

# Unsigned Music Playbook

By Rachel Moore



## **Introduction**

### **My Story**

Hello, fellow music lover. You're reading these lines right now because we share a similar interest; similar passion or a similar desire. We share a love for music. If I'm wrong, I'm not sure what your reason(s) are for reading this book, but I hope we at least share a love for music. Music is a divine, universal language. You're reading this because you've taken a step past music appreciation, and delved into the world of music creation. Expressing your personal life story, your desires, your goals in the form of a song is something like magic, isn't it?! You're like an experienced wizard (I'm assuming you have at least a few finished songs in your catalog, if not, What have you been doing. You're packing a lot of power in the form of art right now.

Have you ever pictured your music going viral? Have you ever imagined a world where you released a song and woke up the next day to tons of notifications from people loving it? Have you ever imagined being interviewed on radio shows, contacted for gigs, and offered paid opportunities in your career? It does happen for some. What's stopping this type of success from happening for you? I'm sure you've been making music for a while. It's become a part of who you are. A part of your identity. When will it be your time to get the shine and exposure you deserve from it?

You've tried a few tactics before. Think 'em over. Maybe you found a Facebook group where people post music and you've added yours in hopes of being seen. Maybe you've sent music to a few people you know through connections that have claimed to be able to get you heard by important people in the industry. Maybe you tweet your songs to strangers every week in hopes that someone will love your latest song, although they don't know you. You've tried a few ideas, but nothing is getting your music the results you really need. Not enough people click your links. No one is paying enough attention to your art.

My name is Rachel AKA Yona Marie, and I've been making music for over 15 years. Musical talent runs in my family; I've been surrounded by it for so long that it become something like my first love. A few years back, just like you, I didn't have enough of the answers. I had passion, I had creativity, and I was even consistent in my music efforts, with almost 100 songs in my back catalog.

I also had people yelling at me on Twitter, like "GUESS WHAT, NO ONE CARES ABOUT YOUR SONG, I'M BLOCKING YOU!". Look, I was determined, okay?! I was one of those people on Twitter, popping up in everyone's mentions, like "Hey, check out my song." "Hey, I have a new track, plsssss listen!?" "HEY, CAN YOU DO ME A FAVOR!?" Yes, I was a bit annoying. But I was passionate, you see. I had so many songs to share. I had collaborated with so many people in my area. I had 'connections' and high hopes. My family, coworkers', my babysitter's neighbor knew Chris Brown, so I had a way to submit songs directly to Chris Brown, in my head. The producers I worked with had ties to some A&R at Atlantic Records and all we had to do was pass it along and we'd get our feet in the door, according to them. And I believed, and believed, and believed, and I was naive. I was getting more experience in my craft, thankfully, but I felt like I was just running in circles.

I was in college at the time, studying as a Vocal Performance major. It was a great experience to learn about singing, but we were all just singing to each other and planning future auditions to grad school with foggy hopes of making it big somehow,

somewhere. There was no solid groundwork for the process of how. I decided to switch my major to Music Business with a concentration in marketing. I had studied music performance and music theory throughout my entire youth and figured it was time to study the hidden magic that makes it all work in a real-life setting.

The information was pretty great, but it was also dated as hell. It covered little to no info about the new wave of music streaming, music apps or the Indie artist boom of the digital era. Some books were still mentioning vinyl as a main channel of music consumption. I was happy for history info, but I was tired, bored, and still lost on how to get more people onto my Bandcamp page. It might have even been my Myspace page depending on what year we're talking. I needed to know all about music business post-year 2000, with information on how to market online, so I nerded out over the subsequent years and researched my hands off until I found the answers. I found *so* many answers. Some answers took a while to dig up, while some were right in my face, making me feel a bit slow.

Some answers in the music industry world are even still, a bit rocky. Want to know why? Well, the whole music industry is flipped on its ass. Really. Labels are going bankrupt. Streaming apps like Spotify and Pandora have yet to make a net profit, but technology has allotted millions of Indie artists the ability to create music in hopes of being discovered online. It's a mess, really. Don't feel bad if you're lost. The only reason you should feel bad is if you'd like to stay lost. In the midst of all the confusion, there are a few artists and musicians who spend a little extra time on their vision and release magic that actually gets noticed.

For a successful vision to become reality, you need to have the right information. The more of the right information I retained as a music maker, the better my music started to sound. The smarter I worked. The further my music reach got. The more I started getting *paid*. Fans were popping up from across the globe, telling me how my musical creations actually brightened their days. People were contacting me for interviews and performances. Retailers were using my music in advertisements. I remember the first royalty check I received from Pandora spins. I felt like my own mini label. I truly felt like a business. Like a brand. In this day and age, that's what you and your music need to be. And to become a successful brand and business, you must first learn the business.

### **Common Reasons Why Most Indie Artists Fail And Few Prosper**

**Lack of Knowledge and Quality:** If you don't know the rules of the game, chances are, you'll lose. Many Indie artists don't even take the time to research how the

music business operates and what is required. Those who are always hungry for knowledge to expand in their field are the ones who usually excel the most. Taking some time out to research a few things about your genre, your instrument, and how the people doing what you aspire to do operate on a regular basis is a must.

**Relationships:** Networking is sometimes the push that Indie artists need to make it over the 'no results' hump. You would be surprised by how quickly your career will start moving by regularly connecting with those at your level in your music market. Making efforts to connect to those who are even a few steps ahead can help you with your exposure.

**Team:** A lot of artists tend to make the mistake of trying to boost their career all alone. Sure, you may be a hustler who can make major things happen when you put your mind to it. But, there is strength in numbers! Growing a team of people who are dedicated to promoting and helping your brand is also a great way to excel fast in this industry. Not to mention, new listeners tend to want to hear the opinion of someone else about your music, not your own opinion of your music. Having a team to vouch for you is a great way to draw in even more potential fans.

**Talent:** Let's face it, if you don't have any talent at all, it's very unlikely that you will make it far. This is a consumer-based market that relies on an artist's likability. If no one likes you or your sound, no one will give you money. Now I know you are probably thinking, "What about the talentless crap I hear on the radio all the time?". Firstly, in a scenario where the artist is garbage but still on the radio, they still have a talented team (writers, producers, engineers). Also, people fail to realize that established artists that you might think sound like garbage still have great work ethics. How do you think they got where they are? A great work ethic is a very under-rated talent!

**Work Ethic:** Many artists with a dream, talent and creativity still manage to fail due to poor work ethic. If you don't consistently make songs, you won't consistently get fans. If you limit your ways of promotion to YouTube only or Twitter only, you are missing out on success by not taking a chance and trying other ways to promote your music. Your work ethic in this business **WILL** make or break you.

**Ineffective Efforts:** This can also tie into work ethic. Not only should you work hard, but you should work smart. Funneling money into bad marketing efforts, spamming people with your music who aren't even in your ideal target audience,

and performing to the same crowd of people or at the same venue over and over in hopes of expansion are just a few examples of ineffective efforts.

The times where an artist's biggest job was limited to performing and doing interviews are now a thing of the past. These days, the music industry loves to work with Indie artists and musicians who are thriving and building an audience with their own efforts. Not understanding how the new game works is a sure way to be overlooked. Trying unsuccessful methods over and over is a sure way to get stuck running in the same circle. Studying the game, implementing and growing along the way is a sure shot to success.

## **Section 1: Before Your Release**



## **Part 1:**

### **Recording Quality**

#### **Home Studio Checklist**

You may already have a designated place to record, or already have your own home studio setup, but if not, here is a checklist of the main items you will need to produce a good quality song. With the exception of a computer, these items can be bought from online stores like MusiciansFriend.com and Sweetwatermusic.com, or bought in person from a store like Guitar Center.

Computer: A lot of people already have this handy, but you'll need a desktop or laptop with good speed and disc space left for your home studio. Studio projects take up a lot of space on computer drives, so don't make the mistake of using an old computer with poor processing for your recording. PCs or Macs with subpar processors and/or limited space tend to crash often in the middle of an artist's work, which is obviously a pain. It's happened to me countless times. Slapping your computer screen only makes it worse, so I've learned.

