

From Bedroom to Release

A Step-by-Step Guide to Getting Your Music Into the World

Signal Engine Series — Book 3 (Series Book 7) by Danny Rules

The music exists. That's the hard part. This book is the easy part — if you follow the steps.

Introduction: The Music Exists. Now What?

You finished a track. Maybe it took three hours, maybe three months. Either way, it exists — a real, complete piece of music sitting on your hard drive.

And then... nothing.

Most musicians stop here. Not because they don't want people to hear their music. They stop because the next step feels overwhelming. Distribution? Playlists? Sync licensing? It sounds like a whole second job.

Here's the truth: it's not complicated. It just looks complicated from the outside.

This book is a map. By the time you finish it, your music will be on Spotify, Apple Music, and every other major platform. It'll be eligible for editorial playlists. It'll be in sync licensing catalogs where music supervisors can find it for TV shows, films, and ads. And you'll own it —

every dollar of royalties traced back to your pocket.

No gatekeepers. No record label. No permission required.

What this book assumes: - You have at least one finished track (mixed and mastered, or close enough) - You've read Signal Engine Books 1 and 2 (or you know how to make music — we won't cover production here) - You want your music heard by actual human beings, not just your Dropbox

What you'll have when you're done: - A distributor account set up and ready - Your first release formatted correctly and submitted - A playlist pitching strategy in motion - Your catalog registered for sync licensing - A social media habit that doesn't make you want to quit - An email list you own - A clear understanding of your royalties and how to collect them - A 12-month release calendar

Let's go.

Chapter 1: Choosing Your Distributor

What You'll Have After This Chapter

A distributor account set up, funded, and ready to upload your first release.

What a Distributor Does

A **music distributor** is the middleman between you and streaming platforms.

Spotify, Apple Music, Amazon Music, Tidal — none of them accept music directly from independent artists. They only accept music from approved distributors. The distributor ingests your files, sends them to every platform, and collects the money that comes back.

Think of it like this: the distributor is your shipping company. Your music is the package. Spotify is the delivery address. You hand the package to the shipper; they get it everywhere.

What a distributor handles: 1. Delivering your audio files to streaming platforms 2. Assigning ISRC codes (track identifiers) and UPC codes (release identifiers) 3. Collecting streaming royalties on your behalf 4. Paying you out on a schedule 5. Managing takedowns if you ever need to remove a release

What a distributor does NOT handle: - Performance royalties (that's your PRO — see Chapter 7) - Sync licensing (that's separate — see Chapter 4) - Playlist pitching (you do that — see Chapter 3) - Marketing (that's you — see Chapter 5)

The Major Distributors — Compared

There are a dozen options. Here are the ones worth your attention:

DistroKid

Model: Annual subscription (~\$22.99/year for unlimited releases) **Royalty split:** 100% to you **Speed:** 24–72 hours to most platforms **Best for:** Prolific artists releasing frequently

Pros: - Unlimited releases for a flat fee - Fast delivery - Automatic splits for collaborators - Easy interface

Cons: - Your music comes down if you cancel your subscription - Some advanced features cost extra (YouTube Content ID, leave a legacy, etc.) - Customer support is email-only and can be slow

TuneCore

Model: Per-release fee (~\$9.99/single, ~\$29.99/album per year) **Royalty split:** 100% to you **Speed:** 24–72 hours to most platforms **Best for:** Artists releasing selectively who want catalog ownership protection

Pros: - Your releases stay live even if you cancel (as long as you paid for that year) - Strong publishing administration add-on - Detailed reporting

Cons: - Gets expensive if you release frequently - Annual renewal fees per release add up

CD Baby

Model: One-time fee (\$9.95/single, \$29/album) + 9% of royalties **Royalty split:** 91% to you **Speed:** 3–5 business days **Best for:** Artists who want a one-time payment with no annual renewal

Pros: - Pay once, your music stays up forever - Handles physical CD/vinyl distribution too - Sync licensing connections built in

Cons: - Takes a cut of royalties (9%) - Slower delivery speed - Interface feels dated

Amuse

Model: Free tier + paid tiers (\$24.99/year for Pro) **Royalty split:** 100% on paid tier; 80% on free tier **Speed:** 2–10 days **Best for:** Artists on a tight budget just starting out

Pros: - Free option to get started - A&R team sometimes signs artists from the platform

Cons: - Free tier takes 20% of royalties - Slower delivery - Limited features on free

AWAL (Artists Without A Label)

Model: Application-based; takes a percentage **Best for:** More established independent artists with proven streaming numbers

Not covered in depth here — if you're at AWAL level, you already know enough to not need this chapter.

