

The **Maestro of Metadata Award** is presented to a company or executive who has made a significant impact in the area of data processing, credit clarification, streamlining or otherwise promoting clean data and best practices.

Submission #1

Andrew Mitchell, The MLC

Chief Analytics & Automation Officer

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Andrew Mitchell has redefined the role of data leadership in the modern music industry. As Chief Analytics & Automation Officer at the Mechanical Licensing Collective (The MLC), Andrew is the driving force behind one of the most sophisticated and transparent royalty-processing operations in the world, transforming billions of complex streaming data into accurate and efficient royalty distributions for songwriters and publishers.

From the organization's inception, Andrew has built The MLC's data and matching operations from the ground up, designing the teams, systems, and processes responsible for identifying rightful owners of U.S. streaming royalties. Since beginning full operations, The MLC has distributed over \$3.5 billion in mechanical streaming royalties, achieving an industry-leading royalty match rate of nearly 92%. These results set a new standard for accuracy, transparency, and trust across the music rights ecosystem, ensuring that creators are paid accurately and efficiently for their work.

Andrew oversees one of The MLC's largest and most technically complex departments, spanning business intelligence, automation, machine learning, and fraud detection. He led the launch of The MLC's Supplemental Matching Network and its fraud-detection partnership with Beatdapp—initiatives that have reduced unmatched royalties, strengthened system integrity, and protected creators from bad actors.

Equally important, Andrew fosters a culture of innovation and collaboration, mentoring team members and sharing best practices that extend beyond The MLC. His contributions also reach the broader Nashville tech and creative communities through mentorship at the Nashville Entrepreneur Center and support for organizations such as the American Cancer Society's Coaches vs. Cancer.

Andrew Mitchell's combination of strategic leadership and industry-wide impact embodies the spirit of the Maestro of Metadata Award. He has not only transformed The MLC into a model for clean, precise, and transparent music data management but has also raised the bar for the entire music industry, proving that rigorous data practices and innovative analytics can empower creators on a global scale.

Liz Mayo, The MLC

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Submission #2

Brandon Musser, Syntax Creative

Chief Operations Officer

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I am pleased to nominate Brandon Musser for the Maestro of Metadata Award, recognizing his significant and lasting impact on data processing, credit clarification, and the promotion of clean data and best practices within the music industry.

Brandon Musser has been instrumental in elevating metadata from a behind-the-scenes function to a strategic cornerstone of digital music distribution. His work consistently emphasizes accuracy, clarity, and long-term scalability — ensuring that artists, songwriters, labels, and partners are properly credited and compensated in an increasingly complex digital ecosystem.

At Syntax Creative, Brandon has led efforts to streamline metadata workflows, improve data hygiene across catalogs, and implement systems that reduce errors while increasing efficiency. His attention to detail is matched by a deep understanding of how metadata decisions impact discovery, royalty flows, and reporting downstream. As a result, both internal teams and external partners benefit from cleaner data, fewer conflicts, and greater transparency.

Beyond internal operations, Brandon is a vocal advocate for metadata education and best practices across the industry. He regularly works with artists and labels to clarify credits, correct historical data issues, and prevent future problems through proactive guidance. His ability to translate complex technical requirements into clear, actionable standards has helped raise the overall quality of data management for the partners he serves.

Brandon's influence extends beyond any single catalog or company. His commitment to accuracy, process improvement, and education contributes to a healthier, more equitable digital music ecosystem — one where creators are properly represented and systems function as intended.

For his leadership, expertise, and ongoing dedication to clean data and metadata excellence, Brandon Musser is a highly deserving recipient of the Maestro of Metadata Award.

Erin Moorman, Syntax Creative
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Submission #3

David Labovitch, Downtown Artist & Label Services

Content Operations Senior Manager

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David Labovitch currently serves as Content Operations Senior Manager at Downtown Artist & Label Services. Here, Labovitch oversees DA&LS' complete QC process and tools for both audio and video (metadata and assets); including:

- Coordinating with DSP partners on style guides, score cards and preferred partner statuses
- Leading supply chain operations, ensuring zero delivery or takedown failures across all DSPs.
- Designing QC and Supply Chain processes enabling high volume delivery with white glove attention
- Managing bulk ingestions for audio, video and spatial assets
- Building and maintaining informational and educational materials for all things operations, metadata, QC, and DSPs
- Innovating on the tools and systems within DA&LS to improve processes or adapt to changes in the industry.

