TAKE CREATIVE CONTROL

SOUND RECORDINGS DECODED

WHAT IS A SOUND RECORDING?

The US Copyright Office defines sound recordings as “works that result from the fixation of a series of musical, spoken, or other sounds but not including sounds accompanying a motion picture or other audiovisual work.”

This basically translates to - a sound recording is a recorded performance of another work (a song, interview, audiobook). A sound recording must be fixed, meaning that the sounds must be captured in a medium from which they can be heard, reproduced, or otherwise communicated - so for example, a digital track, CD or record for our more nostalgic listeners.

A FEW EXAMPLES

A sound recording is an audio recording of...

- A person singing a song or playing a musical instrument.
- A person reading a book or delivering a lecture.
- A group of persons hosting a podcast.
- A collection of produced sounds like wind chimes ringing, or a beat.

WHAT IS A MASTER RECORDING?

A master recording (usually called “masters”) is a type of sound recording. You can think of it as the prototype from which all the later copies are made - a CD, a stream on Spotify, or even a spot on a movie soundtrack. This means that the holder of the masters has control over how the recording is shared (if at all) and the financial gains from the recordings.

Depending on the contract, the master can be owned and controlled by the performing artist(s) on a track, the record label and/or any producer(s) involved in the creation of the recording.