

THE PART TIME ARTIST

DEATH BEACH



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By Death Beach

**Concepts on supporting yourself
as a creative.**

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Table of Contents

Intro

Chapter 1

The Components For Success

Chapter 2

Genesis

Chapter 3

Production

Chapter 4

Packaging, Distribution, Promotion

Chapter 5

Royalty Reality

Chapter 6

Closing Thoughts

PREFACE:

Recording and performing songs are only a small part of what your favorite artists do; there is a whole business behind each artist. This is true no matter what level of the game you are at. And at a certain point, running it like a business is the only way forward. Initially what holds people back is not knowing any better. They are unsure how to present it professionally. I've watched tons of artists go through this. I've even gone through it. That's what led to this book. This is a streamlined version of lessons I have learned and watched other artists learn...the hard way. It's also full of lessons that have been taught to me by seeking out mentors. Mentors can be people that you pay to help you, people you ask and they agree, or people whose work you simply study and follow.

All this talk of mentors and having a team gets me all choked up inside. While so many people have helped me along the way (many to be thanked in later volumes), this book wouldn't be here if it were not for the mentorship of three people. I have been fortunate enough to work with these people in a one on one capacity in some way or another. Thank you to Mickey Shiloh, Adam Ivy, and JHNY WZDM. I learned that the only barrier was myself. The way past that barrier is to take action. Any action.

And thank you for reading this book. I hope it helps you simplify what you are doing and let's you present your music in the professional light that it deserves.

INTRO:

Things We Can Agree On

The first thing we can probably agree on, in the music industry, is that anything can be a hit. Even the most unsuspecting song or performance of a song can captivate the world. But a hit does not equal a career. A hit may or may not make you a lot of money. It may or may not propel you into a career where you can make money.

Most of the people in the music industry making money have careers writing, releasing, and/or representing tons and tons of music. These are the music professionals that you want to connect with. You might just be starting out. You might have had some big moments. Either way, you are reading this book because you want to connect with industry executives, producers, other artists, tour managers, Spotify editors, etc...

Following is a whole book with suggestions on what to do. But in a sentence I can tell you what is not going to work. Your “demo” of tired garage band loops, stacked out of key, with vocals that sound like they were recorded with a can of beans run through an auto-tune guitar amp, mixed by you, with a sloppy roll out and avant bizarre social media, just isn't going to work. We probably agree on that too.

So, what does “work”?

Quality recordings. Collaborating with great songwriters, recording engineers, producers, mix engineers, and mastering engineers. Having a cohesive visual presentation through artwork, visualizers, videos, and photos. Playing to your personality strengths on different forms of social media. Designing and executing a roll out plan for your music, your merch, or a tour.

One thing seems to be for sure. No one can do it alone. Everyone needs some sort of team supporting them. This can happen organically or you can hire people. But we all need guidance we know we can trust. Sometimes we need tasks performed that require learning a whole skill to do. This is when a team can fill in. The best skill you can master is spotting people who can fill in your "talent stack" (thanks Scott Adams). Ditch your ego and the "I'll do it myself" mentality. It's why you don't release music and why when you do, it flops. You have to execute on all fronts 110%.

Let's get into understanding how.



CHAPTER I:

The Components For Success

To some extent every artist is only a part time artist. Even at the highest levels “artists” are making business moves related to the business of an artist. They are not constantly consumed with the actual artistry of being an artist. Being an artist is a personal brand. All brands understand their customers, how to reach them, how to communicate to them, and how they view the brand. It doesn't matter if you are a producer, beat maker, or artist, you will need to find a flow that works for you as far as how often to release music. Regardless of how often you do it, there is a cycle each release goes through. Every release starts with concept, writing, refining, recording/production, mixing/mastering. This stage slowly morphs into the packaging phase. Think artwork, visualizers, and promo photos. This is also a great time to start crafting any press release type material. You will tease your release as you promote it and supporting shows. Promote a spotify pre save campaign and submit to Spotify Editorial Playlists. Run ads and collect emails. Set up distribution. Before you know it, the release is out and you are doing follow up promo and possibly already starting the whole cycle over with a new release...

You can only be on a steady cycle of releases and have a growing career if you are organized...or if someone else is doing the organizing for you. You need a repeatable sequence for releasing your music. This will alleviate

a ton of stress. And the best part about having a process, you will be able to be more fluid and adaptable.