Microphone: You will need a good quality microphone to record your vocal magic for your songs. Luckily enough, you don't need to spend a grand or more on it. Good quality recording microphones from brands like Audio Technica and Rode will only run you around \$100-\$200 bucks. There are many subcategories when it comes to microphone types, but the type you are looking for is a condenser mic. Condenser microphones are most commonly used for home studio recording purposes and reproduce sounds more effectively than microphones used in other settings. Along with the microphone, you'll need to get a microphone stand and a pop filter to eliminate popping sounds as you record. If you want to get *really* fancy, you can even get a portable mini recording booth to isolate your sound for less than \$100 as well (I love the one I got from Amazon).

Music Software and Interface: Music software is used to record and edit your songs online, while the interface is used to hook up your gear to the music software. A common combo that Indie musicians use is Avid Pro Tools software with the Mbox audio interface. These two can be bought separately, but are usually sold as bundled products for a deal or discount. You will also need cables to connect your microphone to the interface as well as your speakers/headphones.

Headphones and Speakers: Headphones are a necessity when it comes to recording and mixing your music. As a beginner, you can stick to one pair of quality headphones (also around \$100) or do it like a pro and get the two different types: closed-headphones for recording and isolation, and open back headphones for mixing and better sound quality. If you only want to start with one, go with the closed-back option. Studio monitors (speakers) are less of a necessity ever since the updates in studio headphones, but are still a great way to get top notch sound quality for mixing and playback purposes.

## **Mixing/Mastering**

After completing and recording your songs, you need to make sure you don't miss out on 2 vital steps involved in audio recording and reproduction. You need to make sure your music is properly mixed and mastered to polish your sound. A lot of research, time, and skill goes into mixing and mastering, so I won't cover all of it here since it would take up an entire separate book to properly address it. Hopefully you have someone who is taking care of this process for you, but I'll briefly explain the key factors that go into these two processes.

### Mixing

After you are done recording and laying down all your separate tracks, mixing is the process of blending it all together. When an engineer is mixing a track, they are essentially combining all of the tracks (vocals, instruments, etc.) into one output to be finalized or mastered. During mixing, there are a few main processes:

**Panning:** Used to put sounds in a certain position for fullness, i.e right pan or left pan

**Compressor:** Controls the volume range or gain of a track to prevent peaking

**Limiter:** Controls sounds that go beyond audio threshold levels

**EQ:** Edits levels in the audio spectrum including lows (bass boost), mids, and high

**Filters:** Used to limit a certain frequency levels on the audio spectrum

**Echo and Reverb:** Used to create depth, delay and repeat effects on sounds

### Mastering

Mastering involves adding the finishing touches to your song and preparing it for duplication. Volume adjustments, Master EQ edits and noise reduction are a few of the things included in the song finalization process. A lot of people wrongly assume that the mastering process can boost a song's audio quality completely, but if a song's quality doesn't sound up to par, it's probably the mixing that is at fault and not the mastering.

In both processes, it is important to have a good ear for music and audio production.

Knowing the process isn't enough when it comes to trying to get a professional finished product. Be sure that you or your engineer has taken the time to learn in-depth about the recording and audio editing process, or you may lose out on professional opportunities. You'd be surprised how many songs with potential are being sent out unmixed and/or unmastered. Don't be that Indie artist that seemingly has the full package, but then sends out crappy MP3s. Professional outlets can literally do nothing but move on to the next submission.

### **Tags and Edits**

If you have explicit lyrics, it is important to have edited versions of your song available for radio shows to be able to play your music. Companies are also becoming very strict about ID3 Tagging, or properly formatting the song, artist, genre and year data on your audio file. Artists without clean edits and tags are missing out on 90% of the effective promotional outlets available to Indie artists today. There are many free apps available for you to download from the net called ID3 Tag Editors, including MP3tag.

## **Part 2:** **Creativity and Musicality**

### **Clarity and Pitch**



When recording your music, be sure that each word you sing or rap is as clear as can be. In theory, you want people to be able to sing your lyrics along with you, right?! It's easy for a line recorded in a home studio to be sung too low or a part of a verse to be spit too far from the microphone. Go over your song recording and make sure that someone who has never heard your lyrics before can understand as many words as possible. It's also a great idea to have your lyrics available along with a song or CD release for clarity purposes.

If you are a singer, be sure your notes are as correct and crisp as can be. It doesn't need to be 100% perfect, but you are trying to mimic the professional ear of a millionaire audio engineer. Browse Google for a pitch correcting plugin that works for your particular music software. A lot of people mistake Auto-Tune and other pitch correctors as *overly dramatic* effects that are added to vocals, but 99% of recorded singing vocals that you hear on the radio have been slightly edited with a pitch plugin. The key is to be subtle with your corrections.

### **Confidence and Personality**

As an artist, it is important to sound confident when singing or rapping your lyrics. Hesitance and shyness can actually be heard through a song. Even though you are an Indie artist finding your way, you need to have the ego of a star in the studio. Listeners engage and connect more with artists that confidently present their lyrics, especially in pop music. Be sure you are recording in a space where you can be as comfortable and as loud as you want. It's also a good idea to add your own flavor and personality when recording a song.

### **Lyricism**

Not enough people are paying attention to the story that is being told in a song these days, but when you tell a good story, you are adding more gold to your magical song.

Lyricism is especially key for the Indie musician these days, because everyone is complaining about the 'garbage' on the radio and raving over the hidden Indie artist gems they find in local talent. If you are providing watered down pop lyrics like everyone is already used to, how are you standing out?

Whenever Indie artists are in the songwriting process, they tend to cling to what's 'mainstream' and what 'everyone else' is doing in their genre, which isn't a bad thing. If you're a singer who often serenades on the topic of love, or you're a rapper

who often speaks on the excess of money and women you have in your imagination, that just might come to fruition once you get big. You're having fun, you're in your element. But, have you ever sat and created a song with the intention of speaking to someone's heart? Yes, you're making songs with the intention of getting fans, in general, but has your material ever been a source of inspiration?

Music has capabilities that Indie artists often overlook when they get lost in the process of it all. Set aside time in your musical future to create a song or two that will speak to someone's heart. Focus on a topic that's often overlooked in the mainstream music world these days. Be different. Be bold. Be sincere. Take the time to write lyrics that will leave an impression. You and your listener will be rewarded.

### **Rhythm**

Pay close attention and make sure that the words you say/sing are on precise beats of your song. Again, you want to be one with the music. You don't want your verse sounding more like freestyle poetry on your songs. A good way to stay in tune with the rhythm of the song when you are in the studio is to add body movement to your expression while recording. Another way to take command of your rhythmic skill is to practice what you are going to record at half the speed beforehand.

### **Emotion/Interpretation**

It is important to create an overall experience when making a song that you want people to really enjoy and connect with. If your song topic is somber and depressing, delivering a line with little emotion won't compare to a line delivered with heartfelt sadness. For example, on Kendrick Lamar's 3<sup>rd</sup> song 'u' on the album "To Pimp a Butterfly" features a very depressing third verse that Lamar delivers in a flawlessly drunken and depressed tone that won't be forgotten by anyone who has ever heard it. Adding the appropriate emotion to your lines and adlibs can really turn up your song's impact. To best convey your emotion, you should have your lyrics memorized. Focus that is thrown off by reading or not being confident in your recording space can surprisingly effect the quality of your song. You want to be as connected and as 'in the zone' as you can possibly be during your studio session. Be one with the music.

## **Dynamics/Phrasing**

Songs without the proper structure, phrasing and dynamic changes can really become a drag after a minute or so of listening. Most addictive songs have dynamic changes that occur between verses and choruses. Be sure your song lyrics and instrumentation never becomes too repetitive or dull for listeners. Adding changes to your rhythmic flow, range, panning, and instrumentation for certain sections of your songs is a great way to add flavor and appeal.

## **Part 3:** **Story and Appeal**

### **History**

Every artist or musician has a story. What's yours? Be sure to leave out the boring parts. If you don't already, you should have a biography written in 3<sup>rd</sup> person that briefly tells the story of your music career. What really stands out about your journey thus far? Make sure you cover key points about yourself including where you are from, what inspired your career and any previous projects you've worked on. Bios don't really need to be over 250 words, but should also not be anything under 100 words.

