

Union Moves to End Rock-Band Exploitation

John Sinclair

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In one of the largest steps in its history, the American Federation of Musicians has drafted plans for a huge apprentice program for teen-age rock musicians which could alter the present music industry considerably.

The program, to be implemented by Detroit's Local 5 under the supervision of business agent Dennis Day, calls for concerted action by the union on two major fronts: to convince teen musicians to join the union under its new "affiliate membership" plan, and to convince club owners that they should sign "union shop" agreements with Local 5 which would provide for employment only for union bands at union scale.

The bands are to sign up with the union as individuals and can pay the first year's initiation fee (\$89.00) and dues (\$2.00) in twelve monthly installments of \$10.00 each, and will become full members of the AFM at the end of the first year. All members of a band must sign up for the band to be recognized as a union group.

Until the apprentice program is over, i.e. until a band member pays his \$120, he is not permitted to play in lounges or any other place where liquor is sold. The teen members will be issued an "affiliate membership" card for their first year, and the cards will be designed for the new program by Gary Grimshaw of Trans-Love Energies.

For their part in the bargain, the club owners will be requested and then pressured to sign an exclusive booking agreement with Local 5 which stipulates that only union bands can be hired, and only at union scale or above.

Union scale, according to a Local 5 information sheet, provides for a per man minimum (plus taxes and leader's fees) of \$10.00 for one hour. \$16 for two hours, \$22.00 for three hours, \$28.00 for four hours, and \$34.00 for five hours. The provisions of the agreement also call for contracts to be filed with the union by bands and employers of all jobs played.

Informally, according to Mr. Day, the teen clubs will be boycotted by the union and all union bands if they refuse to honor the terms of the agreement, and bands who cooperate with maverick clubs by working for less than union scale will be penalized by the union through loss of membership and privileges. According to Mr. Day, over 25 bands have already made arrangements to join the AFM under its apprentice program, and at least two Detroit teen clubs (the Grande Ballroom and the Mummpp) have signed the booking agreement. Union bands include the Scot Richard Case, the Rationals, The Thyme, the Apostles, the MC-5, the Up, the Gold, the Gang, the Bouys, and many others.

At an orientation meeting held at Local 5 headquarters September 5th, Mr. Day also disclosed plans for a special teen-band union center on Livernois Avenue which will feature practice areas for bands and a fully-equipped recording studio which union bands could use for making demonstration tapes and other recordings at a low rate. The new center would also provide space for auditions." Work on the teen center will begin as soon as the union sees that enough bands will join the union to make the project worthwhile," Day said.



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