This book is not about to give you the perfect cycle. This is unique to each artist. You will need to communicate with your fan base and get a feel for what they want from you.

Pro Tip: Your fans want more than your music from you. They want to know you and share in your adventures.

I have a few final concepts to talk about before we keep going. To be successful in your ventures; to push on with all the moving parts even when one of them is failing miserably; you must have a clear mind and a clear vision. Things will happen that will throw you off of your game. That is the game. Your role in this is to allow these things to happen. Pivot, recalculate, and go at it again. You must be in a “mind state” of learning from your mistakes and never lose sight of your goals. There are plenty of books on “zen” and “enlightenment” (I recommend Eckhart Tolle), so I won’t go too far into it here. Achieving this takes practice. It takes having a daily routine. Daily objectives. Learning new things. Trying new things in order to become a master at our craft. Yes. You are developing your craft. You must practice all aspects of your craft. Part of being an artist or producer is knowing how to release your own material. Period.

No one wants to work with someone who is a slouch in the skills department. You will find a hard time

collaborating with a reputation of an egomaniac. Save that mentality for the major labels. If you want a career where you are your own boss, you need to know how to work with other professionals.



CHAPTER 2:

Genesis

Where does creativity come from? I am not about to answer that question, but it's a fun one to ponder. I can tell you as a process, it has a few parts that we can dissect and look at. In its simplest form, "creativity" starts with inspiration and ends with a representation. For me, my best writing happens when I allow myself to get all the ideas out first. This is like a brain dump of ideas from my imagination that could have been inspired by anything. Next, I look at the chaos and begin to make it take form by organizing these ideas. If I become passionate enough about my ideas I will work on them until they become a full fledged reality. This final step of turning the idea into a reality as a "creation" is creativity. Creativity is the process of creating.

I have a quote that I absolutely love. It goes like this:

"If you have ideas but don't act on them, you are imaginative, not creative" - Linda Naiman

As a songwriter or artist, this is often why you would hire a producer. When you have the ideas in your head but can't seem to get them into the DAW, the producer produces a song for you based on your ideas. They look at the chaos and turn it into something. They create/produce the song for you. When you work with this producer, you will learn invaluable lessons that you can carry forward into your next creation.

This is something that takes lots of work. It takes lots of practice. The more songs you create, the faster and more efficient you will become. Your process will become more refined over time. I'm not saying to have a songwriting formula, but I am saying you should have 3-4 songwriting formulas you can reference when you are feeling a little less imaginative. See, this is where having a system comes into play. Organizing your processes, using templates, buying samples and loops from another producer, or trading presets are all tools to use to keep your music flowing.

When I am in this early phase of a project, I like thinking about imagery or colors that would go good with it. I take note of what I am feeling at the time of creation. This can change later, but it certainly helps to have some direction moving forward.



CHAPTER 3:

Production

Recording, producing, editing oh my! We've all felt like dorothy swirling around in that tornado while working on our tracks. We are often faced with excitement, fear, and sense of wanting to go home (if we are at a studio). My philosophy is this, "there is a reason there are studios that cost a million dollars to build and that are operated by people with 30 years experience". When you are done singing into your laptop mic over a beat that you ripped from youtube...and then you slap some presets on willy nilly...and get that sweet mastering job from LANDR (hey, I love LANDR)...your song is going to compete against some very professionally done music. This doesn't mean give up, but it does mean you have a set of skills to master. As an artist, one of the most powerful things you can do is learn to record yourself. Get clean takes that are in tune and have the emotion you want. If you can do this, and you work with producers that mix clean beats, you will have a great sounding mix/master to release.

Likewise, if you are a producer and you are using stock Garageband sounds, you are going to sound like a producer using stock Garageband sounds. Even Timbaland has a sound designer he turns to (check out Sound Oracle.) Quit Mickey Mousing around and get yourself some good sounds to play with. Join Splice. Getting good sounds and loops is too easy now.

What if you are terrible with "music theory"? They have

plugins to help with that. Even if you are not a good singer, you still have options to release a professional sounding record. Do your takes with auto-tune on your voice. It will act like a bumper and help keep you stay on pitch. Get a vocal coach and have them help you sing your parts better. In fact, have them sing a guide track for you to sing along too. What's important is that you are willing to grow. Become the best you can be and learn about all aspects of what you are doing. If you are in a band, someone can edit your band and leave it natural sounding (trust me, you do not want to know what I have done with editing). These are the types of things that happen at the pro level. Of course it's best to work with professionals, but the least you can do is treat your project the same way a professional would.