Joining DA&LS in 2015, his initial role was to bundle together collections of production music into themed compilations. It was here that he developed a deep understanding of metadata standards and norms. He then transitioned into handling bulk catalog ingestion into the DA&LS system, making sure all metadata met the highest standards. These tasks naturally led towards QC, where he was able to apply everything he knew to build a robust and comprehensive QC system.

Labovitch has been instrumental in establishing clear, scalable metadata standards that empower DA&LS' marketing team members to move faster and smarter. By creating processes that prioritize accuracy, consistency, and forward compatibility, he has reduced friction across teams and unlocked greater confidence in how the company activates campaigns, pitches to partners, and interprets performance data. Labovitch has been a key part in the construction and improvement of the content upload and bulk ingestion processes within DA&LS. Helping to ensure a smooth upload process while also rigorously adhering to metadata standards.

Labovitch streamlined inspection and pre-delivery QC processes so that the DA&LS team could handle all releases. In doing so, he has achieved and maintained the highest partner service level rating from each of the major DSPs. Furthermore, his proactive approach to pre-delivery release processing has reduced the amount of anomalous content delivered to platforms, further solidifying DA&LS's position as a top-tier distributor with a quality, clean catalog.

Beyond systems and structure, David's influence is cultural. He has been a tireless advocate for education, helping team members understand why metadata matters, not just how to input it.

This shared understanding has directly improved cross-functional collaboration between marketing, operations, and product, resulting in even stronger launches and fewer downstream issues.

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Submission #4

Ghali Bouzoubaa, Sony Music Publishing

Admin Manager

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Ghali has demonstrated exceptional leadership, technical innovation, and educational impact in advancing metadata accuracy, credit transparency, and rights management across one of the most linguistically and structurally complex regions in the world — the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

Regional Transformation Through Metadata Precision

In a region spanning 22 countries and more than a dozen dialects of Arabic, Ghali led the development and implementation of a unified metadata framework to standardize transliteration, credit attribution, and linguistic formatting across all publishing submissions. This initiative not only resolved long-standing discrepancies between Arabic, Latin, and French data structures, but also established a replicable blueprint for multilingual metadata processing within Sony's global systems.

Automation, Infrastructure, and Workflow Innovation

Recognizing the challenges of fragmented data across societies and systems, Ghali built a comprehensive internal infrastructure connecting metadata ingestion, validation, and royalty processing. His suite of VBA automations, Power BI dashboards, and data-control templates—collectively referred to internally as the SDS System—reduced error margins by more than 80%, accelerated registration cycles, and enhanced real-time visibility on repertoire delivery.

Empowering the Ecosystem: Education and Advocacy

Beyond process transformation, Ghali has been a vocal advocate for metadata literacy across the region. He has led training sessions and collaborative workshops with artists, composers, producers, labels, and local cultural institutions, promoting awareness on metadata integrity, IPI registration, ISWC/ISRC accuracy, and rights chain transparency. His educational efforts have helped reshape the local understanding of metadata as the foundation of equitable remuneration.

Bridging Global and Local Standards

Ghali has also served as a vital operational bridge between Sony Music Publishing's international offices (UK, France, Netherlands, India) and local collective management organizations (SACEM, BMDAV, IMRO, SUISA). His frameworks ensured that MENA metadata aligns with global schemas and can be recognized across international royalty pipelines, making him a driving force in integrating Arabic-language works into the worldwide metadata ecosystem.

Demonstrated Impact

Under his leadership:

- MENA repertoire delivery compliance reached a near-100% metadata completeness rate.
- Duplicate registrations and rejected claims decreased drastically across international societies.
- Multilingual and cross-alphabet metadata is now fully interoperable across SMP's global systems.
- The region has seen notable increases in matched royalties for local and diaspora songwriters.

Why Ghali Represents the Spirit of the Maestro of Metadata

Ghali Bouzoubaa embodies the Maestro of Metadata ethos: turning complexity into clarity. His blend of technical excellence, process innovation, and cultural understanding has created lasting impact within Sony Music Publishing and the broader regional music rights ecosystem. His work is not only transformative for MENA—it is exemplary for the global music industry.