### **Relatability**

Aside from your bio, it is important to try to relate to your target audience as much as possible. As an Indie artist, you already have the advantage of being seen as 'just another person' instead of a celebrity. Use that to make your music brand more appealing. Reach out to your fans and market yourself as if you're a friend, not as if you're some god that needs to be worshipped. Let people know that you are just like them, just trying to be noticed in the world. Talk on Tik Tok about how you're out of gas money but will somehow be making it to your gig tonight. Share your creative process. Create a picture in your head about your ideal fan and present yourself as someone who could be their best friend.

## **Uniqueness**

Since your music brand is your business, you should be thinking of business tactics in order for you to stand out. One popular business tactic that is well-known in the marketing world is to have something known as a Unique Selling Proposition or USP. Your unique selling proposition is what sets you apart from other people offering what you offer.

As a musician, having a USP is very relevant in the overcrowded music world. Everyone is aware of how many starving Indie artists are out trying to get their songs in the limelight. Your job is to simply be different. If you are in a band, what makes your band different from any other band playing local shows and applying to big name festivals? If you are a producer, what makes your beats stand out from the thousands of others offered online with a simple Google search? Start brainstorming the ways you can set yourself apart from artists and musicians similar to style.

You have so many options in choosing your USP. One example could be the way you present your music on your website. Or, you might have something weird that you do at the end of each of your songs. Maybe you wear your hair in a way that no one can forget. Maybe your USP is that you know everything about the music industry, while your competitors are just running in circles! You can have multiple USPs, but it's important to focus on one major unique selling point that will put you a few steps ahead of the competition. After finalizing your USP, it won't hurt to include it in places like your bio and social media pages!

## **Effect**

How does your music make people feel? Material that relates to a listener's feelings and emotions tend to leave a lasting impression. Heartfelt musical art includes the type of songs and videos that get played back to back on repeat by a listener. Material that leaves a lasting impression tends to also get shared way more often. The more people that feel your musical release relates to their life and personal journey, the more success your release will have. If they feel you are providing something that will help encourage their journey, you will have much more success; not to mention that your career path will feel very rewarding! Not only are you

making good material; you are making others reflect intensely on themselves with your material. Art like that knows no boundaries.

## **Part 4:**

### **Your Image**

#### **Branding - Images and Names**

As an artist or musician, I'm sure you have profiles across multiple social media networks. As mentioned before, you probably have a Twitter, a Facebook fan page, a SoundCloud account and a handful of others where you have advertised your music in hopes of being noticed. The first form of representation as a musician online, before someone even gets to the play button, will be your images. Be sure the images on your profiles are up to date and of good quality. *Great* quality is preferred. If you are just starting out and unable to provide a high-quality photo of yourself, a great alternative is to add a high-quality graphic or cover photo that fits your image as a musician. No one will need to know that you haven't had your photo shoot yet!

Also, as a musician, you are now a brand. You are a business, and your product is your music. Be sure that all your profiles share a common theme and most importantly, a common name to represent yourself. You wouldn't want to confuse potential fans. When you make these pages, your brand name (artist or band name) should be the same everywhere, clearly visible and understandable. Don't be 'DJ Turnt Up' on twitter, but then be "TurntUPKID" on Reverbnation. Make sure that your brand is clear, so that every piece of information you want to give to fans can be clearly found. The more links people find, the more established your brand is!

If I Google you, what's going to show up?

#### **EPK – Electronic Press Kit**

Every Indie artist needs an Electronic Press Kit. Think of your EPK as your musical resume. This kit provides anyone interested in your music with all the information they will need in one place. Your press kit should definitely include:

- Professionally written biography (mentioned in part 3)

- High Quality Images that represent your music brand
- Songs and videos that represent your musical works
- Quotes from professional music reviews you have received in the past
- List of shows you've done and that are upcoming
- Social media links and contact information

To add some pizzazz to your EPK, consider adding some of the following elements:

- A link to a large amount of your songs that are easily downloadable (try a file hosting site like Dropbox)
- Lyric sheet links that provide the full lyrics to the songs featured on your EPK
- Band or artist Q&A to include fun facts about your musical journey
- Recommended If You Like list, AKA "sounds like [artist-name]" (used to identify a reference point for your music)

The great thing about EPKs is that they cover literally everything about your music, so you can easily use it to fill in details on your social profiles, song submissions, and even an official artist website.

## **Part 5:**

### **Song Protection**

#### **Performance Right Organizations**

PROs for songwriters, or Performance Rights Organizations, are societies responsible for collecting income on behalf of songwriters when a song is performed for public broadcast. This means they collect money on your behalf for the music you've written when it's played or performed. This includes things like getting played on radio, being featured in a commercial, or any live broadcasted event. PRO's literally track down companies for you to make sure you get paid for your hard work and creations.

Current Songwriter PROs you can sign up with (you only need one):

[ASCAP.com/join](http://ASCAP.com/join) (\$50 fee)

[BMI.com/join](http://BMI.com/join) (free!)

For SESAC, you have to be exclusively invited.

There is a newer organization collecting money for the sound recording owner, while the other 3 collect only for the songwriter. SoundExchange is [free to register](#) for and collects royalties for the party that owns the song master. This includes payment for plays on digital streaming services like Pandora and Music Choice. Chances are, you wrote the songs and own the sound recording, yet are leaving money on the table by not signing up to two companies. Join BMI + SoundExchange, or ASCAP + SoundExchange to cover all of the royalties owed to you.

### **Song Copyrighting**

You can copyright your music through the government copyright office online also known as the eCO online system. The fee for registering a copyright is \$45 works with one creator, \$65 for works with more than one creator. Trust me when I say it's better to be safe than sorry, especially if you are releasing quality music to the public.

There are two types of forms that pertain to registering songs: form SR and form PA. You should make a single registration using Form SR if you, the copyright claimant owns both the sound recording and the musical composition (i.e. if, in addition to recording the song in the studio, you also wrote the song's lyrics and musical composition). If you only want to register the underlying or musical composition, but not the actual recording that you have, Form PA should be used.

## **Part 6:**

### **Social Profiles**

#### **Stats - Existing Numbers and Social Proof**

Your music brand is a business, and businesses of all types benefit from having something called social proof. What's the meaning of social proof? Let's say you've

opened up a barbershop at your closest outlet mall. You're new, and you need ways to entice people into walking into your store. You decided to bring a few family members along for moral support on opening day. Another barbershop owner has also opened his business right across from yours. Unfortunately, he didn't bring anyone to his store opening. Potential clients walk by the two shops and take a moment to decide. Which will they chose? More than likely, they will chose your shop, because more people are already in it. This is how social proof works. The same can be applied to the thousands upon thousands of emerging artists on the internet. Everyone is new and unsigned! What music will the people browsing through Indie artists chose to take a chance on? The ones that stand out and already have a crowd. Social proofing online has become a bit taboo, but don't you wonder why you hear about thousands of companies and celebrities taking advantages of services that boost their numbers? It's because social proofing works when done right. You wouldn't want to buy from a company that only has 7 followers on Twitter, would you?

### **New Posts - Engagement and Consistency**

As an artist or musician, you need to consistently put out new material. Visiting an artist's page and seeing that they haven't had any new material in years is major letdown. A lot of times, musicians have new material, but neglect to add it to their music pages. Even if you are simply uploading a 30 second cover or freestyle, you need to be giving your fans something new multiple times a year. Interviews, upcoming performance dates, lyric videos, periscope live check-ins, and recent reviews are great ways to add new content to your pages without even needing to upload new official song material. Also, as an unsigned artist, it's critical to engage with your listeners and fans. You aren't as big as Beyonce yet! You should personally send a thank you message to anyone who comments or shares your music online. The more personal and genuine your response is, the better! Indie artists who engage with their listeners and fans have a stronger presence, stronger support system, and overall stronger brand.

### **About Me Section - Clarity and Enticement**

After viewing your image and name, the person visiting your profile will most likely glance at your 'About me' or 'Bio' section. What could you say in a couple of sentences that will make the most out of your About Me section? Well, the first thing you don't want to do is leave that section empty or with one or two words. You will need to as clearly as possible state who you are and what you do. In the music world, it's also a good idea to emphasize your genre so that you can stand out to



those who regularly listen to your genre the most. Be clear about what the visitor should expect when hitting play on your music or videos. Secondly, again: there are thousands upon thousands of music makers on the internet, looking for spotlight. After you have clearly and briefly stated what you do, think of a brief and enticing way to state what your music can do for the listener. Which bio stands out more:

“Guitarist for the rock band HeroKillers.” or: “Guitarist for the rock band HeroKillers. Riffs will rock your socks.” A lot more people in the music industry need to be thinking like a salesperson! Don’t hesitate to tell a potential fan how your music will make them feel. People are tired of hearing about what your latest song is, how you can help them get more listeners, and how they should buy your music. The real thing any consumer wants to know is, “What will this do for me”?

