The Rate for the Job

ARRIVING at the appointed venue to interview a middling rock star for a PR “biog” commissioned by a publicist for a new album’s press release, a fellow music writer found a camera crew installed too.

The PR said they were going to do an Electronic Press Kit (EPK) too, while she was at it. EPKs involve an interview, some music and other material neatly edited into a little publicity film – ever more popular in the music world these days because of their ease of transmission.

My colleague had been offered a very acceptable 600 quid for the written biog, but hadn’t signed up for the movie version. Having done an EPK before and aware what they’re worth, she politely advised the PR that this would mean an extra fee. For historical reasons, EPK fees reflect the film world’s financial practices – a good thing, as it means an EPK can earn journo £1500 and up for sitting on (or off) camera and asking questions. My colleague accepted the PR’s protestation that he “hadn’t thought”, and eventually reached an amicable agreement to double her rate.

Access to courts abroad could get easier

THE EUROPEAN Federation of Journalists (EFJ, of which the NUJ is a part) is working on a model agreement between journalists’ unions in various European countries to provide mutual legal assistance for affiliates (these would include national journalists’ unions and their freelance members, for example) to fight legal cases in courts in each other’s jurisdictions.

We’ve heard from the NUJ Brussels Branch, for example, that there’s more work around for journalists writing in English as more EU publications switch from French to English. Currently it’s next to impossible in practice – too expensive – to wring money from copyright pirates or non-payers in other countries.

However, some LFB members have had some success in that area – LFB’s Andrew Mueller, for example, through his own efforts managed to extract money from a copyright abuser in Germany (and also outside the EU in Australia and India).

The EFJ’s model agreement on union members going to court in other countries should eventually make it a lot easier for NUJ freelances to pursue through the courts copyright infringers and late-paying clients based in other European jurisdictions.

Some bilateral agreements are already in place – the NUJ has one with a French journalists’ union, and we understand there may be such an agreement in place with a Belgian journalists’ union. There’s already a mutual agreement between Danish and German journalists’ syndicates to support members seeking legal remedies in each others’ countries courts. The journalists’ unions of Nordic countries (Scandinavia plus Finland and Iceland) have had a similar deal in place for some time.

The current EFJ initiative came out of a London Freelance Branch motion tabled at a Delegate Meeting way back in the 1990s. thence to an international meeting in Moscow. As we went to press, a model agreement that would cover all EFJ affiliate unions across Europe was with the NUJ’s National Executive Council for consideration. Watch this space.

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