



Music Licensing & Tech Veterans Deborah Mannis-Gardner and Pär Almqvist Launch Global Copyright Administration Firm 'AYO Music Group'

December 11, 2024 (Hockessin, DE) – Music licensing and tech veterans **Deborah Mannis-Gardner** (Owner/President of DMG Clearances, Inc.) and **Pär Almqvist** (Co-Founder and former CEO of Tracklib) have launched [AYO Music Group](#), an active copyright administrator offering global administration of publishing, neighboring rights, and recordings. AYO's mission is to organize and protect music copyrights while educating their owners on how to utilize all licensing opportunities to maximize their earnings.



The AYO Music Group team. From left: Stacey Haber, Pär Almqvist, Bryson Nobles, Deborah Mannis-Gardner, Thomas Mathieson, Billy Toulson, and Kimberly Fisher.

Throughout Mannis-Gardner and Almqvist's extensive careers clearing and innovating technology around samples and syncs, they realized that many rightsholders don't know that they are sitting on a potential gold mine of revenue. That is often especially true in the case of those who have inherited estates. After Mannis-Gardner explained the idea to fix this issue to

fellow co-founder **Stacey Haber** (Chief Legal Officer for SyncLodge LTD and Co-Founder of the Web 3 Music Rights Group), who immediately jumped onboard, she reached out to Almqvist and the group teamed up to create AYO (short for Are You Organized). The company helps clients “copyright copy-wrongs” by correcting administration issues that can date back decades, and prioritizes rightsholder education at the forefront of the company’s services. To that end, AYO does not sign any contract unless the rightsholder fully understands and agrees with all terms, with the goal of developing underserved copyrights to the benefit of all parties.

Since its soft launch earlier this year, AYO has already built a strong catalog of songs totaling well over 1 billion streams, with several tracks crossing the 100-million-stream threshold. Current clients include A\$AP Ant, Bedrock, Che Smith, Cory Mo, David Forman Project, DJ Domingo, Dwayne Williams, Eric Reed, Hero The Band, Holy, John McCall, JT Money, Julianna Zachariou, Keishaun Watts, Latrice Lynz, MC Lyte, Michael Ramsey, Natalie Carr, Pusharod, R. Prophet, Rhondo Robinson, Selam/Muzikawi, STREETRUNKER, Tawnted, True Master, Willie G, The Estate of Joseph Washington Jr., The Estate of Julius Thomas, The Estate of Michael Henderson, and The Estate of Scott La Rock.

In addition, AYO has already begun conducting regular educational webinars on music copyright and more. These sessions are free to attend and will continue in the coming months. On January 21 at 2pm ET, AYO will partner with IAFAR to present the webinar “[From the Voice of a Producer - Neighbouring Rights and How to Get Paid.](#)” Moderated by Abby North (North Music Group LLC), the webinar will feature AYO’s Pär Almqvist and Stacey Haber as panelists, alongside Naomi Asher (Neighboring Rights Advisor, AYO/Co-Founder of IAFAR) and Gina Deacon (Absolute Rights Management/GLA Rights Ltd). Together, they will do a deep dive into the convoluted income stream of neighbouring rights and how producers can get paid.

Meet the Team

Known globally as the “Queen of Sample Clearance,” **Deborah Mannis-Gardner** (Chairwoman & Co-Founder, AYO) started DMG Clearances, Inc. in 1996 and has since cleared releases for artists including Drake, Tyler the Creator, DJ Khaled, Eminem, Pop Smoke, Logic, Justin Bieber, Kendrick Lamar, Lil Wayne, Frank Ocean, Jay-Z, John Legend, Megan Thee Stallion, Big Sean, J. Cole, Lady Gaga, Rihanna, Beyoncé, and more. In 2023, she worked with Reservoir to clear samples and prepare the De La Soul catalog for its long-awaited release on streaming services. She was named to Billboard’s R&B/Hip-Hop Power Players list in 2023 and 2024, Billboard’s Women in Music list in 2020 and 2024, and the Forbes 50 Over 50 list in 2023.

