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OVER 80 CLIENTS ALREADY SIGNED TO EXPANDING PUBLISHING DIVISION

Wixen finds good neighbours

RIGHTS

BY TIM INGHAM

Neighbouring rights management is one of the fastest-growing areas of the modern music business - and respected independent publisher Wixen is expanding its operation with gusto.

The company, which is best known for publishing major league writers such as Stephen Stills, George Harrison and Rick James, has already attracted 80 neighbouring rights clients, and expects that number to top 100 by Christmas. Wixen is made up of two sister companies, Wixen US and Wixen Music UK. The latter is handling the neighbouring rights operation in tandem with PPL's international division.

UK director Naomi Asher (pictured, right) told *Music Week* that many of these clients are US performers who were already signed to Wixen as songwriters - and who didn't realise that they were entitled to neighbouring rights royalties outside of the States. The US is the only major music territory in the world not to recognise the Rome Convention - the globally-binding piece of legislation which ensures performers on a record, whether featured or otherwise, are due royalties whenever it is publicly played. However, US performers can still claim neighbouring rights royalties if their material is played abroad, either by a broadcaster or in a place of work, depending on certain circumstances. "I was



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BETH WIJAYARATHNA AND NAOMI ASHER, WIXEN

surprised how many territories actually pay Americans," explained Asher. "I expected it to be four or five countries - it was more like 15. And more countries will pay Americans if certain criteria is met: for instance, they'll pay if [a musician] performed on the record outside the US, but also if the recording's owned by a Rome Convention label. A lot of the labels will also have their international [ex-US office] register the recordings, so even if it's recorded in Los Angeles, it will appear as [international] in the system."

Wixen UK MD Beth Wijayarathna (pictured, left) said:

"This is an especially important royalty for [non-featured] performers. They're the people behind the scenes bringing the music to life. They're not necessarily aware that they can claim, and it's fantastic we can bring them money that's due to them."

Wixen is finding surprisingly large sums of neighbouring rights payments coming from the likes of Germany, Spain, the Netherlands, Serbia and Albania. But the neighbouring rights market is becoming increasingly more crowded, with agents such as Fintage House rivalling PPL, and publishers such as Sony/ATV also recently announcing their

own operations. Wijayarathna said that the advantages for performers of signing with Wixen's neighbouring rights service were broadly in line with the benefits they would see from its traditional publishing business.

"The term is short - it's the shortest you'll find," she said. "And collection here is second to none, plus our rates are very competitive. We can offer a bespoke, unique service - you can always speak directly to the team." Aside from its neighbouring rights expansion, Wixen UK is celebrating recent success with star publishing client Tom Petty, whose new album *Hypnotic Eye*, hit No.1 in the US and No.7 in the UK after being released in July. Last year, Wixen claimed 100% of the publisher share of The Saturdays' track *What About Us?* - a platinum-selling version of which, featuring Sean Paul, hit No.1 last March. Said Wijayarathna: "We're obviously still a publishing company first and foremost: the US company has been around for 35 years, and we're actively signing new clients - it's very much the anchor. But neighbouring rights is now growing incredibly quickly."

Added Asher: "The attention to detail that we pride ourselves on in publishing is being applied to our research process for neighbouring rights. It's so important we make sure that our guys can claim for every possible recording and contribution they've ever done, and account it to them properly."

Call to arms for anti-austerity lobbying group

Cuts in funding to the NHS, arts education, housing and cultural and heritage sectors risk resulting in a gentrified cultural landscape, according to the newly launched Artists' Assembly Against Austerity (AAAA).

Over 600 names working in the creative arts have already signed up to the organisation, which is

equal access to arts education by scrapping student fees and ending cuts to creative subjects in schools and universities, provide affordable homes and studios by capping rents and the abolition of cuts to the cultural and heritage sectors and reinstatement of arts funding to

what was going on, what we thought about, what was important. To think that these artifacts could end up produced by a limited demographic is sad, almost Victorian. It means more people and their experiences remain invisible, pushed to the margins."

activist Billy Bragg has spoken out in support of the group. "Very few people go to hear politicians speak, but many of us still go to gigs, so music has a role to play in bringing people together in support of a particular cause," Bragg told *Music Week*. "The songs