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Submission #5

Kelly Jones, CD Baby - a Downtown company

Vice President of Data and Analytics

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Kelly Jones serves as the Vice President of Data and Analytics at Downtown company, CD Baby, where she leads teams responsible for the company's entire data ecosystem - from website transactional data processing and data pipelines to data warehousing, royalty report ingestion and processing, reporting, payments, and metadata governance.

Jones oversees the technology groups that design, architect, and operate the systems that accurately process partner reporting and royalty payments, ensuring metadata integrity at a massive scale. Jones also leads the data architectural direction for this core infrastructure, partnering closely with her team to develop the systems that now underpin CD Baby's modern data platform.

She also leads the teams that enable weekly artist payments, ensuring every payment is fully compliant with IRS tax regulations and supported by clean, validated metadata. Her leadership ensures that independent artists, especially those often overlooked in traditional industry structures, receive accurate, timely, and transparent compensation.

Kelly's career reflects a rare blend of deep technical expertise, visionary leadership, and a mission-driven commitment to data excellence. She began her career as a Database and Software Developer, building custom business intelligence solutions and mastering the full Microsoft SQL Server and BI stack. She advanced into roles as a Database Engineer and Manager of Database Development, where she introduced modern SDLC practices, led major platform upgrades, and architected large-scale ETL and data migration solutions.

As Director of Data and Analytics, Kelly helped define modernized application platforms and strengthened cross-functional alignment across engineering, product, and business teams. Today, as Vice President of Data and Analytics, she drives CD Baby's data strategy, oversees enterprise data architecture, and ensures that data quality, accessibility, and metadata clarity fuel the company's mission and growth.

Her progression from hands-on engineer to executive leader demonstrates both technical mastery and a deep commitment to empowering teams, elevating data practices, and championing artists through better information systems.

Across her tenure at CD Baby, Jones' achievements include:

- Designed and implemented CD Baby's modern data warehousing strategy, enabling advanced analytics, experimentation frameworks, and long-term data governance

- Architected data pipelines and platforms that significantly improved data reliability, efficiency, and accessibility across the organization
- Implemented enterprise-wide business intelligence solutions, including executive dashboards and advanced reporting using Power BI.
- Elevated metadata quality and governance, introducing validation layers, refined data models, and improved ingestion processes that reduce errors and promote clean, trustworthy metadata.
- Mentored and developed data talent, advancing team members into leadership roles and strengthening CD Baby's long-term technical capabilities.
- Ensured regulatory compliance by overseeing systems that support IRS-compliant artist payments at scale, backed by accurate metadata and transparent reporting.

Jones' work embodies the core mission of the Maestro of Metadata Award: promoting clean data, credit clarity, streamlined processes, and metadata best practices that uplift the entire music ecosystem. Her approach to metadata is not as a technical artefact, but as a form of artist advocacy. She has implemented governance frameworks, validation layers, and improved data models that reduce ambiguity, prevent crediting errors, ensure auditability, and promote industry-aligned metadata standards.

Jones' modernization of CD Baby's data pipelines and architecture has dramatically improved the speed, accuracy, and reliability of partner reporting and royalty processing and her leadership has cultivated a culture where metadata quality is a shared organizational priority, influencing engineering, product, finance, and operations teams alike.

Emma Cordell, Downtown / CD Baby
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Submission #6

Kristian Downs, Secretly Distribution

Head of Digital Operations

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Kristian Downs, the Head of Digital Operations at Secretly Distribution, has led a major evolution in the past year in how the company supports its global label roster, focusing on scalable technological developments and process improvements that balance efficiency with commercial impact.

Among other achievements, Downs has overseen the full concept-to-launch of a fully custom rights management platform for the company, supporting its roster of more than 100 labels. Alongside this platform launch, in the past year Downs has supported major expansion of the Secretly Distribution ecosystem, onboarding key independent labels including Merge Records, Ipecac Records, Third Man Recordings, Invada Records, and strengthening the company's reputation as a trusted, innovation-led distribution partner.

With more than 20 years' experience in digital and physical distribution, royalties and content management, Kristian Downs has been instrumental in redefining Secretly Distribution's digital capabilities.