So, what do you need to record at home?

Of course, you will need a computer. Any modern computer should be able to handle vocal tracking. At the time of writing, you will want an i7 chip and 8GB ram at minimum. You could try an i5 chip, but will quickly outgrow it. Mac or PC? It doesn't matter. Mac will be more expensive, but does come with recording software on it. There are free software options for PCs discussed below.

I recommend a condenser microphone (\$150-300), an interface (\$100-150), reflection filter (\$200-300), pop filter, cables, stand, and headphones. Speakers are good to have but not crucial for vocal tracking. Acoustic panels are also a huge help. You will also need recording

software. Reaper is free. People who use it are annoying, but it's free. Garageband is free (mac only). Logic is only \$200 (mac only). Cubase, Pro Tools, Studio One...the list goes on. One thing that is often overlooked in picking a DAW is your ability to collaborate. For example, if all of your friends use Logic, you are a fool not to start using Logic. Just my opinion. If you are producing on the same computer you are recording on, you will need at least 16GB of ram.

I cannot stress enough that you need to record clean vocals. No noise. No AC or refrigerator running in the back. No hum. No room echo. Squeaky clean. You want adequate gain on your preamp. Some preamps sound their best being pushed a little, but you do not want to come close to going in the red. No distortion. Red is bad.

Remember, you are the instrument. Your delivery is everything. You can sing, play guitar, or be a drummer. You control the instrument. Practice technique. I'll give you some examples.

When singing, vowels are generally where our "prettiest" sounding notes come from. Vowel sounds are said to be "voiced". Consonants like "M" or "N" are voiced, and humming is cool, lingering on one of these sounds doesn't sound "pretty". We can color vowels with how we hold our mouths. "S", "F", "P", "Ch", and "T" are unvoiced. We do not use our vocal cords to produce these sounds. These sounds hold no pitch value. These sounds along with other consonants can jump out when we hit them too hard. Controlling your pronunciation will

will help with this. Learn how you make these sounds and learn how to control them. There are studio tools, but again, your delivery is everything.

I feel like I have used the word and hinted at its importance a few times already, but I want to be explicate here:

You must practice, practice, practice. All things. Everyday.

If you pass off shitty takes to a mix engineer, he's going to have to polish them with every technique he has, just to get it to sound like polished shit. Same for beat makers. If you send me a Garageband rock kick on a trap song, I'll just replace it. But now, I would consider myself more of a co-producer than a mixer.

Collaborators, Engineers, and Producers will keep you honest with your performances. They will push you to want to do and be better.

You now understand the importance of practice, having a clean recording, and using quality sounds. A skill you will now need to learn is Engineering. Recording Engineers in the lightest sense, make sure that the recording sounds good. They are aware of noise, distortion, the levels and response of every piece of gear. They troubleshoot why things are not working and why they do not sound 100%. Really good Recording Engineers know how to recreate sounds from other records. This is similar to how a good skill for a Producer is sound design. There is absolutely no replacement for a good engineer. Some larger artists only work with one

Engineer because they know how that artist likes to work and they crafted them their signature vocal sounds. However, the fastest way to record your ideas is to be able to record yourself. I highly recommend working with a few different professional Engineers just so you can learn a few things in person from a master. Stop. Read that last sentence again. Before you go it alone. You will need to spend money to put yourself in a studio if you do not have a personal connection to one. Get over. Make it happen. This is how you will learn the fastest.

It's worth noting that learning Engineering takes time. Getting good at it takes longer.

The type and style of preamp will affect how much gain you add. How loud you are singing (or what instrument you are recording) plays a role as well. I like my meters hovering in the low “yellow” with some peaks going to high yellow. No red. If you are hitting red you will need to turn the preamp down (or engage the pad). You could also put a compressor on the signal to catch the peaks from going into the red. Using a compressor like this allows you to get more gain out of the preamp while also controlling the overall sound. When recording, I suggest being conservative with the amount of compression you apply. Until you get the hang of it. You will be compressing more once you are mixing, so don't worry, the vocal will sound “phat”.

It is up to you if you want to record while singing through a tuner. I used to not like this idea, but I have grown to

love it. It's 2020. It's what is happening. End of story.

