008.

The PRSforMusic's July 2011 distribution totalled just over £91million. In total the PRSforMusic July 2011 distribution contained more than 2,274 separate usage sources, generating 126million transactions. There were some 35million unique performances during the quarter made up of 674,905 distinct works to include Guild members works.

The PRSforMusic October 2011 royalty distribution totalled just over £127 million to its publisher and writer members. In total the October 2011 royalty distribution contains more than 2,400 separate usage sources, generating 109 million transactions. There were some 37 million unique performances during the quarter, made up of more than 8000,000 distinct works.

Songwriting and publishing royalties are a substantial source of income.

**Article Source: <http://www.songwriters-guild.co.uk/faq.htm>**