RIOT (Repertoire Information and Operations Technology) has been built to address the below concerns Downs didn't find available in the existing marketplace out of box options:

- It has been built to be future proof. DSPs and other partners continually update their metadata requirements, and internal teams are continually evolving their workflows. Development required to update the platform is not arduous.
- It's been built to collect ALL the metadata points required for global neighbouring rights administration and collection, including key deal timeline points, and a safeguarded mechanism to update them.
- The platform is built to minimize duplicative release data entry, whether it's to create vinyl variants, waterfall digital singles, or any of a number of release iterations. The more places a single data point must be re-entered, the more time-consuming for labels who have much else to do – but also, the more times it's entered, the more opportunities for error. RIOT has been built with an elegant process flow that eliminates duplicative entries.
- Internal teams are able to create fully customizable, automated reporting that can draw from any data point within the system, as each team requires different data sets to complete various tasks. Labels also need to be able to create customized, shareable reports for their internal use as well as to provide to artist teams.

The way the platform has been constructed is not only a simple RMS, to get from point A to point B to DSP delivery. It's been built in such a way that labels collect information for a campaign and enter it at the top of the process, so that as they build out releases and singles, they're using existing data pieces

they've already entered. This not only reduces error and minimizes hassle once the initial information is collected, it "trains" labels to have complete metadata to hand when putting a series of related releases in the system.

Under Downs' expert guidance, RIOT has been built not only to ensure that Secretly Distribution labels are able to easily and without error enter release information into a system for dissemination to DSPs, retailers, and other partners. It has been built to create a new standard for recording metadata.

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Submission #7

MassiveMusic

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MassiveMusic has spent more than 20 years building the infrastructure that underpins clean, reliable music data at global scale. Rather than correcting metadata after delivery, we standardise it at the source. We ingest and normalise data from more than 300 rightsholders, labels and catalog sources worldwide into a single clean dataset, covering nearly the entire digitised music ecosystem. As a result, clients receive accurate, consistent data without the need for downstream cleaning.

Our platform is fully DDEX-compliant, enabling partners to connect directly into an established supply chain instead of building and maintaining their own. Through a single integration, MassiveMusic delivers tagging, content delivery, storage, usage tracking and reporting as a fully integrated solution, removing cost, time, and operational complexity.

Every track ingested into our system is analysed to generate an average of 26,000 data points across 360 musical characteristics. This includes enriched categorisation with strength values, predictive audience insights and audio embedding vectors that support discovery, attribution and recommendation workflows. All metadata is rightsholder approved in advance and available before release.

MassiveMusic supported 1,430.31% year over year growth in platform usage in 2025 and processes between 500 million and 1 billion music interactions per day. Our infrastructure improves credit clarity, accelerates royalty reporting and ensures creators and rights holders are represented accurately across every downstream use case.

MassiveMusic is not improving metadata at the margins. We have built the standard that modern music systems rely on.

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Submission #8

Music Story

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Our company has been a partner of Music Story for several years. Music Story delivers API-based highly curated metadata with a first class service.

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Music Story (<https://music-story.com/en>) stands as one of the world's leaders in music metadata innovation. Headquartered in Lille, France, the company brings together a uniquely international team of engineers, editors, and metadata specialists across 40 countries, delivering customized, high-quality metadata that powers the global music ecosystem.

Music Story's strength lies in its dual DNA: technical precision and musical expertise. Its engineers and metadata specialists bridge the gap between technology and artistry—building the foundation that enables richer, more immersive music experiences for listeners worldwide. The company's metadata catalog now spans over 30 million tracks by 620,000 artists, offering accurate and normalized information on albums, compositions, and creators across 40 territories and 12 languages.

What distinguishes Music Story is its integration capability. Its API and metadata frameworks allow partners to rapidly implement clean, enriched metadata at scale, improving recommendation engines, discovery tools, and user engagement. Clients rely on Music Story's fast, client-centric model, deep editorial network, and commitment to continuous improvement for both creative and technical excellence.

In a digital world increasingly driven by context and discovery, Music Story ensures that every artist, song, and story is represented accurately and meaningfully. The company's ongoing innovation—combining machine learning-powered audio descriptors with human curation—positions it as a trusted metadata partner to global leaders in streaming, media, and entertainment.

