

HOW AFM 257 RECORDING MUSICIANS GET PAID FOR THE WORK THEY DO

All AFM Local and National recording contracts include scale wages, plus a pension payment of 14.09% of scale, (% varies slightly in some contracts) and Health and Welfare payments of \$30 for the first 3-hour session and \$25 for each additional session per day. Up to 15 minutes of music can be recorded in a 3-hr session. Leader makes double scale and typically writes charts, calls the players, helps the producer communicate with the musicians, and makes sure the paperwork is taken care of properly and turned into the union promptly after the session is completed.

AFM 257 LOCAL SCALES

- **Demo:** \$170.00 (\$57/hr) This scale is for recordings not originally intended for commercial release. Publishing demos have long been a fertile training ground for players and producers, and the quality of Nashville demos is second to none. To be released, they can be converted to Limited Pressing and/or upgraded to Master scale. More on that below...
- **Limited Pressing:** \$216.50 (\$72/hr) This was developed for indie artists and labels. When 10,000 copies are pressed and/or sold, an upgrade payment is due to bring it up to Master scale, with credit given for the original payment. This scale can also be combined with the Single Song Overdub Scale.
- **Demo to Limited Pressing Conversion** - \$100/player + \$25 H&W per 3 hour session. Upgrade to Master applies when 10,000 copies are sold.

SINGLE SONG OVERDUB AGREEMENT

We developed this concept in Nashville to address the rise of home recording and remote Internet based sessions, but **all AFM Locals can use this scale, which can also be combined with their Local Limited Pressing Agreement.** It is the only AFM scale to pay by the song with a negotiable per song rate (\$100 minimum). Pension and H&W are included as a percentage of the rate, and the musician can choose to make their own pension contribution, also a first.

AFM NATIONAL RECORDING SCALES - The current AFM Sound Recording Labor Agreement (SRLA) with the major labels has been extended to July 2026.

- **SRLA Low Budget Master:** \$274.32 (\$91.43/hr.) This scale is for album projects with a total recording budget of less than \$99K. No upgrade to full master is required, regardless of sales. **Budget must be approved by AFM in advance.**
- **SRLA Master scale:** \$488.29. (\$162.76/hr) is the standard scale for major label projects. There are discounts for larger ensembles in our latest contract.
- **SRLA Live and in Studio Streaming :** \$250 1st song, \$125 each add'l. song.

OTHER NATIONAL AFM AGREEMENTS (3 hr session rates, rounded to nearest \$)

- **Motion Picture/Television Film:** \$379-\$436 (\$126 -145/hr) Rates vary by # of musicians on session. Lowest rate is for 35 players, highest for 23 or fewer. H&W is 48.54/day TV Film (Scripted television shows) \$322-406 (\$107 -126/hr). Lowest rate is for 5 or more musicians, higher for 4 or less. This pays additional wages for reruns and the release of audio under the SRLA. Pension is 11.99% of scale.
- **Television/Videotape:** (Live TV performances/awards shows/late night TV) Pay depends on length of show. \$317 (30 minute show with rehearsal) \$1879. 3.5 hr show w rehearsals pays additional rehearsal hours \$94/hr. Weekly shows such as Today pay based on length of show how many days a week the show airs. \$259 - \$484. H&W is \$45.day Pension is 12.1 % of scale.
- **Videogames:** \$300-345 (\$100-115/hr) Rates vary by # of musicians, lowest is for 25 + musicians, higher rate is for fewer than 25 musicians. More info below.
- **Basic Cable:** Shows airing on cable TV \$298 30 minutes - \$506 1 hour - \$1010. 2 hr (plus rehearsals)

NEW USE/REUSE - RESIDUALS AND ROYALTIES

- **New Use/Re-Use:** when a phono recording is used in another medium such as film, tv, and/or jingles, the appropriate payment for that medium is made to the musicians who played on the original recording. Additional jingle cycles of 13 weeks pay an additional Re-Use fee for each subsequent cycle.
- **Use of studio tracks onstage:** Long prohibited, the SRLA Phono Agreement now has a "Tracks on Tour" scale for paying musicians a reasonable per show fee (\$170/night) for the use of their AFM-covered studio work onstage, with a discount for advance payments of \$5000 for 6 months and \$9000 for one year.
- **Sound Recording Special Payments Fund:** funded by .05% of record sales from signatory labels and pays recording musicians a residual payment once a year. The individual's distribution amount is based on the amount of AFM sessions done over the past 5 years. \$9.7 Million was distributed last year.
- **Film Musicians Secondary Markets Fund:** pays musicians who work on AFM covered film soundtracks a pro rata share of 1/20th of 1% of post theater revenue generated by that film in perpetuity. The FMSMF distributed more than \$120 Million to musicians last year.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY - PERFORMANCE RIGHTS