## Section 2: After Your Release



## **Part 1:**

### **List Building**

#### **Why Build A List**

Want to know one of the best ways to keep in touch with your fans and get your music to the right people when you have new releases? Some know the secret, yet a *lot* of people still don't! Answer: Build an Email List.<sup>[L][SEP]</sup>It's simple: You can tell your friends to subscribe to you, (or just request their current email yourself) then add them to your music promotion email list. Once you have the list setup with all your fans/friends, all you have to do is blast your music to them all at once, not multiple times for multiple people!

Which one sounds better:<sup>[L][SEP]</sup>

- A. Slaving over social media, annoying the hell out of friends, trying to boost numbers on every video/song you put out.<sup>[L][SEP]</sup>
- OR<sup>[L][SEP]</sup>
- B. Keeping emails of your fans, and sending one big blast whenever you have new material, while the traffic, views and downloads come pouring in all at once

Clearly, B makes it easier and less of a nuisance for you AND them.<sup>[L][SEP]</sup>

#### **Software and Techniques**

There are plenty of mailing programs out there for you to use for cheap prices, and A LOT for free (for a certain amounts of subscribers). A few suggested options include MadMimi,<sup>[L][SEP]</sup>MailChimp,<sup>[L][SEP]</sup>and Aweber. Another great way to build a list is through Bandcamp.com, which allows you to set the option of your listeners leaving their email in order to download your tracks and projects. A quick Google search will give you more options.

To lure in subscribers to your email list, the most popular product for a musician to offer is a free song. In exchange for an email address from a fan of your work, you will be emailing them a link to a free, amazing song of yours. Once you get that email, you have a direct channel of communication with that fan for as long as they use that account, which is usually a very, very long time!

It is recommended that you keep in contact with your list at least once a month. If you don't release songs that often, then it's a good idea to send updates about your

career that include interviews, upcoming shows and recent reviews from noteworthy people. If you don't send consistent emails to your fans, they may forget about you. Think about how fast the internet works! With each email, it is important to have a 'call of action' or a statement that makes it clear that you are trying to get your fan list to complete a goal of yours. That goal may be to buy your cd, book a ticket to your show, or even to just check out your latest Youtube rant.

## **Part 2:**

### **Social Media Marketing**

#### **General Tips**

When attempting to promote your music on social sites, it is important to find out ways to really grab someone's interest and not be seen as a pest. Everyone is claiming to do music these days, meaning that you have to stand out and find a way to get people excited about hearing you in particular. A popular tactic with marketing and sales across all types of industries is to tap into someone's personal desires and motives. Here are three tips that work well on music:

#### **1. Let Them be a Judge**

People like to hold positions of power, even if in small or somewhat irrelevant situations. Ask someone to listen to your music while stressing the fact that they can judge (based on any scale you guys choose) however they decide after hearing it. This way, even if they don't like you, they are excited to tell you your score as they've involved themselves heavily in this process with such power and all.

#### **2. Appeal to What They Like Already**

Try to find out what the person of interest likes in terms of music. If someone is in love with Taylor Swift and you have songs with beats that sound just like Taylor's style, let the potential listener know! This way they are more eager to hear what you have since it relates to something they already like.

#### **3. Offer an Exchange**

Since a lot of music on the internet is free now, especially Indie songs, it may not be smart to believe giving away songs is enough of an exchange to get someone's support these days. Get creative and offer something really small yet valuable that

you can still give to those who listen and support you. A good idea that many artists are adopting is to support fellow artists by listening to their songs while the other artist will give the listener's music a chance in return.

## **Twitter Tips**

### **1. Have an appealing profile with interesting Tweets**

The main way to get more people to notice you on Twitter is to be entertaining. Retweets can go viral, and if you have tweets that others can relate to, you are more likely to get retweeted, followed, and mentioned. If you have a Twitter account and you constantly only post your music, you're doing it wrong!

### **2. Follow others with similar interest**

A lot of people go crazy with the random following thing, but simply following and engaging with people who have a similar interest can easily get you new followers/fans.

Often times, when you follow someone new, they check your picture and bio first. Imagine if you were following a few people a day, and they all saw your amazing picture with your bio and link to your music!? You'd get hits and potential new fans. Take it a step further, follow people in the industry, NETWORK!

### **3. Support other artists**

Just like you, there are thousands of undiscovered artists and musicians on Twitter looking for someone to give them a chance. Take some initiative and check out another artist's work every so often! You never know the types of relationships you could build with other talent by providing feedback on other's work. At the very least, they are likely to check your music out as well.

### **4. Search for Opportunities**

Often times, there are companies and sites that announce opportunities that artists can submit to, similar to the ones we post on our site. Using Twitter's search function, you may be able to find places to submit your song to by searching terms like 'music contest' and 'submit to radio'. You can also use the search function to browse and follow profiles for radio stations you may know of, music blogs, and labels that promote artists similar to your style.

## **YouTube Tips**

Create in a space where a buzz is already present. People who have had the most success with music on YouTube are people who consistently cover/remake songs that are highly relevant to the music world. YouTube is very crowded, but it's also one of the main places people go when a new topic hits the web. Use the traffic from popular songs, events and topics to drive views to your video with all of the 'related video' marketing that YouTube does for it's users.

Do you upload your original music content onto Youtube's video platform? If so, don't miss out on ways to make some extra coins while making content that you love and sharing it with your fan base! A lot of people aren't aware, but you can make a few different types of royalties from original music of yours that is on YouTube. YouTube has paid over **2 billion dollars** in royalties to content owners across the world. Yet still, a lot of indie artists are leaving money on the table and don't have a clue!

### **Youtube videos that feature original music generate these 4 different types of royalties:**

- Royalties for video content
- Royalties for audio content
- Performance royalties for the audio content (if you wrote the song)
- Mechanical royalties for audio content (if you wrote the song)

The types of royalties can be collected on your behalf if you are a member of performance rights organizations like [BMI](#) and [SoundExchange](#).

## **SoundCloud Tips**

Everyone has a Soundcloud profile, but not everyone is using theirs to its fullest potential to make their music brand look good! Having a solid music profile page includes providing your page visitors with the right information, a great online personality and a music catalog they will be excited about! Below are the top mistakes to avoid with your Soundcloud profile.

**A profile with no bio** is the most common flaw found on Soundcloud pages. The best thing to do as an unknown indie artist is to provide your listeners with information about yourself to catch and interest. Imagine how many people might be coming to your Soundcloud page, hearing great music, and wondering, "I wonder where they're from?" and the question goes unanswered due to a missing bio. Your listener might take the time out to google you and your song name, but there's a high chance that they might not and be a bit put off that you have no background information about yourself for them to get acquainted with you.

**A profile with no links** is another mistake a lot of indie artists are making. If you have an official website for your music, make sure all of your music pages including Soundcloud displays the link to that site. If you have social media pages like Twitter and Facebook, make sure you add these links for people to be able to reach out to you with ease if they'd like. If you have links like iTunes and Spotify that will direct a listener to a place they can save your music, don't be too lazy to copy and paste that link onto your Soundcloud! You may think that no one is reading or clicking these links, but you'd be surprised at how many listeners (who like what they're hearing) are prone to click your links to get more from you. Don't leave them hanging!

**A song with no description** looks boring and uninspiring. You've put a bunch of energy into creating a completing the songs you upload on Soundcloud, so don't lose steam by missing the chance to spice up your track with some good information. Information can include song meanings, lyrics, a story on the recording process for that song, what the song means to you, buy links and social media links.

**A track with crappy cover art** can kill a listener's motivation to press play on your song. Adding appealing art that catches your viewer's eye is a must, especially if they've never heard of you before. Adding an image that captures the essence or your song and/or your artist image is a great way to [make your music brand professional](#) and memorable. Try to get the highest image quality possible so that your pics will look clear on any display, whether it's a smartphone or a huge computer screen.