Other Options Worth Knowing

- **Ditto Music:** Unlimited releases, ~\$19/year, UK-based
 - **Distrokid for Teams:** Good for labels or managers handling multiple artists
 - **UnitedMasters:** Free tier available, focused on Black artists and hip-hop/R&B
 - **RouteNote:** Free option (15% royalty cut) or paid (keep 100%)
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How to Choose

You release music frequently (more than 4 singles/year): → **DistroKid.** Flat annual fee, unlimited releases, fast.

You release occasionally and want catalog stability: → **TuneCore**. Pay per release, music stays up, strong reporting.

You want to pay once and never think about it again: → **CD Baby**. One-time fee, catalog stays up forever, but they take 9%.

You're just starting and have zero budget: → **Amuse free tier** or **RouteNote free tier**. Get your music out, upgrade later.

Setting Up Your Account: Step by Step

We'll use DistroKid as the example (most common for independent artists), but the process is similar across all platforms.

Step 1: Go to distrokid.com and create an account - Use the email address you'll use for your music career (not a personal Gmail you might abandon) - Choose the Musician plan (\$22.99/year) to start

Step 2: Set your artist name - This is critical. Use the exact name that will appear on Spotify and Apple Music. - Capitalize it exactly how you want it displayed - If you have existing releases under a different name, contact DistroKid support before uploading to avoid creating a duplicate artist profile

Step 3: Add payment information - Set up your bank account for direct deposit (or PayPal) - Do this before your first release — you don't want to be chasing payments later

Step 4: Verify your identity - Most distributors now require ID verification for tax purposes - Have a government ID ready - Fill out your W-9 (US) or W-8BEN (international) form

Step 5: Claim your Spotify for Artists profile - After your first release goes live, go to artists.spotify.com - Search for your artist name and claim the profile - This gives you access to analytics, editorial pitching, and profile customization

Signal Engine Note: In Book 1, you built your sound. In Book 2, you produced tracks that are ready for release. This chapter is where that work enters the world. Your distributor is the door — now you know which one to walk through.

Chapter 2: Preparing Your Release

What You'll Have After This Chapter

Your audio file, metadata, and cover art formatted correctly — zero chance of rejection.

Audio File Requirements

Streaming platforms are picky about file specs. Submit the wrong format and your release gets rejected or sounds terrible.

The standard: - **Format:** WAV (preferred) or FLAC - **Sample rate:** 44.1 kHz (the CD standard — don't use 48 kHz or 96 kHz for music distribution) - **Bit depth:** 16-bit or 24-bit (24-bit preferred for masters) - **Channels:** Stereo (not mono, not surround)

What about MP3? Don't submit MP3s if you can avoid it. MP3 is a compressed format — the platforms will re-compress it, which degrades quality. Always submit the highest-quality file you have.

Loudness: Most streaming platforms normalize audio to around -14 LUFS (Spotify’s target). If your master is significantly louder or quieter than this, it’ll be normalized anyway. Aim for -14 LUFS integrated when mastering, or use a streaming-optimized master.

Checklist before submitting audio: - WAV or FLAC format - 44.1 kHz sample rate - 16-bit or 24-bit - Stereo file - Mastered and ready (not a rough mix) - No silence longer than 2 seconds at the start or end - No pops, clicks, or distortion

Metadata That Matters

Metadata is the information attached to your music — the artist name, song title, genre, contributors, and more. Bad metadata causes real problems: lost royalties, wrong credits, algorithmic confusion.

Essential metadata fields:

Artist Name Use it exactly the same way every time. If you release as “D@ni” on one track and “Dani” on another, they may appear as two different artists on Spotify.

Track Title Capitalize properly. No parenthetical notes in the title unless they’re meaningful (“feat. Artist Name” is fine; “radio edit” should go in the version field).

Album/Release Title Same rules as track title.

Genre Pick the most accurate primary genre. This affects which algorithmic playlists you’re eligible for. Don’t keyword-stuff — pick one or two real genres.

Release Date The date you want the music to go live on streaming platforms.