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Seventeen years ago, Jean-Luc Biaulet, a lifelong music lover and technology pioneer, founded Music Story with a clear vision: to make music metadata as rich, accurate, and meaningful as the music itself. Long before “metadata” became a strategic priority across the industry, Jean-Luc recognized its power to connect songs, rights, and stories, and to make sure creators are seen, credited, and paid.

Today, under his leadership, Music Story has become a global leader in music metadata services, providing deep, structured, and multilingual metadata to the world’s most influential players, including Deezer, Sony, Sonos, LG, Sacem, Avex, and numerous rights organizations and DSPs worldwide.

From its headquarters in Lille, France, Jean-Luc built an international company uniting data engineers, musicologists, and editors across 40 countries, all dedicated to advancing clean data and cultural diversity in digital music. The result is one of the industry’s most comprehensive metadata repositories, covering over 30 million tracks, 620,000 artists, and 2.3 million albums, supported by robust APIs, automated matching technologies, AI, and editorial intelligence.

Jean-Luc’s achievements have directly advanced industry-wide metadata excellence:

- **Data Processing & Enrichment:** His team developed a proprietary semantic and AI-assisted matching engine, capable of processing 150 million tracks daily to resolve duplicates, missing identifiers, and data inconsistencies across catalogs.
- **Integration & Access:** Through its Metadata Monitor and API-first infrastructure, Music Story enables real-time metadata delivery to DSPs, rights organizations, and device manufacturers, fostering transparency and efficiency across the value chain.
- **Ethical AI Practices:** Jean-Luc instituted strong AI governance to maintain metadata integrity, balancing automation with human expertise.

Jean-Luc’s pioneering work has helped shape how metadata powers the global music economy, bridging creative, legal, and technological worlds. Thanks to his vision, millions of creators are now correctly identified, billions of tracks are accurately linked, and fans across the globe enjoy richer discovery experiences.

From championing metadata as an art form to building the systems that sustain it, Jean-Luc Biaulet truly embodies the spirit of “The Maestro of Metadata.”

Jerome Davant, Music Story
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Submission #9

Pirames International LLC

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Pirames International has elevated metadata management to a level of certified excellence unmatched in today's music industry. The company is ISO/IEC 27001:2013 certified for Information Security Management — covering the entire chain of ingestion, delivery, and reporting — and has transformed metadata processing into a rigorously verified and auditable system.

Beyond formal metadata validation, Pirames performs substantive copyright verification, ensuring that every asset submitted through its systems is not only correctly tagged, but also lawfully owned and eligible for distribution. Each recording undergoes proprietary AI-driven checks designed to confirm exclusive rights and detect potential copyright risks — from reused public-library loops and indistinguishable cover versions to unauthorized remixes or duplicated uploads.

Every file ingested by Pirames is digitally fingerprinted and cross-referenced with the company's internal fingerprint database, enabling real-time detection of overlapping or conflicting assets before they reach DSPs or content databases.

Supported by a procedural AI trained on over twelve years of ingestion and quality-control data, Pirames maintains an unmatched standard of accuracy, security, and accountability. Its model exemplifies how certified metadata governance can safeguard the entire value chain of the modern digital music ecosystem.

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Submission #10

Redeye Worldwide Digital Operations Team

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Following Redeye's acquisition by Exceleation Music in 2023, the combined organization faced the complex challenge of unifying two large-scale digital operations teams, systems, and catalogs - each with established workflows, standards, and processes. Over the past year, the Digital Operations leadership and team have gone above and beyond to successfully merge these organizations into a single, high-performing, best-in-class digital operations team.

Redeye Digital Operations, led by Marina Baranik, and Exceleation Music's Digital Operations team, led by Larissa Woss, came together to form one integrated, collaborative Digital Operations team. This newly unified group aligned processes, consolidated systems, and established shared best practices while maintaining uninterrupted service to labels and DSP partners throughout the transition. The result is a streamlined, scalable operation built on clean data, consistent metadata standards, and operational excellence.

A major focus of this effort was the full migration of the Exceleation Music catalog into Redeye's ecosystem and delivery feeds. The team successfully migrated more than 26,000 tracks, bringing the total managed catalog to over 400,000 tracks. This work required deep coordination across metadata standards, delivery specifications, historical catalog cleanup and standardization, and DSP requirements - executed while continuing to manage daily new releases and ongoing catalog maintenance.