- **Internet Radio and Non-Interactive Satellite Radio:** Sound Exchange collects nearly \$1 Billion annual revenue from these sources. 5% of the distribution goes to backup musicians and singers and is distributed by the AFM/SAG-AFTRA Intellectual Property Fund. In 2025, the Fund paid out more than \$60 Million to musicians whose work was played on Sirius XM and non-interactive Pandora.
- **International Performance Rights** - The AFM participated in the 2012 UN Conference on Intellectual Property in Beijing. We created the "no collection without distribution" language in the treaty which has resulted in more than \$20 million in new money paid to American musicians by foreign collectives, despite the U.S.'s lack of reciprocal AM/FM performance rights. (see below)

EXCEPTIONS TO THE ABOVE...

- **AM/FM Terrestrial Radio:** U.S. terrestrial radio Pays NOTHING to musicians or artists, unlike every other developed country in the world. The U.S. creates 80% of the world's music, yet millions in overseas money owed to American musicians is held captive due to our lack of reciprocal Performance Rights. For years, the broadcast industry has successfully fought this concept and previous versions of this legislation. The two issues that were bought up for years by the broadcasters have been addressed in the newest version of this legislation, the American Music Fairness Act. **The AMFA legislation now in Congress will fix this once and for all if passed. TN Senator Marsha Blackburn is one of the legislation's co-sponsors.**
- **AFM Videogame Contracts:** Despite claims to the contrary, these agreements do not have, and have never had, any residual or royalty component whatsoever for session musicians. However, if covered music is re-used in another videogame, an additional payment is required. When videogame music is recorded non-union, then the musicians will never receive another payment. With the rise of AI, all of the unprotected music recorded by companies like EA can be manipulated over and over again, and the musicians may never get another call or any credit or compensation as their work is misused over and over again. This is the downside of AI, and we are doing all we can to establish standards for proper use of this latest technological challenge to authentic musicians and the work they create.

AFM Local 257's mission is to make sure musicians and singers are paid fairly, and that our members, and their employers, know how to protect their intellectual property rights and future residuals by documenting their work on an AFM contract. This organic system of mutual respect between employers and musicians that has developed over the past 120 years is the reason why Nashville is Music City!

FIVE GOOD REASONS TO PUT YOUR RECORDINGS ON AN AFM CONTRACT!

1. **Why Bother?** Putting your recordings on an AFM contract greatly increases both the artist and side musician's chances of getting what they deserve for their intellectual property, both now and in the future. Additional uses of a song in commercials, film, or tv will pay them again. Any legit sync, commercial, tv, and film company knows they have an obligation to pay AFM covered musicians separately from the artist or label's fees.
2. **Protection for Everyone:** An AFM contract provides a "work for hire" scenario for the signatory employer, ensuring that no one can claim rights of composition, arrangement or production after the fact. Accurate contract documentation makes sure that both the artist and side musicians are protected and will receive all the revenue they deserve for broadcast royalties and additional uses of their work, both now and in the future. The contract also provides a Health & Welfare payment and a pension contribution.
3. **Back End Residuals and Obligations:** the AFM/SAG-AFTRA Fund paid out \$65 million to side musicians and background singers last year for airplay on satellite radio. The Fund uses our contract database to accurately monitor who played on which song to ensure correct residual payments. The Sound Recording Special Payments Fund pays musicians residuals for five years after sessions are filed, and paid out \$9 million to musicians last year. The amount a signatory employer pays into the SRSPF Fund is based on physical sales, at a very reasonable rate. For example, no payment is required from the employer until 50K albums are sold, and that payment would be \$700. 100K sales require \$2700 in payment to the Fund, and 1,000,000 physical sales would require a payment of \$40,200.
4. **New Uses:** When a song recorded under an AFM contract is used in a commercial, television show, or a theatrical film, the new employer knows they are obligated to pay the musicians the appropriate scale for the use of their work. Commercials pay in 12 week cycles. We have gotten musicians, and if they have passed away, their beneficiaries, paid again and again for the use of songs recorded more than 60 years ago. Songs used in movies require that the film producer, not the artist, pay the appropriate additional scale payment to the all the players, plus the musicians will all share in 1% of the film's post theater revenue through the Film Musicians Secondary Markets Fund. The FMSMF distributed more than \$132 Million to participating musicians last year, and is a game changer for many musicians.
5. **Artificial Intelligence:** As AI becomes more of a threat to working musicians, the AFM has negotiated protections against the misuse of AI in film and television, and we are currently in negotiations with the major labels and AI is at the center of our discussions. Again, the use of an AFM contract provides the only measure of protection against AI, by documenting your work in a tangible way. We will have a much harder time protecting musicians whose work is not properly documented under an AFM recording contract.