The Blast Ministries, Inc.
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Always Aggressive, Always Progressive Christian music

"The Blast": 2013 Rain Awards Winner: Best Single Stream Webcaster

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Copyright Royalty Board
P.O. Box 70977
Washington, DC 20024-0977

Dear Copyright Royalty Board:

I am writing to comment on the proposed changes to record-keeping rules for webcasters.

I believe that some of the proposed rule changes Sound Exchange has put on the table would cause an undue burden on small webcasters.

From my research, it appears that very few streaming providers offer a way to calculate census reports that show how many people were listening each time a song played.   It would cost us almost 1% of this year's revenue to have our streaming provider write software to capture such data. Why are we as a pureplay small non-commercial webcaster treated unfairly compared to small non-commercial webcasters that stream their signal over the air? Why would we have to do census reporting if they don't?

Our current setup allows the sending of Reports of Use in the ASCII format.   The proposed change to require UTF-8 presents a hassle, as I am not sure our current softwares can send them in any other format other than ASCII. I do not see a UTF-8 option. If ASCII has always been sufficient for Sound Exchange in the past, why would we be required to change the format now?

I can understand late fees for late payments.   But late fees for late reports also presents an undue burden on small webcasters, especially if we have such stringent requirements that are hard to meet.

Forcing services to include ISRC codes in every song listing in each music use report is a very unrealistic requirement.   This is an attempt to change the rules long after the game has started. When we started webcasting in 2007, this was not a requirement. Our understanding was that they wanted the

artist, title, album, and composer listed for each work played, and we have been extremely diligent in providing that for every song (although sometimes it is not clear to us who the composer is on a given work). As to ISRC, labels have just recently become diligent about listing this in the docmentation attached to the songs they release. To go back and find these for all of the songs in our back catalog of songs would be impossible. Not to mention the fact that a large portion of our library consists of "pick hits"...songs that are not officially released to radio. The reason we do this is...with our primary station being a Christian Rock station...the Christian record labels do not release many valid rock releases to the format. They have been dumbing down the format over the last few years, releasing a high percentage of songs to the format that (in the real world) would be much better suited to Christian pop /Top 40 radio. As a small, independent non-profit start-up organization, we have a staff of one person and a few volunteers. There isn't enough time in a YEAR to do that kind of information gathering.

To tell an internet radio station that such radio station is required to force its stream hosting providers to give Sound Exchange detailed access to its systems is absurd. What vendor is going to agree to that? In 7 ½ years of webcasting, we have tried at least 10 streaming providers (that I can count) and deals and contracts are never written from a standpoint of here is what we, the webcaster demand of you, the streaming provider. It's always coming from the stream hosting provider: here is what we offer, and here is the cost and here are the payment methods. The only things we've been able to different than that is to negotiate the price, ask for the stream to be hosted at a certain data center, and in some cases, ask for a certain streaming address and port number.

Internet radio helps level the playing field for ex-broadcasters like me who are using their talents to promote music through internet radio that FM radio generally ignores. This provides a valuable service for listeners all over America. And it helps the artists and bands that we play.

As a skeleton crew small non-profit, we already spend a disproportionate amount of money and time each year on royalties and royalty-related record-keeping.

I plead with the CRB...please make this simpler for those of us providing this type of service who are paying royalties to Sound Exchange. Don't unnecessarily make it more complex and burdensome.

Sincerely,

Colin "Cruz" Strombeck

President and Founder
The Blast Ministries
TheBlast.FM (aka The Blast)
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