Vocal comping (not compressor related at all) is the act of doing multiple vocal takes of a part and compiling the best parts of each into one final "compiled" track. This is considered vocal editing. This is often done using "playlists". Look up how your DAW uses these. I like to do this and use the leftovers to make doubles or create vocal effects. It is usually easier to double and harmonize a comp track. Mostly because it sounds great. If there are any spots with weird/funky tuning, I'll put them under the microscope in a graphical tuner. Once final aspect to comping/editing is cleaning up the longer spaces between vocals or takes. Clean these up and put some fades on there.

Comping works great for vocals, guitars, and drums...basically anything!

With the vocals (or instruments) comped, edited, and cleaned up, we are ready to add some flavor, tonal shaping, and dealing with unvoiced consonants. Unvoiced consonants are F's, S's, T's, Sh, Th, and Ch. These are sounds made without the vocal cords. Good singers know how to control these with how they hold their mouth. You should learn how too, as singing with better form in the beginning will help you out massively later.

There is no set order in how to apply effects. I like to EQ first. Carefully removing unwanted frequencies, noise, and generally tightening up the sound. Then I'll add

some compression. The type of compression is going to be song dependent. Depends on if I want to smooth the vocal out or make it more punchy. Usually both. I am not one to be afraid seeing what -10 and -20 db of gain reduction sounds like on a vocal. Sometimes (most of the time) a lot of compression sounds good. Sometimes, -1 to -3 db of reduction makes things pop too. What's important is following what your ears are telling you. I often stack compressors, running them in serial. More than tightening/thickening the sound and offering control, compressors often impart a tone onto the signal. After the compression I will often EQ again to clean up any unwanted artifacts from the compression. As a final step, I know put a "Deesser" on the vocal to catch those unvoiced consonants. This is all preliminary mixing. This is just to get some mojo happening and to get an idea of where you are going with the song. At this point, I will begin to experiment with FX like reverb, delay, and micro pitching.

With all this recording and production done it's time to send you tracks off for Mixing. But before we get into mixing, what it is and selecting an engineer, let's talk about Producers.

Like, wtf is a producer? And why would I need one? I am sure you know people that call themselves a producer, but all they hand you is a finished beat to sing over. They won't record you. They wont do a final mix. All they "produce" is a beat. I call this a beat maker but the term producer still applies. This is how they produce. Someone can still come in later and rearrange this beat

to better fit a vocal. I would consider this person a Co-Producer, but they will end up being called Engineer or Mixer. To me, a real producer is someone who does this and more. They work on arrangement and creating the elements that either the artist or label wants. They are able to create special moments in songs. They are often aware of what the artist wants, what a good production sounds like, what an audience wants, and what translates into a good mix. A good producer looks at all the parts the instruments are playing and finds ways for them to work together better and support the vocal (or main melody) ideas the best. A good producer can take a good song done with only vocal and simple guitar chords and turn it into a trap banger or an EDM anthem. Producers often mix their own productions. This is both good and bad. It is easy to lose sight on what sounds good if you get too far inside the production.

Now, we are ready for a Mixer. They say garbage in garbage out. This is very true in mixing. But every mixer has a story (or many) of replacing sounds, resingin parts, editing to create "feel", adding tamborine...If I take on your project to mix it, I believe it should sound as amazing as possible. To do this, sometimes I have to put a better kick sample in. As a mixer, I will often do vocal tuning. If the song is sung well, no big deal, and I can tune her up real fast. But if the performance is bad, then you will probably get a charge for detailed vocal tuning. Also, the song will not sound as good as it can with a bad performance on it. Like looking for and hiring a Producer, find someone that you think will compliment

your sound or can help you achieve the sound you are after.

What if you are thinking right now

"my favorite record by _____ was done for \$500 and has mistakes all over it. Why do I need good performances? And why am I hiring all these people?"

This is easy. That artist was prepared. Also, That album is probably pretty old. Your fans do not want a bad record from you. Your competition sounds amazing. Still wanna use bad takes and bad productions? Go for it.

Pro Tip: When selecting a Producer or Engineer it is important to look for people whose work you admire. If you are in a metal band you don't want to hire a pop producer. UNLESS, you are trying to expand your sound. More than likely though, as a metal band, you want to sound bigger and heavier.

Personally, I include a "Master" with every Production or Mix I do. I also Master mixes from other people. Mastering cannot and will not fix a bad mix. Loudness comes from the mix not from the master. Repeat that silently to yourself. Mastering can make a great mix sound outstanding. So, I like LANDR, but if you give it a shitty mix, you get the same mix back louder. It's not LANDR's fault. All of this said, I cannot recommend finding a Mastering Engineer you like enough. See who has mastered some of your favorite records if you are

looking for recommendations.

