

## Performing Rights

# Credit Check

*The newly formed Production Music Association taps into an underrepresented musical niche.*

BY JEFF BOND

Composers of music for movies, television and other venues have long benefited from the existence of organizations that represent their interests, such as the American Federation of Musicians and the Society for Composers and Lyricists. But there's another element of the music heard on television, radio and even in motion picture theaters that has long gone unrecognized and unrepresented: production music.

Production music is prerecorded musical material designed to be used in commercials, documentaries, sports programming, TV promos, movie trailers, theme parks and numerous other venues including CD-ROMS, Webcasts and Web sites. Composers of this music often toil without credit and until recently have had no organization to represent their interests.

That problem was addressed last year with the formation of the Production Music Association. Comprised of musicians and producers from a number of production music companies, the PMA was formed to bring together production music composers and publishers to provide them with

been around for decades since they first appeared in Europe and the United Kingdom, the past 20 years have seen exponential growth in the use of production music due to the expansion of cable networks and other venues of worldwide production. "The name of the game now is to fill all of these media pipelines and distribution channels," says Ron Mendelsohn, CEO and co-founder of Megatrax Production Music and one of the PMA's founding members.

Richard Wolf of eSoundtrax explains that while some production music is written specifically for use in music libraries, a great deal of it is the result of work done by musicians purely for their own pleasure. "As a record producer, I know that not every track I put together for an album will be used, and there could be a variety of reasons why a great track of music wasn't used on a record," Wolf says. "It's musicians who are writing the best music they can and not thinking about what it's going to be used for. They put their music down and want people to hear it and know about it."

Wolf formed his company

catalyst for the formation of the PMA occurred three years ago when ASCAP put in place a payment system for production music, to cope with increased performances. Composers and publishers consequently saw a drastic reduction in ASCAP distributions, which resulted in a series of meetings between production composers and ASCAP executives. ASCAP subsequently revoked the changes and returned to its original payment system, and the production music representatives saw the need to organize. "We realized there was no organization for the producers of this kind of music to deal with the marketplace as a unified group," Mendelsohn says.

Since production music is designed so that the same piece of music can be used in different venues, tracking the use of such music so that the composer is paid is a concern for the PMA. Technological developments, such as "watermarking," now promise to simplify this process. "We're watermarking all our CDs with technology by Verance Corporation," Mendelsohn says. "It allows music to be tracked

Special Issue

THE *Unauthorized* REPORTER

August  
\$3.25 (California) \$4.95 (Canada) \$3.40 (Elsewhere)

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valuable information, a forum to express their concerns and advance their trade and a mechanism with which to work with various performing rights organizations such as ASCAP and BMI in order to ensure that members are fairly paid for the work they do.

While music libraries have

when he found other producers and musicians with a backlog of quality music and no immediate distribution venue. "It's a focused effort to find the highest quality contemporary music that we can distribute to clients in audiovisual productions," Wolf says.

According to Mendelsohn, the

wherever it's played.

PMA membership is open to individuals, companies and organizations involved in the production music industry. With its ambitious agenda, the organization looks to position itself alongside long-established musician's organizations in the coming months. □