Mannis-Gardner has also handled music clearances for ad campaigns for Google, Ciroc, and Kmart; films by Martin Scorsese, The Coen Brothers, and Richard Linklater; TV series on networks such as HBO, Showtime, Netflix, and Paramount+; video games such as Rockstar Games franchises “Grand Theft Auto” and “Red Dead Redemption”; and metaverse platforms such as Meta and Roblox, including a live concert from Post Malone. She also handled Grand Rights clearance for Lin-Manuel Miranda’s Broadway sensation “Hamilton” and music

clearances for its release on Disney+, and served as the award-winning music supervisor of HBO's Dr. Dre and Jimmy Iovine docu-series "The Defiant Ones."

Pär Almqvist (CEO, Co-Founder, AYO) is an internationally established innovator, entrepreneur, and leader. With a dual background from both the agency and corporate worlds, he builds pioneering products, services, and brands such as Tracklib, which he co-founded in 2014 and served as CEO. The platform was the world's first music service to enable music creators to discover, sample, and license original recordings, bringing together hundreds of music catalogs with 10,000s of music creators.

Almqvist is passionate about building, establishing, and scaling companies, products, and services that matter. He has established new markets and created brands for both large multinationals and new ventures. His first VoIP venture, a company called Spokn, was acquired in 2006. This was followed by two ventures in telecom and renewable energy — VNL and OMC, respectively — both World Economic Forum Technology Pioneers. His current obsessions include music and music rights, and technology as a tool for access and democratization.

Joining them is a dynamic team from across the industry including **Stacey Haber** (Chief Legal Officer, Co-Founder, AYO), who also serves as Chief Legal Officer for SyncLodge LTD and Co-Founder of the Web 3 Music Rights Group; **Kat MacLean Daley** (A&R, AYO) founder & CEO of KatClearedit, and the former VP & Head of Publishing at Death Row Records and Director, Sampling and Business Development at Universal Music Publishing Group; **Bryson Nobles** (Head of Data & Technology, AYO), Co-Founder and former CTO of Music Tech Works; **Thomas Mathieson** (Head of Operations, AYO), former Director, Licensing & Copyright at Reservoir Media Management, Inc.; **Naomi Asher** (Neighboring Rights Advisor, AYO), former Vice President of International Neighbouring Rights and subsequently former VP of Songwriter Services at Sony Music Publishing, a Co-Founder of Wixen Music UK Ltd and IAFAR (the only Neighbouring Rights Trade Association in the world), and co-author of the U.K. edition of *The Plain and Simple Guide to Music Publishing*; **Billy Toulson** (Client Relations Manager, AYO); and **Kimberly Fisher** (Marketing Manager & Project Coordinator, AYO).

"I couldn't be more excited to officially launch AYO alongside my incredible team," said Mannis-Gardner. "Coming from all different facets of the music industry, our team shares a passion for putting creators first and educating artists, songwriters, and rightsholders about the intricacies of this business. Many people don't know how to collect the money they have already earned, and others are missing out on opportunities due to faulty administration records. We aim to solve those issues, empowering rightsholders and making a real impact in the years to come."

"When Deborah and I began discussing AYO, it was a no-brainer to join forces and turn our vision into reality," said Almqvist. "We believe that every rightsholder deserves to be fully educated and empowered to create a lasting legacy with their music, and we have already hit the ground running with the substantial roster of clients who have signed on so far. I look forward to seeing all that we achieve as a team."

“Music copyright can be incredibly complex to navigate, and our team at AYO is determined to break down those barriers day by day through education and rightsholder support,” said Haber. “We’re not just launching a brand, we’re setting a new standard where music copyrights can be developed into their full potential. I’m excited to be a part of AYO’s mission and growth.”

For all of the latest updates, please visit ayomusicgroup.com or follow AYO on [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

About AYO Music Group

AYO Music Group is an invitation-only music administration company founded by industry veterans Deborah Mannis-Gardner (DMG Clearances, Inc.) and Pär Almqvist (Tracklib). AYO exists to empower music creators and rightsholders by accelerating the value of their music copyrights. The company is an active copyright administrator, helping artists, songwriters, and producers protect their music copyrights and collect all the money their music is generating. It offers global administration of publishing, neighboring rights, and recordings. In addition, AYO actively helps clients navigate the complex maze of music rights and royalties to make sure that they are in control and getting the most out of the copyrights they own. For more information, visit ayomusicgroup.com.

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