**A profile with too many songs** may overwhelm someone who is visiting your music page. It's best to highlight your top tracks while still being able to leave your listener wanting more and coming back to your profile. Uploading your entire 5 albums within a short amount of time might seem like a good way to make sure your music is heard, but it could seem like a chore for a visitor to go through all 100 of your songs without knowing which ones are your best hits. Keep in mind that people's attention spans are short on the internet these days!

**A song getting comments with no replies from you** is a missed opportunity to connect with a fan personally. If you are getting comments, likes, reposts, and followers from listeners, you're doing great! Why not show some appreciation and add interaction to your songs as well? Replying to fans who leave compliments on your songs is a great way to show how connected you really are to your music and listeners. It's a great way to build a connection that will go beyond a song your listener can appreciate. You will become a person they can appreciate. Since most people with Soundcloud pages have music of their own as well, comment replies are a great first step to networking with other musicians on Soundcloud. Following other music accounts that have interacted with your music is even better!

## **Facebook Tips**

Are you giving your visitors and fans what they want? Are you allowing yourself the chance to expand your audience and listeners? A greatly constructed and greatly managed fan page for an artist can do wonders in their career! Here are 5 tips you may want to think about when it comes to designing and maintaining your Facebook fan page.

### **1. Fill it ALL out!**

We come across a lot of fan pages that have empty slots for a lot of good information, including their [biography](#)! Who wants to like an artist who won't even put up a bio on their fan page? Be sure to add as many social links and information about yourself as you can! This helps to strengthen your brand and increase your professionalism.

### **2. Post Regularly**

Your engagement will increase when you constantly deliver material to your timeline. It doesn't always have to be a new release! You can post inspiration, past work, future goals, anything! If you increase your engagement on Facebook, you have a higher chance of getting your posts viewed by others.

### **3. Don't Just Post Words**

Facebook is a tricky place. You have to kind of go with the flow in terms of finding what posts get the most engagement, depending on your audience. Usually, pictures and videos tend to stick out and get more impressions. Get creative and see what works for you!

### **4. Find a Music Player App**

Your Facebook page may be the first interaction that some people have with you, so why not give them access to your music on the spot!? Apps like MyBand, Spotify, and iLike are great for integrating a player onto your Facebook fan page.

### **5. Keep an Important Pinned Post**

Facebook allows you to pin any post of your choice to the top of your page in order to highlight that post. Most likely, there is always a show, song, CD or specific aspect of your career that you want to highlight more than anything at any given moment. Highlight away! Keep that [upcoming tour](#) or release at the top of your page and on everyone's mind.

## **Part 3:** **Updates and Interviews**

### **Blogs, Video logs and Captured Moments**

If you want fans and onlookers to be constantly engaged with you even if you aren't local, you can have make it happen thanks to social media, blogging, vlogging and the like. Documenting your past, current and future musical endeavors is a great way to bulk up your brand and artist image with content. Having up to date content outside of your music releases is a killer move when it comes to word of mouth and social sharing. After all, today's world is all about sharing content. It's a little annoying when your every day kid with nothing to talk about updates their sites and social media pages with tons of content, but it's smart when you're updating the world consistently in the name of building a brand. Moments to capture can include live shows, studio sessions, music festivals, conferences, award ceremonies, opinions on the industry, how-to manuals, and so much more! Get creative and start putting out content that your fans would be excited see, and maybe even share with their own circle.

### **Interviews**

Speaking of people loving content, tons of companies in the music industry love content in the form of interviews. Radio shows, blogs and magazines in particular love to interview Indie talents to get backstories on their journeys, understand their future goals, and get to know their processes. Doing an interview is just like



providing content for your own network, but getting your brand in front of a completely new audience! When submitting music in the future to a company you know is likely to do interviews, be sure to let them know you are open to one if you are comfortable! Artist interviews are usually done through radio call-ins, blog-style written interviews, and vlogs. Regardless of the medium, if you get the opportunity to do an interview for your music, be yourself, be relatable, and be appealing!

## **Part 4:**

### **Offline Marketing**

#### **Local Performances**

Locally performing your original and cover music will never go out of style. Check local listings for events that include open mics, talent competitions and festivals in your area. Where might these local listings be? Local music events are often advertised in radio ads, newspapers, online classifieds sites like Craigslist, and on social media. If you're on a tight budget, stick to open mics, which are usually free or very cheap to perform at. Competitions and festivals tend to have entrance fees that can get pricey if you're consistently performing, which is recommended. If you're a singer, you should dominate karaoke shows you can find at local bars and restaurants for free!

After your performance, be sure to stick around and network at the event, with CDs and flyers handy. If your music is what the people want to hear, the event organizers along with new fans from the crowd will be very open to hearing more from you! Consistently gigging in your area is a great way to build a loyal fan base. And if your music is enjoyable to fellow musicians in your scene, collaborations can easily flow into the conversation! Musical collaborations that can provide mutual benefit for both parties are an effective way of being exposed to someone else's fan base.

## **Street Marketing**

Advertising music by way of street marketing is popular and effective in major city areas. Street marketing can include giving out CDs, placing flyers and cards in local stores, and unscheduled performances in public areas. With street marketing, it is best to have an inviting personality and be able to catch the attention of the public. Street marketing musicians are somewhat in the same category as canvassers and independent product sellers, so it's important to have a certain amount of appeal in your image that will not label you as pesky.

Street marketing is often done by larger companies who pass out information on behalf of an Indie artist, but the most effective way to market is for you, the Indie artist, to actually be present in your street marketing efforts. The thing that sets street marketing apart from other types of marketing is human interaction. As mentioned in the relatability topic earlier, having a humble, relatable approach to your music brand is a great way to win them over as a fan and friend.

Be aware of the laws when coming up with street marketing ideas for your music. In some cities, it is illegal to post flyers on public property to include telephone poles, buildings and street signs. Be sure to find information in your particular city, as fines can be up to \$75 per poster.

## **Part 5:** **Paid Advertising**

### **Direct Response Marketing**

Direct response marketing is a type of advertising that is most successful for small businesses and brands to advertise their product or service. In a direct response advertisement, you are paying to promote your message directly to a person in your target audience with the intent on them completing an action. Actions for a music ads can include CD sales, free downloads and mailing list sign ups. For this type of paid advertising online, there are 3 main forms: PPC, CPM and CPA.

PPC - also known as pay per click, is a form of advertising where you pay for each click that your advertisement receives. For example:

You create an advertisement on Google for your latest song that you want 100 people to see. Google is charging you 10 cents for every person that clicks your ad. You will then owe 10 cents to the ad company that ran your ad (Google).

CPM - also known as Cost per Mille (Mille means 1000 in Latin), CPM is a form of advertising where you pay for each 1000 impressions or views that your advertisement receives. For example:

You create on Facebook to promote your latest album. Facebook allows you to put your post on the timeline of 1000 people, charging you a flat rate of \$10 for your ad to run.

CPA - (Cost Per Action) ads will cost you money only when a person completes a desired action, like a sale or mailing list sign up. Example:

A music website allows you to place a banner advertisement on their home page promoting your upcoming tour. When a user buys a \$40 ticket through that music site, you will pay \$15 to the site owner for promoting your tour successfully.

The goal with Direct Response marketing is for you to get a return on the amount that was spent on advertising. In the CPA example above, the artist will pay \$15 to the music site, but profit \$25 from the advertisement. In a successful CPM scenario, you will spend \$10 to get your music ad in front of 1000 people, and 50 of those people will check you out and 5 buy your album, netting you around \$50 in total sales and \$40 in profit. In a successful PPC scenario, you will pay 10 cents for 100 people to listen to your music, and 10 people will buy your album (\$100 in sales).

## **Social Media Ads**

Popular social media sites like Facebook and Twitter have ad platforms that allow you to get your music to a larger audience. The process goes like this: you design a post that advertises your music, you set the audience that you would like to see your message, then you pay for each time someone interacts or sees your ad post. With social media ads, you can target audiences by interests, groups, who they've liked or followed, and keywords they have used in posts. Social media ads work great for creating a buzz and attracting potential fans based on topics they are already interested in. Since most people browsing social media aren't in the mood to be sold to directly, it's best to include giveaways and freebies in social media ads to get the best results.