You probably think I am crazy. I'm telling you to spend \$1,000 just to get started. Think of it like this. The recording equipment is an investment in yourself. The learning is an investment in yourself. Hiring a Producer is an investment in the song. Paying for a mix is an investment in the Production. If this is a hobby for you, you can/should put less into it. But if this is your career...something that you want to support you later, then you need to support it now.

If you are still with me, we're just getting started. We're putting all this hard work into creating our art, now we need to get it packaged and distribution set up.



CHAPTER 4:

Packaging, Distribution, Promotion

Think of yourself as a retail clothing store. Seasonally you get new items in and push old ones out. There are color schemes that change, displays change, and we add new vendors. This is sort of the rotation you need to be on as an artist and the changes must be comprehensive like in our example. You should have your base set of colors and fonts that visually define your brand. Blend these with new colors for special releases. Have varying sets of colors. Whatever. Be strategic. Your album artwork needs to pop. There needs to be central tenants to your brand. Themes that carry through time, but things should change up a bit release to release. Everything must have a purpose. You will need to develop your visual storytelling skills. Your job as a storyteller is to tell the story in as many ways as possible. For example, you need to write the book, the movie, and the tv adaptation. Each medium or “social media” has its own way of communicating.

What I just laid out might seem like too much to worry about as an “artist”. It is a lot. You will refine it over time. You will not have all the answers in the beginning. It doesn't matter. You will learn. Eventually you will be on a cycle with all of this. After a few releases you will have instincts for it and the system will be freeing up more of your time for writing.

It is important to have distribution set up ahead of time. I like distrokid but any of the major players will do. Once

distribution is set up, you never worry about setting it up again. You just go through the process of uploading your music. Your distributor will have a way for you to set up pre saves for spotify. Do this. It is huge for your music. It puts the new release in people's inbox the day of the release and onto a playlist for them. How cool is that?

The distributor has the capability of signing you up with a PRO as well. Or you can link your ASCAP or BMI to your distribution account. You should have the option to register the songs with your PRO at the time of upload. PRO's only collect performance royalties. Like when your music is played publicly. Music played over the radio, in a bar, sporting event, or even on Spotify or Pandora. However, super important here, they do not collect all spotify royalties. I am going to dive into royalties shortly. It's how you get paid. I'd say it's pretty important. But first, I'd like to keep it all stay on task. We need to get you artwork.

Pro Tip:

Your distributor will register you as artist with a PRO if you are not one. Or you may have signed yourself up like this. You will also need to sign up with the same PRO as a publisher. This is how you get the publishing royalties that are generated by performance royalties

Learn to make your own art, hire someone from fivrr, or find out who does your favorite album artwork and hire them. Bottom line here, you need solid artwork for your releases. You also need a set of correct sizes for

different platforms of your artwork. Same for your videos/visualizer. If you take this on yourself, this something to keep in mind. You don't want your artwork getting distorted, misshapen, or looking tiny and blurry out there.

Similar to the needed artwork you should also get some professional photos taken. I'm not saying you have to hire Dave LaChapelle every time, but Aunt Debbie on her iPhone 8+ isn't going to cut it every time. You can take excellent photos of yourself. Just put the time in so they come out good. Learn color correction and some basic editing skills. For pictures I do a combination of all the above. I have professional photos and some shoots I do by myself or with friends.

Some thoughts on promotion. You will do paid and organic advertising. You will split test ads. Whatever Adam Ivy tells you to do on social media, you should do it. It will give you organic growth. Whatever you do, have a plan or system set up that you can implement right away on any new song. Distribution, Spotify playlist submission, tease the release with promo videos and a release date. Do a Spotify Pre Save campaign. Release the song. Push it with ads. Release the visualizer/video for the song. On its way out, do some live acoustic versions on social media. Tease the next release while you do this. Continue on and on...

Your fans will need a break. So create a cycle that works for you and your music.

As far as paid promotion is concerned, I am talking about running real ads, not hiring some service that gets you 10,000 plays in 6 weeks. When you pay for these types of services, they tend to hurt you more than help you. You want your music on relevant playlists listened to by people who will actually like it and interact with it. It is against the rules for people to accept money for playlist placement. They can charge a submission fee, but there can be no payola. Be mindful of what you are paying for out there. Doing things organically will take a little longer but will have larger, longer lasting effects.

