

Important Notice to All AFM Members Concerning Non-union Recording in Seattle

by Thomas F. Lee, AFM President

Over the course of the last several years, non-union recording of all kinds, but particularly film scoring, by both AFM and non-AFM musicians in Seattle have been on the rise.

While we are aware of non-AFM recording in other cities, Seattle has become a major hub of this activity, far surpassing non-AFM recording work done elsewhere.

The Federation has made efforts to turn this trend around by trying to organize the Seattle recording musicians. For a variety of reasons, that approach has not been successful, even though musicians recording non-AFM in Seattle are presently receiving pay and benefits well below those provided under AFM contracts.

After considerable review, the Federation has determined that it must take a more aggressive approach to this problem.

Our review of the recording scene in Seattle has convinced us that these non-union recording sessions are in no small measure dependent upon AFM members--orchestrators, arrangers, copyists and others--who create and prepare the product to be recorded.

We have also concluded that many, if not most, of these projects simply could not have been done in Seattle without the services of these talented AFM music prep members.

Membership in the AFM is a privilege and it has allowed our recording musicians--including music prep members--to earn a handsome living with generous health and pension benefits and to participate in successful residual funds that can add tens of thousands of dollars to their annual income.

Non-union recording is not a problem for just a handful of musicians, or just a few large recording locals--it is a problem for all of us.

Every non-union record date represents a recording that won't be subject to the Sound Recording Special Payments Fund or the Music Performance Fund.

Every non-union film scoring session represents a film that won't be subject to the Film Musicians Secondary Markets Fund.

Every non-union recording represents investment contributions that will be lost to our Pension Fund.

Most of our members understand the importance of solidarity. They know that helping Employers record projects non-AFM in Seattle erodes benefits for all AFM musicians and is an affront to our brothers and sisters who play by the rules and who refuse to work non-AFM.

Non-union recording weakens the AFM and deprives the Federation of the financial resources necessary to represent all of us, regardless of our musical discipline.

Recording non-AFM is also a violation of the AFM Bylaws. Article 15, Section 3 provides: 3(a) No AFM member may perform services (whether as composer, arranger, copyist, proofreader, instrumentalist, leader, contractor, cutter, editor, or in any other capacity): (1) where the product of the services is intended to result in, or be embodied in, recorded music made outside of the United States and Canada and the possessions of either; or (2) for the purpose of producing, editing, or dubbing recorded music except where expressly authorized and covered by a contract with the AFM or when expressly authorized by the AFM.

3(b) Any member violating Section 3(a) shall be subject to a fine not exceeding \$50,000 and/or expulsion.

Those sections of the Bylaws were enacted specifically to encourage the solidarity that is essential to the Federation's ongoing effort and commitment to achieve and protect hard won benefits for its members.

The purpose of this notice is to place AFM members--both music prep members and instrumentalists--on notice that the Federation will no longer tolerate the disloyalty to our craft and to our members that this conduct demonstrates.

The Federation will actively invite local unions to file charges against members who participate in projects to be recorded non-AFM in Seattle on or after October 1, 2006.

Those charges, if filed, will be processed in accordance with the AFM Bylaws, and members found to be in violation of the Bylaws will be subject to the full reach of the Bylaws' sanctions.

The Federation has reached the conclusion that it must initiate this course of action only with reluctance and after carefully considering and rejecting alternative approaches.

No union relishes the prospect of disciplining its members, but no union can allow its members to erode the hard-fought benefits that union membership provides.

While most of our members understand the importance of maintaining solidarity on this fundamental point, those who do not make it harder on those who do.

We hope that this Notice will result in broad compliance with the Bylaws going forward and that the Federation will never have to impose any discipline on any AFM member.

Between now and October, we encourage all our members, wherever they may work or reside, to discuss this issue with their friends and colleagues to ensure that as many musicians as possible are aware of the Federation's anticipated course of action.