## **Search Engine Ads**

Search engine ads are the sponsored, relevant ads that you see when you search something on Google or Bing. These types of ads usually perform great, because the intended audience is specifically looking for what you are selling. For example, you are an artist who has a new EDM hit song. You decide to pay Google to promote your new song under the search term “EDM songs”. A random kid in New Jersey looking for music decides to type into Google “EDM songs” and clicks your link to hear your songs. Assuming your music is good, this kid automatically becomes your new fan because you are exactly what he was looking for. Highly targeted advertising like this usually costs more and is very competitive. Search ads usually run using PPC (Pay per click), averaging 20-70 cents per click. For every popular search term or phrase in the world, there are literally hundreds of brands and companies fighting and outbidding each other for an ad spot on one of the first page results. Why are they fighting to pay? Because the top spot earner is usually spending thousands of dollars a day, they are probably making tens of thousands in profit!

## **Display Ads**

Banner and multimedia advertisements that you find on popular websites fall under the category of display advertising. Display ads are similar to search ads, but the advertiser finds their target audience with website topics instead of using search terms. As a musician, you would want to put your banner ad on a relevant site like Pitchfork or Stereogum, where people are visiting to discover new music already. Banner ads usually run for much cheaper than search ads, but rely very heavily on your ability to stand out, as most banner ads go unnoticed. When is the last time you clicked on a banner advertisement you saw while browsing a website (and not by accident)? In today’s digital age, most people have become subconsciously blind or dismissive to advertisements like these, so it’s important to design an ad that will breakthrough the browser blindness.

## **Part 6:**

### **Distribution**

#### **Online Distribution Companies**

If you want your music to be available on popular music stores, apps and streaming sites like iTunes, Google Play and Spotify, you will be needing an online distributor to submit to these outlets for you. You don't need a major label to release your songs to the world! Popular distributors for unsigned artists include companies like TuneCore and CDbaby, who charge a small fee around \$20 per song or CD added, and/or as a small yearly fee. Distribution companies will keep all your statistical data on who is buying your singles and album, while distributing scheduled payments from the sales to your desired payment account. When signing up for music distribution, make sure your music's audio quality is as best as can be.

There are tons of music distribution companies popping up these days, but here are the top recommended choices:

#### **TuneCore**

TuneCore is one of the largest and first online music distribution companies to hit the net. They currently charge a flat fee of \$10 for single tracks and \$30 for albums. They don't take any parts of the royalties received for your songs and can usually get your project ready to sell on all of their outlets within 4 weeks. They also provide UPC codes for free.

Visit Their Site: <http://www.tunecore.com/>

#### **CD Baby**

CD Baby is another industry giant that distributes a large share of creations that are made in the independent music world. CD baby pays their artists weekly and charges a flat fee of \$13 per song and \$49 per album. They also charge a 10% royalty commission fee.

Visit Their Site: <https://www.cdbaby.com/>

#### **Distrokid**

Distrokid brings something new to the music distribution world by charging a flat fee of \$19 per year for an unlimited amount of songs. No matter if you distribute 1 song or 100 songs, they only charge \$19 per year! Distrokidd also doesn't take any

parts of your royalty earnings. Created by musician Philip Kaplan, this service is highly recommended for artists on a budget.

Visit Their Site: <https://distrokid.com/>

### **Ditto Music**

Ditto music fuses some of the best options above together to create a variety of options for independent music creators. They have an option of distributing a single for \$9, album for \$29, and unlimited amount of releases for \$79 all while taking no royalty commissions.

Visit Their Site: <https://www.dittomusic.com/>

### **MondoTunes**

Mondotunes is another distribution company that was started by an indie musician that has the music-makers pockets in mind. With Mondotunes, you can distribute an unlimited amount of songs for a flat fee of \$39.99 per year. You also keep 100% of your rights and ownership and get free UPC codes.

Visit Their Site: <http://www.mondotunes.com/>

## **Radio Distribution**

While the digital age is allowing constant adaptation and growth for many of the music business' practices, commercial radio distribution (for major FM radio channels) has not changed in over 20 years, and is still somewhat a pain in the ass. Unlike distribution to Spotify or Pandora, submitting one song for radio rotation will cost you around \$1000 at the lowest. And that's for only one week of rotation. Why is it so costly? Because mainstream radio is the only thing that major labels can still dominate. Studio recording has become something everyone can do from home, so the big labels lost the monopoly on owning the master recordings of songs. Social media has made it so that unsigned artists can go viral in press and media. Streaming is even available for unsigned independent artists to get a chance at on their own with little help! The only thing that is elusive and unreachable to unsigned talent is major radio, so the major labels put up big bucks to dominate that industry, confident that no one can compete. If you have a hit song that went viral everywhere, major radio stations *may* take note and add you to somewhat heavy rotation, but there's only a very small chance. Some stations may have a 'hot or not' segment that features Indie talent for free, but that is only one or two spins compared to thousands upon thousands or spins that really allow radio marketing to do its magic and get a song heard by the masses. Unless you happen to be an unsigned artist *and* rich, it is best to leave major radio distribution to chance. Fortunately, this doesn't include college radio, community radio stations, and online stations which are usually more lenient and open to receiving submissions at no cost.

For smaller major radio opportunities, even if you don't have thousands of dollars to spend, you can still get major radio airplay from some places if you know where to look.

#### **Pass or trash segments:**

While major stations have strict schedules and segments set up daily, some places like to spice things up by adding "hot or not" or "pass or trash" segments for independent artists who want to be heard. Segments like these don't usually include large prizes, but you may be able to secure a few spins and some new fans if your song is received well by listeners. Beware: DJs and listeners can be rather brutal in these types of segments for entertainment value. Check out your local station's website. If they have this type of segment, it will probably be featured on a web banner.

#### **Locals only segments:**

Similar to trash or pass segments, some major radio shows like to give the spotlight to artists in the area. By only allowing submissions from artists within certain zip codes, major radio shows can cut down the hassle of deciding on thousands of submissions being sent every week. This also cuts down competition for you to be possibly featured. Some stations even include local talent on their website blogs. Check out your favorite station's site for any segments that may mention local or your city name.

#### **Live contests on air:**

Most radio shows hold some type of contests that listeners can interact and compete for a chance to win cash or something similar. Some contests require callers to showcase their talents for other people tuning in to hear. Check to see if your local station runs this type of contest. Not only can you showcase your skills live, you may be able to win a prize for it. Who knows, they may also give you a chance to shout out your Soundcloud page for someone to check!

#### **Physical submissions:**

Most major radio shows do not have the capacity to accept digital submissions from international independent artists. While it may seem discerning, it's not always impossible to send one of your songs for possible rotation. Some major stations still allow physical demo submissions to be sent via snail mail. With this method, traditional stations can easily accept, organize and review unsolicited music without being overwhelmed by thousands of emails and large song files with potential viruses. Accepting "physical only" music submissions cuts down the workload dramatically: most indie artists these days don't sell physical CDs, or won't put in the time to send them manually. This gives you a chance to shine if you're up to the challenge. Call your favorite station and ask if there is a P.O box to send your demo to.

#### **Internships:**

If you're really looking to dedicate yourself to a cause, become the ultimate networker and start applying for internships at stations in your area. Radio interns across all genres

have been known to secure and nurture great business relationships to accelerate their career. While most of these types of interns are looking to score hookups on the business sides of things, it's not unheard of to be able to accelerate your music career by meeting the right people and mentioning your work at the right time when working at a radio station.

### **Physical CD Duplication**

To get a physical CD packaged and duplicated with your designs of choice, you will have many online and local solutions available to you. The average cost for duplication is between \$1-3 per CD, depending on how you design it. If you are able to do a quick local search and find a duplication service in your area, you will be able to save on hefty shipping and handling fees that you may find online. Features to consider while designing your physical CD:

Do you want your CD enclosed in a hard case or jacket?

Do you want your design printed on your CD and on the case/jacket?

Do you want to include a booklet with lyrics?

It is also important to figure out how many copies you want to buy when ordering. Wishful thinking may lead you to buying 1000 CDs in bulk, but realistically, it is best to start out with 50-100 if your fan base isn't very big. Keep in mind that CD sales are on the decline; most people would prefer to stream your music or buy it in iTunes.