Maybe not promotion, and perhaps more related to just growing, you will want to get your music on playlists. Spotify and Youtube for sure. Spotify for Artists FAQ page has gems of information on it. How to get on editorial playlists. How to get your artists page without having a release yet. Loudness. Anything you want to know about Spotify and your music is in that FAQ and it is laid out nicely. Additionally, your workbook will help walk you through the Spotify process.

To make Spotify's editorial playlists, they need the song submitted prior to release. When you submit it, it is wise to tout the song. Does it have write ups? Famous director for the music video? Unique story about the song or its recording? Did you work with someone in another country? Mention previous release successes. Keep it to the facts, but make sure they understand, this isn't just some artist releasing a track for the heck of it. Also, pitch to playlists you have a chance of getting on. You won't be next to Drake on your first release.

User playlists are great too. 10 playlists with 10,000 active monthly listeners is potential to have your music heard by 100,000 people. You will also grow with some of these playlists. Build relationships with the owners. Spotify has deep ties to Facebook. Playlist owners are often easy to find through Spotify or Facebook.

Another gold mine is Youtube. It is still the second largest search engine behind Google. Besides that, there are channels that make videos for your songs and put them into their playlists that are listened to by millions of people (potentially, genre dependent). Don't skirt the video description section. Have links to your socials, but make sure to talk about yourself and the release in detail. Use "keywords" that relate to your music and that are also popular at the moment.

Let's break down some numbers. If you get on those 10 user spotify playlists with 100,000 active listeners. A youtube playlist with 250,000 active viewers. And you land a Spotify editorial playlist with 500,000 active listeners. That's 850,000 possible people to hear your song. 1 song. If you even get 2% of those people to listen you will have close to 20,000 plays. This can be your opening week of releasing the song. Higher numbers if you already have a fan base. Now, imagine if you are on a regular cycle of releasing music. Your play count would naturally go up more every time. As you get your fans more involved/engaged those numbers will grow even more. You have to work hard at every step of this game. But without this type of devotion to promotion no one will ever even know you have music.

CHAPTER 5:

Royalty Reality

Perhaps you now understand what's required and have said "screw it! I'm all in". At this point you have to be wondering, "how do I make back this investment of time and money?" You make back the time investment by releasing regularly. Over time, it will take less and less time to do a release. Your investment of time spent learning turns into time to create as you get faster at everything with experience. There are many ways to make money from songs and as an artist. Most artists deal with direct sales and royalties. Money can also be made from performances, sample packs, and offering your services as an artist. Here, we will be talking mostly about royalties. Direct sales of CDs and vinyl I would consider it merch. A cd or 12" at this point is a novelty. The rest have to do with you running your artistry as a brand. I could write whole chapters on each way to make money as an artist. You will mostly be concerned with royalties as far as regular income from your music.

I'm going to start with Sync. Everyone does it last. Mostly because it's a weird topic and kinda doesn't fit, but it does. Sync is usually an upfront amount of money. It has to do with syncing your music to moving pictures. There are backend royalties, but when people are talking about sync deals, they are referring to making bags upfront. In a sync deal, mechanical royalties can be negotiated (as in you probably won't get any, that's the upfront money) but your publishing and performance royalties are non negotiable. As in you get them no

matter what. Unless you sell the song. If you sign away the rights to some movie or show for big money upfront, you will lose these royalties. Always own your publishing. To be clear, Sync is when your song is synchronized to some sort of moving picture. Like a TV commercial, TV show, or movie.

So I just casually dropped mechanical, publishing, and performance royalties. It seems complicated but it isn't. But it is. Often, you are songwriter, publisher, performer, and label. So you get to make all the royalties. But it is important for you to understand how these royalties are generated and who collects these royalties on your behalf. This money doesn't just sit there waiting for you to collect it. It gets redistributed after a time.

A recorded song can be thought of as having 2 copyrights. The actual songwriting or composition (publishing) is a form of intellectual property. It is the idea in written form (melody + lyrics + harmony). The other copyright is of a unique sound recording of that song. Both the written version and recorded version earn royalties. In the US, songwriters can earn public performance royalties and mechanical royalties. Recordings make money from the sale or stream of a recording. Traditional large Record Labels would finance a recording in exchange for ownership over most of it. They would also recoup that financing for the recording and your advance. If you are a songwriter you would retain publishing, but probably sign some of that away in a pub deal. Recording artists typically sign away mechanical royalties to labels as well in exchange for the financing of the record.

financing of the record.

