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EMI refuses to stream at new PRS rates

Takes its ball and goes home

by Duncan Geere published on 30 June 2009

EMI Publishing has said that it's not going to be making its catalogue available at the new audio streaming rates for websites, recently published by PRS for Music.

The collection society, which organises royalty payments for music publishers, cut its minimum stream rates from 0.22p to 0.085p last month, to cheers from the digital music community.

However, EMI's withdrawing its mechanical rights from PRS. That, thankfully, doesn't mean the catalogue will be unavailable, it just means that it'll have to administer its own royalty collections at the old 0.22p price.

"We are not currently satisfied that the new rates - in particular the minima - proposed by PRS for Music for streaming services are appropriate", said EMI Music Publishing's general counsel for Europe Antony Bebawi.

Universal Music Publishing and Sony/ATV, two of the other major publishing organizations, are similarly unhappy with the new lower rates, but haven't announced what they're planning to do yet. If they follow EMI, then PRS may be forced into an embarrassing climbdown.

Meanwhile as you might expect, the news has not been welcomed by music streaming services. We7's SVP of Digital Music, Clive Gardiner, told Pocket-lint: "High minimum payments per stream can really cripple fast-growing new services in the investment phase of a start-up business".

"A situation where different publishers charges different rates for the same usage is an everyday occurrence in the convoluted complex world of music licensing".



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Keith Harris, chairman of MusicTank, a business development network for the UK music industry, agreed, telling Pocket-lint: "There is no doubt that there is an urgent need to license new streaming services. It is disappointing that for whatever reason there seems to have been a lack of communication between some of the key players and PRS for Music".

"There needs to be an immediate rapprochement if these important new services are not to begin to flounder due to poor customer experience, though the unavailability of key catalogue".