

## AFM Freelance Touring — Removing Some of the Bumps in Road Gigs

*by Paul Sharpe, Director, AFM Freelance Services Division*

In many cases, it's a fact of today's live music business: If you're going to succeed as a full-time musician playing clubs, college dates, casinos, corporate events, festivals or concerts; you're going to have to hit the road! Whether you're a cover/tribute act or an Indie group touring in support of your latest CD, the AFM can help.

You may not be taking full advantage of the many AFM benefits/services currently available to you. You should be! Using them can only increase your chances of success. In that spirit, let's take a brief look at some of the most important AFM resources available to freelance members considering a tour.

**AFM Locals:** I find that members often overlook the fact that the AFM structure offers unique networking opportunities. While it's true your home Local should be your first call for advise and guidance, there are nearly 250 additional Locals throughout the US and Canada; many staffed by some of the most knowledgeable people in the industry. They know the local scene! If you're planning a tour, why not ask for their assistance? Let them know what you do and what kinds of gigs you're looking for. They may be able to assist you directly, refer you to a local agent/buyer, or possibly, even a member in their area doing similar types of work. Who knows? You may end up filling a couple of dates in your tour schedule. You can start taking advantage of this resource by searching the AFM Locals database at <http://www.afm.org/public/join/findalocal.php> and/or by downloading the current List of Locals Book in the AFM members' area at <https://www.afm.org/private>. You'll have everything you need, including the names of key contact people, the Local's mailing address, as well as phone, fax, email and website info.

**Licensed Booking Agents:** There is a large number of AFM approved booking agents who meet the highest standards of professional service. Through their contracts with purchasers, these agents agree that there will be no hidden costs or fees and no surprises in the amount of commission or in the services offered. Separate US and Canadian AFM Booking Agent Agreements are available in the members' area at <https://www.afm.org/private>. Get to know and fully understand the terms and conditions of these Agreements. Once you've achieved that, start searching the AFM's database of approved agents at <http://www.afm.org/public/musicbiz/booking.php>. Identify the agents that service and/or are located in the areas you wish to tour. Contact them and arrange to have a complete, professionally prepared press kit sent to them. Remember; first impressions are important. Make them count. Don't risk losing out on potential gigs because of less than effective promotional materials.

**GoPro Music:** Many members are already benefiting from the AFM's on-line booking/referral service GoPro Music. ([www.GoProMusic.com](http://www.GoProMusic.com)) Currently featuring over 1600 AFM artist/group

listings, the website's primary objective is being met; connecting purchasers with our members. However, I feel the potential for direct member-to-member contact and career networking is vastly underutilized. Why not spend some time on the site researching what fellow members from virtually every area of North America are up to? Contact members and ask for their assistance in securing gigs in their area of the country. Offer to return the favour by suggesting some contacts in your area that might benefit them. You're a member of the largest network of professional musicians in the world. Make it work for you! By the way; if you're not one of the artists/groups currently featured on GoPro Music, what are you waiting for? As a member of the AFM, you're entitled to unlimited FREE listings. Get signed up at <http://www.afm.org/private/gopro>.

**International Gigs:** The AFM has been recognized by both The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (U.S.C.I.S) and Citizenship and Immigration Canada (C.I.C) as an authorized petitioner for temporary work permits on behalf of our members. Be sure to check out the Working Across the Border article elsewhere in this issue of the IM for complete details. If your goal is to maximize your touring potential, you need this extremely valuable service. Check it out!

**Instrument & Liability Insurance:** You've worked hard and invested a lot of money in your professional gear. Though you've performed many a gig without instance, you know disaster can strike at any moment and the additional risks and demands of touring make that possibility even the more likely. Rest easy. As an exclusive AFM member-only benefit, low cost instrument and liability insurance is available to our US members through Wohlers/Seabury & Smith: 1-800-503-9230 <https://www.personal-plans.com/afm/welcome.do>. Canadian members are covered by The Unity Group: 1-800-563-9441 <http://www.unitygrouponline.com>. My advice? Don't leave home without it!

**Contract Protection and Emergency Travel Assistance:** If asked to identify the single, most relevant benefit available to touring freelance members, this is it! In fact, I believe it defines the very reason the AFM was first established, why it exists today, and why it must continue to exist for **all** musicians. Our Mission states in part: "We can oppose the forces of exploitation through our union solidarity." Without a signed contract that the Federation is prepared to provide substantive resolve to defend, our touring freelance players will continue to be at great risk of being exploited. In the event of a default (you get stiffed) by an employer/engager who has entered into a Federation approved contract with you for your services, the AFM will act on your behalf to defend your rights and to recover any and all monetary losses you may have suffered as a result of the contract default. In cases where it is determined that you require emergency assistance, the Federation will provide it in the form of a cash advance to enable you to get to your next gig or to return to your home base. Members experiencing a contract default while touring in the US should immediately contact a Federation representative at 1-800-ROADGIG (1-800-762-3444) for assistance. If touring in Canada, dial 1-800-INFOFED (1-800-463-6333)

Should you require additional details about any of the topics I've addressed in this article, please feel free to contact me at 212-869-1330 or 416-391-5161. I may also be reached at [psharpe@afm.org](mailto:psharpe@afm.org)

May all your road gigs be smooth.

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