Performance royalties are royalties that are generated (for a songwriter) when a recording or song is performed publicly either covered by another artist, aired on tv, played on the radio, or any form of passive listening. Mechanical royalties are generated when someone buys a cd, buys a vinyl, buys an mp3, or actively listens to you on a streaming service (Spotify). Some terms to clean up here are “passive” and “active” listening. Passive listening happens when a person is not in control of the music they are hearing. Think of the radio. Think of Pandora or Spotify Radio. Active listening happens when you select what you want to hear. Going to an artists page on Spotify and choosing to listen to a specific song by them.

To complicate things for a moment, Pandora (and digital radio) is a bit of its own beast. SoundExchange collects and distributes Pandora's passive listening Performance royalties for Recording Artists. Different from a songwriter or publisher. Your PRO collects the composition royalties on these digital radio stations. Your PRO collects your performance and publishing royalties on the paid version of Pandora. Your distributor will also need to get you set up with Pandora's MRI to collect any mechanical royalties for you. The mechanical royalties come from the streams of paid Pandora listeners. You will need to register with SoundExchange and make sure your distributor sets you up with Pandora's MRI. Both of these are your responsibility.

So, who collects your Spotify royalties? On top of being with a PRO and a distributor you will also need Songtrust to act as your publishing administrator and help you collect your “publishing” (composition) royalties on the Mechanical royalties that come in from streams. I think this is confusing, I’ll recap a little. A PRO only collects one type of royalty. It collects Performance Royalties and the associated Publishing Royalties. This is why you have to register as both a Songwriter and a Publisher. Your distributor will collect your Mechanical Royalties from streams. They also handle the mechanical for physical sales.

Lots of people think this is all too complicated so they sign rights away. What they do not understand is there are all these different ways to make money from licensing their music (composition or recording). We hear all the time about artists who signed bad deals. Labels used to offer distribution. They could expose your music to new listeners in a way you couldn't. In the modern era, it's all about who can make the most noise and draw the most eyes. Labels still have vast resources to do this, but they are only taking on artists that already have some reach. Why would anyone who can keep 100% give away most of it after they put in all the hard work to build everything? It doesn't make sense.

This was a crash course in your rights as a songwriter and artist. Research all of this yourself to know how to best move forward. If you are both a writer and artist, I suggest learning all of it.

Pro Recap:

You need a distributor. You need to register as a songwriter and publisher with a PRO Register with SoundExchangeRegister with SongtrustRegister all new songs with Distributor, SoundExchange, & Songtrust (songtrust will register with your PRO)



CHAPTER 6:

Closing Thoughts

The starving artist. Is there such a thing? A starving artist is just a hungry person that can create art as a hobby. A true artist, a true creative, brings their ideas into the physical realm in a way that demands attention, recognition, and conveys value. Anything can be art if it is portrayed in a way that it is a finished piece to be admired. But this is more about presentation and perception than something actually having artistic value.

This is the business of being an artist. An art all unto itself. I really love this idea that part of creativity is taking action. That the idea is not enough for the creative. It must be brought into reality. A balance must be struck between self expression and how an audience can interact with something. With music, our lyrics often mean so much to us. They can “mean” a lot to another person as well, but their “meaning” can be totally different from your intention. This is crucial. If your lyrics are too direct there is no room for interpretation. The audience must be taken into consideration.

If you walk away with anything from this book, I hope it is a deeper understanding of what being an artist really is. What being a creative really is. That being an artist is a full business and you need to learn about as many aspects of it as you can. Further, you need to master as much of it as you can and find trustworthy people to help handle the rest for you. You need a team that you can lean on and a network to build on.

See you at the top of the charts



A close-up, high-contrast portrait of a man's face. He has dark hair, brown eyes, and a nose piercing with two dark, bulbous studs. He also has two small piercings in his ears. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights on his forehead, nose, and cheekbones, while the rest of his face and the background are in deep shadow.

About the Author

Death Beach is producer and mixing engineer that specializes in giving artists a unique sound and flipping songs into unimaginable version of themselves. He has worked on upwards of 600 songs in the past 12 years. Working with top level producers and engineers on label projects and with up and coming local talent just starting their careers. Currently he is working towards being an industry leader and innovator of new production.