Contributing Artists - Primary artist (you) - Featured artists (if any) - Composers/songwriters - Producers - Mixing engineer - Mastering engineer

ISRC Codes ISRC (International Standard Recording Code) is a unique identifier for each recording. Think of it like an ISBN for a book. Most distributors generate these automatically — but if you’re re-releasing a track that already has an ISRC, use the same code.

UPC/EAN The barcode for your release. Automatically generated by your distributor. You don't need to do anything here.

Language Set the primary language of the lyrics.

Explicit content flag If your track contains explicit language, flag it. Platforms will auto-flag it if you don't — but you can lose placement in some algorithm-driven contexts. Know your track.

Cover Art Specs

Nothing delays a release like rejected artwork. Follow these specs exactly:

Dimensions: 3000 x 3000 pixels minimum (square — 1:1 ratio) **Format:** JPG or PNG

Color mode: RGB (not CMYK — that's for print) **Resolution:** 72 DPI is fine (screens, not print) **File size:** Under 10MB (most platforms; DistroKid allows up to 10MB)

What gets artwork rejected: - Non-square dimensions - Text too small to read at thumbnail size - Blurry or pixelated images - Logos of streaming platforms (no Spotify logos on your cover) - Copyright violations (no stock photos you don't own) - Explicit imagery that violates platform guidelines - URLs or social media handles as the main element

What makes good cover art (practical advice): 1. Readable at 50x50 pixels (thumbnail size on a phone) 2. Visually consistent with your artist brand 3. Your artist name and release title are legible 4. High contrast — it needs to pop against both white and dark backgrounds

If you're using Canva, Adobe Express, or Photoshop: export as JPG at 3000x3000, RGB, quality 90%+.

Release Naming: Singles vs EPs vs Albums

Single: 1-3 tracks. The default format for most independent releases today.

EP: 4-6 tracks. Great for releasing a cohesive body of work without the commitment of a full album. Algorithms treat EPs closer to albums than singles.

Album: 7+ tracks (typically 10-14). Major commitment. Best when you have a full narrative or concept to support it.

What most independent artists should do: - Release singles regularly (every 4-8 weeks)
- Compile a few singles + new tracks into an EP after building momentum - Save albums for when you have a serious audience and a real marketing budget

Why singles dominate: Each release gets its own moment — a Release Radar feature, an editorial pitch opportunity, a social media announcement. One album release gets one moment. Six singles get six moments.

The Release Date Decision

Don't release today.

Even if your track is ready right now, schedule it 3-4 weeks out. Here's why:

1. **Editorial pitching requires 7 days minimum** (Spotify requires your track be submitted at least 7 days before release — but more time = more consideration)
2. **Time to build anticipation** — announce it, tease it, create content around it
3. **Time to fix problems** — distributors occasionally reject files; you need time to resubmit
4. **Algorithmic pre-save campaigns** — services like Feature.fm or Submithub let fans pre-save a release, which signals to Spotify's algorithm before day one

Optimal release day: Friday. Spotify's New Music Friday playlist refreshes on Fridays. The weekly listening cycle starts on Fridays. Release on Friday.

Step-by-step release date planning: - **Day 0:** Finish and master your track - **Day 1-3:** Submit to distributor - **Day 7:** Pitch to Spotify editorial (as soon as the release is in their system) - **Day 14:** Start pre-save campaign and social media teases - **Day 21-28:** Release day (Friday)

Quick note on “Instant Gratification” release: DistroKid offers an option to release immediately (sometimes called “rush release”). Avoid this for important releases — you lose editorial pitching time. Use it only for spontaneous one-offs where timing matters more than algorithm strategy.

Chapter 3: Getting on Playlists

What You’ll Have After This Chapter

Your release pitched to Spotify editorial, submitted to independent curators, and positioned to trigger algorithmic playlists.

How Spotify’s Algorithm Actually Works

Spotify’s algorithm is not magic. It’s statistics. Here’s the real model:

The algorithm tracks listener behavior signals: - **Saves:** When someone adds your track to their library (the most important signal) - **Saves to playlists:** Listeners adding your track to their own playlists - **Completion rate:** How many people listen to the full track

vs. skip it - **Repeat listens:** How many times the same listener plays the track again - **Shares:** How many times your track is shared - **“Hides”:** When a listener hits the hide button (negative signal — avoid) - **Skip rate in the first 30 seconds:** Very important. If people skip early, the algorithm deprioritizes the track.