### **Identification Numbers**

There are 3 common codes you may come across while you are in the process of distributing your music: UPC, EAN, and ISRC codes. UPC codes are Universal Product codes; barcodes used to track items that are for sale. This term is also interchangeable with the EAN code (European Article Number). The UPC/EAN is used to identify an album as a whole. The ISRC (International Standard Recording Code) is used to identify an individual song or music video. Your album will include one UPC/EAN codes and multiple ISRC codes.



These codes are important to have in order for sales, radio stats and royalty payments to be easily tracked for your music. The easiest way to receive these codes is from an online distributor company like TuneCore or CDbaby. As they process your music, these identification numbers will be automatically assigned to your work.

## **Part 7:**

### **Product Ideas**

Aside from focusing on your latest song or CD, it is important to remember that you can offer even more to your fans and listeners. Again, your brand is a business, and most businesses offer a variety of products to their customers. Why shouldn't you? Offering more than just a song or an album is a great way to increase sales in order for you to reinvest in your brand and pay your bills!

#### **Clothing/Merchandise**

If a fan is in love with your music, chances are, they would be interested in buying an article of clothing that represents your brand. Come up with a design that you can put on t-shirts, hats, hoodies, and even things like coffee mugs. Online communities like Spreadshirt.com allow you to design your own merchandise and will ship products directly to your fans for you. It is important to note that you will need to use designs that you have created originally or have been given the rights to distribute.

#### **Lost Tracks**

Have you ever been such a fan of an artist that you are willing to scour the entire internet, find and pay for some of their earlier or unreleased work? This scenario is very common when it comes to a musician's fan base. As you take time to create current music, it isn't a bad idea to offer your dedicated fans work from your prime years. It'll give them even more insight on your musical journey and where you came from!

## **CD Bundles**

If you already have a lengthy catalog, it is a good idea to offer multiple CDs in a bundle for a discounted price. Fans may want to buy your older work, but might not like the idea of paying \$10-12 per CD, so why not offer 3 of your past CDs in a bundle at a low price of \$23? A buy 2, Get 1 free sale would work well if you have a lot of music to share. Bundling in lost tracks with new releases can also be an incentive to get fans to buy your music.

## **Live Shows**

Live shows have always been a great way to interact with fans and boost your sales as a musician. The most important factor in putting on a local, live show is to make sure the costs to perform (rent, advertising, etc.) does not outweigh the amount you would make in ticket sales. For example, you pay \$400 to book a place for 3 hours, \$250 for musicians, and \$350 for wine, cheese and crackers for people to enjoy while you perform (\$1000 total). You will need to sell 40 tickets at \$30 each in order to make \$1200 total and only a \$200 profit. The amount of tickets and price you can sell for depends on how large and loyal your fan base is. Being able to sell 40 tickets means you most likely have a list of 300+ local fans that you reached out to.

Sites like Periscope, Ustream and Youtube's new Live broadcasting feature can allow artists to get creative in terms of what they present to their fans. Don't have enough in your budget or enough local fans to put on a show in your area? Try putting on shows via internet broadcast. You can interact with your fans for as long as you'd like without having to worry about the cost of renting a space. If you'd still like to charge a fee (it's recommended that you do a smaller fee than you would a live show), you can integrate a site like Paypal and fans can receive your live streaming link after purchasing.

## **Bring Show To Fans**

There are 3 stages of fans in a fan base: modest fans, loyal fans, and super-fans, with a subset category of super-fans that have lots of money to blow. If you have SUPERfans at your disposal, another good idea would be to offer a service where you travel to that fan to give a live performance at their house. This would be a big ticket item since the costs of travel and equipment will need to be included, but a raving fan or 2 with cash to spare might see it as the perfect deal!

## **Lessons**

If you consider yourself one that enjoys teaching and showing others how to do things in the music world, it may be a good idea to offer your talent to other Indie artists or musicians that are at the start of their musical journey. Offering voice and instrumental lessons is a common practice in the music industry that can be a great way to earn some cash while doing what you love. Most people who offer lessons do so locally (in house), but offering video lessons is an up and coming method of getting new clients to teach music to. Most teachers price their lessons according to their capabilities, educational background and experience. A good place to start on the pricing scale as a beginner teacher would be \$10-20 per hour.

## **Features**

Often times, Indie artists collaborate with each other for free. This is encouraged and a great way to network and build your fan base! But, if you're the type of Unsigned Music maker that is extremely talented, or you have a large following that would benefit someone interested in collaborating with you way more than it would benefit you, it's not a bad idea to charge small fees for collaboration. This especially works well for singers offering collaboration services to rappers, who are always in need of a good hook. A good starting point to offer verses for is around \$50 if you're just getting into the 'charging for a feature' game.

## **Part 8:** **Free vs. Paid**

What if you ran your music career with very little to no focus on profit in the beginning stages? Let's say you want to take a more-aggressive approach in terms of your brand awareness and a less-aggressive approach in terms of your financial growth. Imagine if every show you played didn't pay you, but instead gave you more exposure to an audience that didn't know you? Imagine if you made your song available for 'free download' on SoundCloud instead of linking it to your iTunes?

This is a common and recommended approach to new artists trying to break into the market and build a fan base.

### **Fan Relationships**

In general, people tend to flock to things that are available to them for free. With free items, consumers have nothing to lose and don't spend much time making the decision to take it or leave it. In the music world, today, people flock to free songs and cheap streaming apps. Listeners are often willing to pay for an artist's work, but most of the time, it's for an artist they trust and have built a connection to over time.

As an Indie artist, you may have gotten on the radar of some listeners and gotten new fans, but they're most likely the modest type of fan. Modest, new, fans (stage 1 of 3) rarely pay for your music, but wouldn't mind downloading a new release you might have. The key is to bait them in with free, quality songs, then make them fall in love with your work over time to the point where they'll buy any of your music.

Labels take the same type of approach when marketing new artists. In comparison to more established artists on their rosters, music labels tend to market their new artists with the goal of exposure and buzz growth with an expected small or negative return on their marketing efforts. Think of it as having a fan list: you want to reel people into your list with free offers, and provide high quality products to sell to people who have been loyal list members. If you don't have a big fan list right now, your priority should be getting buzz and exposure, reeling people in that you can sell to later in your musical journey. The key in this cycle is consistency: consistently creating and releasing new music, consistently attracting new fans that ease through the 3 stages of being a fan, and consistently communicating with all your fans.

### **Free-Giveaway Tools**

Just because it is recommended that you giveaway free songs to boost your buzz, it doesn't mean you should giveaway your songs with nothing in return! As mentioned in the Fan Mailing chapter, a good way to reel in a new subscriber is to offer a free song in exchange for their email. This way, you can keep in contact with your fan for your future releases, and slowly build them up into becoming a super fan that you will also buy your music. Again, the key part in this process is consistently keeping in touch with the people on your email list so that they don't forget you and your music exists.

Another method that is becoming popular to Indie artists, especially in the EDM scene, is to allow fans to download your work in exchange for a social media follow, like, or repost (sometimes a combination of all three). This is also known as a fan gate. For example, let's say you have a new song you want to release on SoundCloud with a free downloading option. Instead of linking your mp3 directly for the download to start for your listener, there are 3<sup>rd</sup> party sites/apps that will hold your music behind a gate, where users must support you via SoundCloud follow, like or repost. After they support your work, the 'gate' is released and your song can be downloaded. Fan gates are a great way to build your audience on sites like SoundCloud and Youtube, but there is always a risk involved with building your fan base on a social network and neglecting to build your own database.

## **Part 9:**

### **Companies Looking For Music**

Even though the music scene is getting crowded, there is always someone in the world actively looking for Unsigned Music to use and/or distribute. This is happening now more than ever since there are so many new types of businesses in the digital age. Since you've read through this playbook and found out all the things you would need to have in your arsenal, I think you can be trusted enough to know the types of folks you want to bother and harass now (kidding). Remember that these people usually LOVE details and ignore people who send music submissions that are lacking. In general, the more information you have, the less companies must do to research you. The better your presentation is, the more they will be inclined to like you.

