

STEP 1 - HAVE A MASTER TRACK, SPLITS & CONTRACTS IN ORDER

Before you even start getting into marketing and everything else, you need to have your finished, mastered track (in the appropriate format for distribution). You also need to figure out who owns what percentage of the master and the composition - known as 'splits' - and have that in writing!



Having a mastered (wav 16 bit, 44.1 kHz) track is a no brainer as the first step, but a common mistake I've seen people make (and made myself!) is not establishing *early* the ownership and rights associated with the song. If you're making music independently, there's a good chance the people you collaborate with are also your friends.

Conversations about money and splits can be super uncomfortable with friends, but they absolutely need to be had to save you grief later! Your music is *property* after all, and at the end of the day there is a business transaction taking place.

STEP 2 - RESEARCH AND SELECT A MUSIC DISTRIBUTOR & PUBLISHER

If you navigate through our website you will find a full breakdown of the current music distribution sites and their pros/cons. I invite you to start there if you have no clue about music distribution. There are, of course, many more options and new distributors are popping up weekly! I advise you to do your research, everyone's needs will be unique!



Publishing administration, as we have explored, is a little more complicated to do as an independent artist. Some distributors such as CD Baby and Ditto offer publishing admin services and a more robust tracking and monitoring system for your royalties. There is also Songtrust and Sentric Music which function solely as publishers for independent artists.



All I will say is: don't underestimate the need for a publisher! Most distributors will only track your streaming royalties, and are not a part of the wider use and income your composition might be generating!



STEP 3 - SIGN UP WITH A PRO AND WITH SOUND EXCHANGE

"A PRO is an organization collecting royalties on behalf of songwriters and publishers, building a link between the owners of composition copyright and the music users (from radios and streaming services to your local business broadcasting music in the store). "

Many countries in the world have 'official', government licensed, Performing Rights Organisations. The first step is finding out if your country has one, and then establishing if it is a *functioning reputable body*.

Many countries have PRO's but particularly in Africa, unfortunately, they are consistently losing their licenses due to corruption, lack of reporting, inadequate administrative systems and basically... stealing from local artists.

If you are from a nation without an established and reputable PRO, not to worry! There are several big, non-local PRO's that have international registration for songwriters! For example BMI, which is one of America's largest performing rights organisations - has an international wing to their platform.

There are others that allow foreign registration, but as always, it is good to do your due diligence and investigate the options and their terms before committing to one.

That all being said, one of the benefits of using a publishing administrator (like Songtrust) is that part of their job is registering you with a PRO. So you can either do it independently, or through your publishing admin!

STEP 3 - SIGN UP WITH A PRO AND WITH SOUND EXCHANGE CONT.

"Sound Exchange is a non-profit organisation designated by the US Congress to "collect and distribute digital performance royalties for sound recordings".

'Digital performance royalties' involves non-interactive streaming which is things like online radio. They also collect featured artist royalties.

These kind of royalties are much harder to trace and collect through other collection channels. Anyone anywhere can register."

- from the Black Glitter Newsletter #4

As well as figuring out which PRO you want tracking and collecting royalties for you, it's worth looking into Sound Exchange.

Again, a publishing administrator will often handle this for you, but if you are not using a publishing admin it may be worth paying the one time \$100 fee to register with Sound Exchange. They track 'Digital Performance Royalties' from non-interactive streaming, which is a very particular kind of royalty that is often overlooked.

Feel free to read the '[6 types of Music Royalties](#)' in the last edition for more info on Digital Performance royalties and other compensation generated from your music.



STEP 4 - COLLECT ALBUM ART, LYRICS AND CREDITS IN A ONLINE DOCUMENT



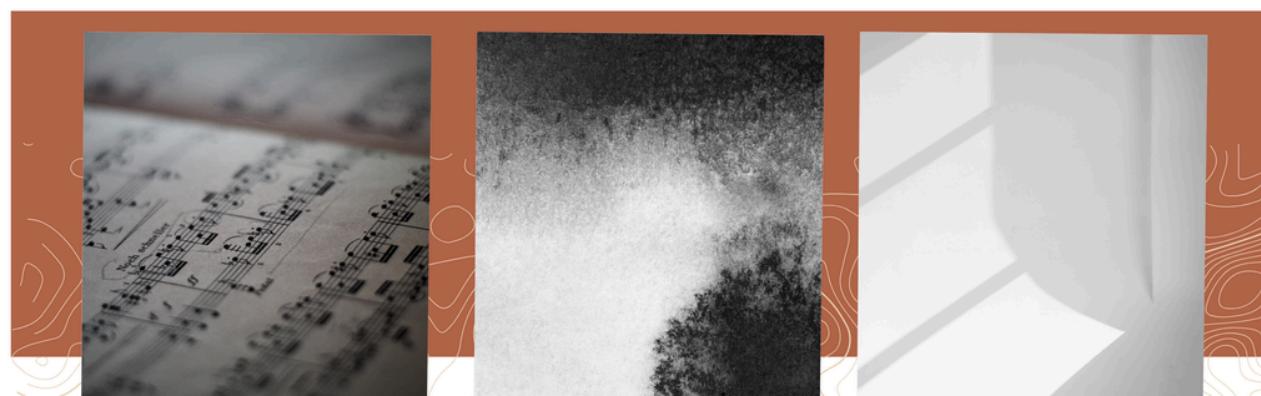
This is not something everybody does, but I find it absolutely crucial for my peace of mind and organisation.

On Google Drive (or any online document sharing site) create one 'base' document/file that contains all the raw information that you might potentially need in the distribution/submission process (this is not a press kit). Keeping it online means your producer, manager or anyone can also access the information should they need it.

Organise and demarcate different sections clearly. A few of the key things I have in my release documents are:

- A link to the highest quality file of Album Art (3000px X 3000px)
- Full lyrics (formatted as such)
- My PRO Member ID number
- Full credits (full names, who played/contributed what)
- A press release statement
- You're up-to-date artist bio

In phase two we will expand this list and file, as we dive into marketing and pre-release.





STEP 5 - SUBMIT THE FINAL MASTER, ART, LYRICS, CREDITS TO YOUR DISTRIBUTOR & SET A RELEASE DATE

The process of uploading your own music with a distributor has become unbelievably straightforward these days. If you have completed all the previous steps the upload process will take up just a few minutes of your day!

Before you click submit, be absolutely sure you have submitted the correctly formatted wav. file of your track, the correct credits and album art, and that all your splits are accurate! Having to make amendments later is a true pain and can delay your release.

If your distributor makes it possible for you to select your specific release date, make it at least 4 weeks from your submission date. This will give you ample time to dive into the many (many) steps that are to follow -

Phase II : Pre Release.

I hope you have found this first little foray into the practicalities of self-releasing music helpful!

In the next edition I will start to dive into what you can do to prepare for and market your upcoming banger!