



American Association  
of Independent Music

## **A2IM on Copyright Protection**

**January 18, 2012**

Independent music labels embrace the Internet. The Internet has been the great equalizer...on the ability to market, to promote, and to introduce new music. The Internet has opened up countless opportunities for us; we would never want to jeopardize our progress that has come from the Internet. However, as a result of the commercial mass distribution of illegal downloading via sophisticated business models, search engine ad-serving, and a loophole in U.S. law, independents labels and artists who have the right to seek revenue from the music they create are finding making a sustainable living very difficult. And because margins are so thin for independent labels -- because we are not part of larger corporations which might be able to offset losses during leaner years -- independent labels and artists may be hurt even more than major labels and superstar artists.

The time and capital investment required for our community of like-minded, but proudly independent, small business people to monitor the web for infringement and take subsequent legal action simply does not exist. A2IM member music labels simply do not have the financial means or resources to house a stable of systems people and lawyers to monitor the Internet and bombard sites with DMCA takedown notices for the endless illegal links to our music that appear on search engines next to legitimate links without distinction to our fans. We do not have the financial means to bankroll field offices in far-flung countries abroad with weak copyright laws. Our companies have limited budgets, and whatever living they can eke out is often promptly reinvested back into finding the next new artist or the marketing campaign of an artist already on their roster.

We need legislation that polices foreign "pirate" sites and those who profit from their illegal behavior in order to continue to invest in the music creation process -- music that contributes greatly to world culture, to the lives of our fans, to the jobs of numerous passionate, hard-working people in every state of the union, and to the very digital platforms that are currently treating us as bitter opponents instead of as valued partners. If there are ways to strengthen the bills currently in Congress and ensure that they are more narrowly focused, we are for that and urge the best digital minds to sincerely engage with the creator community to come up with better language. No legislation is perfect, and improvements should be made where appropriate. If SOPA/Protect IP are found to not be the answer it is important that the possible failure of those proposed legislations shouldn't preclude additional efforts to work against piracy that we all would agree profoundly threatens the creative community. Let's have a debate that genuinely acknowledges that the voices within our entertainment family are deep, broad and diverse and let's all agree that doing nothing is not an option any Intellectual Property creator can live with.