

of an entire steel orchestra,” says Chow. “At Indigisounds Ltd, our main goal is to take the indigenous sounds of the Caribbean to the world market,” he explains. “Originating from the Caribbean, we pride ourselves on understanding and offering the most authentic indigenous digital samples available, giving the user the ability to reproduce all the unique details and nuances inherent in the instruments and rhythms found in our libraries.”

An electrical engineering student at UWI, Chow made his turn toward music technology just after graduating in 2010. Under Professor Brian Copeland, now principal of UWI, he took part in developing the Percussive Harmonic Instrument (PHI), which combined MIDI capabilities with a physical form inspired by the steelpan. From there, Chow moved on to sound sampling of indigenous Caribbean instruments, especially the steelpan, co-founding Indigisounds with longtime friend and steelpan musician Johann Chuckaree. After creating

and refining their samples through many rounds of edits, they struck a deal with Native Instruments to use its Kontakt platform, presenting their samples in a format accessible to producers and arrangers worldwide.

Based locally and rooted in the culture of Trinidad and Tobago, Indigisounds has worked and consulted on its sound samples with some of the most accomplished steelpan players. Early on, however, some had reservations about their project. “Some members of the local fraternity of steelpan performers had the misconception that the library would take from their livelihood, not understanding that it addressed a totally different market,” says Chow. “We reassured them that our product was a tool to make the steelpan more accessible to an international studio production market—which would in turn promote the authentic sounds of the steelpan to an increasingly wider audience.”

Along with the Digital Steelpan Sample Library, Indigisounds has now produced

the Laventille Rhythm Section, an authentic rhythm sample library created with the help of Caribbean dance music pioneers Jus Now. In addition, they’ve teamed up on a new project with Precision Productions, a leading production house for the upbeat Carnival-style genre called Soca. In Soca Starter Pack Vol. 1, to be released this January, Indigisounds is offering a unique library of Soca sounds, loops, and rhythms to anchor recordings and performances. Its products have now been purchased by customers around the world, through company websites and outlets including Reverb.com, B&H Photo & Video, Thomann Music, and Music Marketing JRR Shop. Customers are using them in Jamaican Dancehall, Soca, and Reggae styles, as well as more widely in EDM production. As Chows says, “The international market is on the cusp of embracing Caribbean themed music, and Indigisounds stands poised to fill the demand.”

www.indigisounds.com

MKG

Intellectual property specialist brings advice for a changing industry

PAST GENERATIONS WOULD have marveled at the technologies that let us post a photo online, copy and paste a page of text, or shoot a design schematic to the other side of the world in the time it takes to hit “send.” They would also have trouble imagining the problems that come up when everything can be shared. Over the past two decades, companies defined by their original ideas have had to rethink the meaning of intellectual property—anything from a product or packaging design to text descriptions on a website—and how it can be defended. Fortunately, some in the legal profession have been thinking along the same lines. Connecticut-based MKG, an intellectual property law firm with longstanding ties to the music products industry, is one of the authorities in this field, having actually become a NAMM member two years ago for a



MKG Managing Partner Michael Kinney.

front-row seat to the industry’s most pressing issues. Since then it’s taken part in several industry forums on the topic,

and advised more than a few music companies on the pitfalls you probably never thought of when you first came up with that great idea in your garage. “With global commerce the way it is today—the innovations in how we communicate, the ability to reproduce someone else’s work—it really is important to get legal protection for your intellectual property as well as to ensure that you’re policing it,” says Michael Kinney, managing partner of MKG.

To date, MKG has worked with music industry companies on four continents in segments from fretted instruments to wind instruments, percussion, accessories, and music publishing. One of the firm’s experts on the music products industry is Director of Business Development Mark Kasulen, who’s worked in the industry for the past 25 years and even authored *The History Of Yamaha Guitars*, the first official retrospective on the brand. “The age of digital interface in design and manufacturing enables NAMM members to innovate at unprecedented levels,” says Kasulen. “However, the same technologies provide unprincipled competitors with an opportunity for copying designs and

selling lower quality and infringing products. Integrating intellectual property management with product development strengthens our clients' protection for such innovations."

Where the music industry runs up against intellectual property law, there can be several points of friction. One is simply the nature of the industry, largely a patchwork of small entrepreneurs without legal departments or ironclad usage policies on original content. Another is that sometimes intellectual property law runs counter to normal human instincts, especially in an industry so fueled by passion for its products: An innovator who thinks of a creative solution to a problem often wants to tell the world about it—or at least post a picture of it on Instagram. The problem, Kinney notes, is that it's usually not possible to seek patent protection for an idea once it's been made public, even on social media. Still another issue is what happens to ideas when they cross inter-



Attorney Bob Rispoli (left) and Director of Business Development Mark Kasulen have represented MKG at several music industry forums.

national borders. Because IP rights such as patents and trademarks are territorial, companies may need to seek separate protections for every country that might come into play. And as many unsuspecting companies have found out, the is-

ssues in this area can be cultural as well as legal: Where some cultures take for granted the concept of owning an idea, others traditionally see no problem in "borrowing" without permission.

Between practical experience, outreach by music-savvy law firms, and efforts by NAMM, the industry has begun to build awareness for some of the issues at stake, says Kinney. Starting next year, MKG hopes to host its own forums at industry gatherings to push the message further. What it comes down to, though, is preparedness: "This business is a very collegial environment," says Kinney. "There are a lot of handshake deals, a lot of face-to-face agreements—but it's important to take the next step and set some legal protections from the beginning. It doesn't have to be the 55-page licensing agreement that the big guys negotiate. Just a short document spelling out the ground rules can make all the difference."

www.mkgip.com

MKG

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY LAW

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Our MKG legal team is ready to help you protect your ideas, products and brands around the world. We provide legal support that matches your business strategy. Please contact **Mark Kasulen**, our **Director of Business Development**, to begin working with us. kasulen@mkgip.com

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