Bad email submission examples:

Sending an email with no subject and MP3 attachment only<sup>[1]</sup><sub>SEP</sub>

Sending a great song with bad mixing/mastering

Sending music with a lazy, 1 sentence bio not written in 3rd person

Great image and talent with no ID3 tags

Bad submissions don't always get overlooked, but great submissions get the most attention. If you present yourself in the best possible way you can, you will get the best possible results.

## **Labels**

Many Indie labels have turned to the internet as their main way of accepting new music to review. While some labels still use the traditional P.O box as a way for artists to submit demos, most labels now accept digital submissions via email or a contact form that you fill out. Labels usually have a roster of bands or artists that covers the sound of music they are looking for, so it is important to have something unique to bring to the table when submitting your demo. Traditional A&Rs at labels used to be all about finding potential, but now with the market so saturated, mentioning your past achievements (any placements, tours, awards, etc.) are vital. It is also important to pay close attention to detail when sending work; some labels specifically want to hear your background and get as much info on you as possible, while others may only want an mp3 attachment and phone number to contact you at. Don't over-sell or under-sell yourself, just give exactly what they ask for.

## **Radio Stations**

Community, online and college radio station music directors are the people you want to make sure you send beautifully mastered and ID3 tagged songs to. While labels may be focused more on your potential, radio stations are focused more on your quality. As they have industry standards to uphold, they are no-nonsense when it comes to what they put on air. Be sure to send high quality audio files only! Also, while some shows are uncensored, the majority of radio stations will expect you to have explicit-free radio versions of your song available. It is also important to be a 100% rights owner to the work that you are submitting; radio stations will never air music that they aren't sure they've been approved to by the copyright holder.

## **Blogs and Magazines**

There are thousands of music blogs and magazines online that feature new music releases weekly. These companies are usually in search of content that their audience will enjoy and share, so it is important to visually stand out when submitting. High quality images, music videos, and well-written biographies are a plus when it comes to these submissions. These are the companies that want the most information on your career, so it's recommended to send anything in your

possession, including all your social media links and relevant contact info. Since most blog and magazine posts are filled with content, the type of music submission that annoys a writer the most is one with little to no information. Never submit to a blogger with just an attachment and the words 'check me out' unless they specifically tell you to!

## **Brands and Licensing Companies**

All types of companies and brands use music in their day-to day business practices.

When you hear a song in the background of a commercial? An Indie artist somewhere is getting paid. When you hear a track playing while you were on hold with your phone company? An Indie artist is getting paid. That music playing in your favorite store as you shop? From an Indie artist, getting paid. In order for a company to use musical works in an advertisement or product of theirs, they must obtain the right, or licenses from the copyright owner(s) and work out the payment terms. Some brands like to request songs from the general public themselves, but most brands go through licensing companies, which hunt for quality songs that can be licensed for TV, video game, radio and other song placements. Like radio stations, these companies will only consider polished, completed material; they don't really get excited about potential. Instrumental tracks also do very well in this market since the music is usually used in a background setting. Similar companies that seek songs to pitch to major brands are also known as publishing companies.

## **DJs and Curators**

New songs are coming out every second in hundreds of genres, thanks to all the latest music production software. How can anyone keep up and find the gold? This is where DJs and curators come in. Unlike labels, these people don't want to fully develop and manage musicians, but they are always looking for the next hit with the potential to go viral. These people don't need too much backstory, they just want an amazing song that the masses will love. It is important to appeal to them by having a quality song that blends well with what's popular right now in the genre that DJ or curator is looking for. These guys are people pleasers, so just like top 40 radio stations, they'll only play what they think the people want to hear. They may be less likely to give exposure to something too obscure or unique, since they don't want to risk disappointing their listeners.

## **Influencers**

Similar to brands, Influencers on sites like Instagram, Tik Tok and Youtube are always looking for some good songs to include in their content updates. Some of them may dance along to your music, while others can just play your songs in the background. Similar to curators, they don't need much of your EPK info and they just want to receive hits that will represent their image well. They may be people pleasers just like curators can be, but often times they will go for indie songs that speak to them personally and it isn't always about their audience. Try to connect with influencers that will see your songs or your image as the perfect fit for what they do.

For example, if you're creating R&B songs with uplifting music that feeds the confidence of black women, reach out to a black makeup artist on Youtube.

## **Part 10:** **Types of Royalties**

Besides getting paid for CD sales, merchandise sales and touring, there are many types of royalties that you can collect in the music world. When submitting to the types of companies mentioned in the previous chapter, keep in mind that if you are accepted, these companies will more than likely owe you some form of monetary payment. As long as you have protected and registered your music by signing up with the companies mentioned in the Song Protection chapter, you will be receiving checks!

### **Performance Royalties**

When a song is played or performed in a public setting, the owner of the composition and the publisher are owed performance royalties which are split 50/50. These types of performances can include terrestrial radio, music played in stores, and music on streaming sites like Pandora or YouTube.

### **Mechanical Royalties**

Mechanical royalties are owed to the composer and publisher of a musical work each time a song is sold. This is important for songwriters that are not the actual



artists or performers of the songs being sold, and a bonus for those who write and perform their music.

### **Synchronization Royalties**

When songs are used in TV, film, radio and the like, royalties are owed to the composer of the song and the publishing company that marketed the song successfully. The royalties are split 50/50, and sometimes include an upfront, one-time 'Sync Fee' for acquiring the song's synch rights.

## **Outro Tips**



### **Mimic the Pros**

When in doubt, don't hesitate to follow the moves of successful people in your field. Think about some of your favorite bands and artists, and consider the ways they are currently marketing their music to their fans. Do they have a mailing list? What type of updates do they send on Twitter and Facebook when they are about to release a new CD? What type of products do they give away and what do they sell? Individuals who build professional brands, no matter whether it's the music industry or a non-creative industry, will tell you that there is no need to reinvent the wheel. There are tons of methods of promoting your music that have been proven to work; you just need to find out which one's work best for you.

### **Have a Consistent Schedule**

The best way to get things done and *keep* things getting done is to have a consistent schedule that you follow. Creative types usually don't like the idea of a schedule because it may remind them too much of their 9-5, but the 9-5 schedule does keep people consistent (for the most part) and productive in their careers. You don't have to put your musical schedule into a 9-5, but having a daily or weekly schedule that delegates your time properly to things like creation, marketing and performing is a great way to stay on your game.

### **Be Humble But Hungry**

As an Indie artist, you want to shamelessly tell everyone about your music whenever possible. You are your own salesman. Never skip a chance to tell someone about past, present or future musical endeavors. How could it hurt? As long as you are sharing your music in a tasteful way, you should never feel bad about promoting yourself. But, be sure to promote yourself humbly! Egos and Indie artists don't mix well. Being an Indie artist is all about building connections and getting people to enjoy your work and your image. Try not to come off as a douche when networking and sharing your music with fans. Confidence can go a long way, but lines can easily get blurred between confident and cocky.

### **Find Ways to Grow**

Once you find a decent grove, it's easy to get too comfortable and complacent. If your only goal is to get a few local gigs and a few dozen hard core fans, no problem! But if you really want to expand, don't get stuck in the same circle, playing at the same 3 venues, selling to your same circle of FB friends, family and supporters.

Branch out and get creative! If you're used to writing the same type of lyrics, challenge yourself to write a song about something you would never dream of. If

you're sick of the same small time gigs, challenge yourself and audition for a new talent show or festival, even if it's out of town. Maybe you could try a collaboration with another artist outside of your genre. Often, when creative types successfully step outside the box to try something new, they can find a whole new world of ideas and possibilities with their creations.

### **Be Professional**

Professionals in the music industry love to see an Unsigned Music maker that knows their stuff. They are used to being approached by people who only have surface knowledge, limited experience, and below-average skills in presenting themselves. Show them how you're different! Let people know your PRO Affiliation, be sure to send that professionally written bio. Don't be afraid to show off those high quality photos from your most recent photo shoot or a share a professional review you got from a local music magazine. Be proactive and research a company or individual's past ventures before introducing yourself, highlighting points of their history that relate to you.

This book is only a brief online on the parts of the music industry that an Indie artist needs to learn about. As you put more effort and research into your passion, you will begin to see your personal growth and notice very positive results. I hope this book has motivated you to dig deeper into your field and find new ways to accelerate your music career! The music business is full of opportunity; it's waiting for someone like you to step their game up, be professional and inspire the masses.