Today, the merged Digital Operations team:

- Manages 400,000+ tracks across 350+ active labels

- Oversees end-to-end ingestion and delivery for all Redeye and Exceleation releases

- Monitors 80+ active delivery feeds

- Ensures strict compliance with DSP metadata and style guidelines across all partners

This commitment to clean, accurate metadata and best practices has resulted in industry-recognized performance:

- Platinum Tier status in Spotify's Preferred Provider Program

- Placement in the highest tier of Amazon Music's Partner Excellence Program

- Consistently strong Apple Music scorecard scores, driven by adherence to Apple's metadata and formatting standards

As a result of these achievements, Redeye benefits from expedited ingestion and delivery times across key DSP partners - directly improving speed to market for hundreds of labels and thousands of releases.

Beyond day-to-day operations, the team has also invested heavily in long-term sustainability and education by developing comprehensive best-practice guides, metadata specifications, internal SOPs, and training resources for both labels and internal stakeholders. These tools ensure consistency, reduce

errors, and support ongoing growth as the catalog and label roster continue to expand.

At its core, this nomination recognizes not just a technical achievement, but a team achievement. By bringing together two organizations, harmonizing processes, and maintaining exceptional data quality at massive scale, the Digital Operations team exemplifies what it means to be a Maestro of Metadata - setting a standard for clean data, operational rigor, and collaborative excellence in digital music distribution.

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Submission #11

Synchtank

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Synchtank stands as a transformative force in the music and media technology landscape and a true Maestro of Metadata. Over the past year, Synchtank has significantly advanced how the industry processes, clarifies, standardizes, and deploys metadata, setting a new benchmark for clean data practices and operational excellence.

At the heart of Synchtank's impact is its ability to unify fragmented rights, assets, and delivery data into a coherent and trusted source of truth. This enables rights owners and media partners to resolve credit ambiguities, streamline downstream workflows, and ensure metadata accuracy across complex industry chains. The platform's robust data governance, reconciliation logic, and intelligent delivery tools are widely recognised for elevating the quality and reliability of rights data throughout the music ecosystem.

In 2025, Synchtank's momentum accelerated with the signing of three new customers across diverse segments of the global music business, including private and national broadcasters, global production music libraries, and forward-thinking record labels. This group represents a truly international mix and demonstrates the platform's flexibility in addressing a wide range of metadata challenges and operational requirements.

Each new partner is already putting the Synchtank platform to work in meaningful ways. One customer is using the Delivery Module to seamlessly distribute accurate and consistent metadata to third parties such as PROs, broadcasters, and other industry partners, reducing friction and improving downstream efficiency. Another is taking full advantage of SyncUp, Synchtank's sync licensing tool, to streamline pitching, rights clearance, and deal tracking within a single, connected workflow built on clean and reliable data.

Synchtank's growth over the past year is also reflected in the continued expansion of its platform capabilities. Significant product enhancements have focused on improving metadata structures, strengthening identifier support for recordings and compositions, and enabling the merging of duplicate records to maintain a true single source of truth. Expanded delivery options, including metadata-only deliveries, further support partners who rely on precision without unnecessary duplication of assets. SyncUp has also evolved to more tightly connect creative pitching with accurate rights and deal data, reinforcing best practices throughout the sync lifecycle.

Organisationally, Synchtank experienced substantial growth, expanding its global team by 50 percent to better support its international customer base and to deepen expertise across rights management, data governance, and customer success. This investment reflects Synchtank's long-term commitment to helping clients adopt sustainable, high-quality metadata practices rather than short-term fixes.

Beyond its platform and customer base, Synchtank continues to influence industry thinking through

education and collaboration. Its Synchblog has become a widely read source of insight on metadata, licensing, and rights management, helping to raise awareness of best practices and promote greater transparency across the industry.

Together, these achievements illustrate a year of meaningful growth and impact. Synchtank is not only scaling its business, but also raising the standard for how metadata is managed, shared, and trusted across the music and media ecosystem. For its leadership in data processing, credit clarification, and the promotion of clean data and best practices, Synchtank is a highly deserving recipient of The Maestro of Metadata Award.

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