What this means for you: Don't chase raw plays. Chase quality engagement. A hundred listeners who save your track and replay it are worth more to the algorithm than ten thousand streams with a 40% skip rate.

The algorithm also tracks: - **Genre and audio characteristics** — Spotify's audio analysis groups your track with similar music - **Who else your listeners listen to** — This feeds Discover Weekly and Radio - **Profile completion** — Complete artist profiles with bios, photos, and artist picks signal legitimacy

Spotify for Artists: Your Dashboard

Before your first release goes live, claim your Spotify for Artists profile.

How to claim it: 1. Go to artists.spotify.com 2. Sign in with your Spotify account 3. Search for your artist name 4. Click “Claim Profile” 5. Verify via your distributor or social media

What you can do with it: - See real-time streaming analytics - Submit upcoming releases to editorial playlists - Customize your artist profile (bio, photos, artist picks) - Run Marquee and Discovery Mode campaigns (paid) - See your listener demographics

Set this up before your release, not after. You need access to editorial pitching as soon as your release is in the Spotify system.

Pitching to Spotify Editorial: The Actual Process

Spotify has a team of editors who curate official playlists (New Music Friday, Mood playlists, genre playlists). You can pitch directly to them — for free.

The window: - Available as soon as your distributor delivers the release to Spotify (usually within 24-72 hours of submission) - Must be submitted **at least 7 days before the release date** - Each release gets one pitch

How to pitch: 1. Go to Spotify for Artists 2. Click “Music” → select your unreleased track 3. Click “Pitch a Song” 4. Fill out the pitch form

The pitch form asks for: - Genre (be specific — not “Pop,” say “Indie Pop” or “Dark Pop”) - Mood (choose 2-3 that honestly describe the track) - Style (instrumental elements, tempo, energy) - Description (this is where you write — 500 characters)

What to write in the description: This is not a press release. It’s context for an editor. Tell them: - What the track sounds like (specific references help) - The story behind it (brief — 1-2 sentences) - Why this track specifically (what’s unique about it) - Any notable context (is this your debut? A follow-up to a track that performed well?)

Example pitch description: > *“Dark pop track built around an 808 loop and processed vocals — feels like The Weeknd meets Lana Del Rey at 2am. This is the third single from the upcoming EP, following ‘Bloody Kiss’ which reached 12k streams organically. Made entirely with AI-assisted production tools. This one’s for listeners who like their pop with an edge.”*

Be honest. Be specific. Don’t oversell.

Spotify editors listen to hundreds of pitches. Hype language (“this is going to be huge!”) gets ignored. Accurate descriptions that help them categorize the music get considered.

Editorial placement rates: Most tracks pitched don’t get editorial placement. That’s the reality. But even without editorial placement, pitching matters because it gets your track into Spotify’s pre-release system, which feeds other algorithmic processes.

Algorithmic Playlists: Release Radar and Discover Weekly

These are Spotify's personalized playlists generated automatically. Here's how they work:

Release Radar (updates every Friday) - Features new releases from artists a user already follows - Your track appears in Release Radar for everyone who **follows you on Spotify** - How to grow this: tell people to follow you on Spotify (not just save songs — follow the artist)

Discover Weekly (updates every Monday) - Features tracks the listener hasn't heard, from artists they don't follow - Driven by collaborative filtering: "listeners who like what you like also like this" - How to get in it: strong early engagement signals + genre consistency

Radio / Auto-play - When a listener's playlist ends, Spotify auto-plays related tracks - Strong listener engagement = more radio plays = more discovery

How to feed the algorithm: 1. **Pre-saves before release** — Fans who pre-save trigger Release Radar automatically 2. **Ask for follows, not just listens** — Follows drive Release Radar distribution 3. **Promote within the first 7 days** — Algorithmic systems evaluate early velocity 4. **Consistent release schedule** — Regular releases keep your profile active in the algorithm

Independent Playlist Curators

Editorial placement is the jackpot. But independent curators — people who run their own playlists with real followers — are accessible today.

How to find curators:

1. **SubmitHub** (submithub.com)
 - The most organized curator database
 - You buy credits (~\$1/submission)

- Filter by genre, follower count, response rate
- Curators have 48 hours to respond with feedback
- **Start here.** It's the most efficient system.

2. **Groover** (groover.co)

- Similar to SubmitHub, European-focused
- Guaranteed feedback from every curator
- Slightly more expensive per submission

3. **Soundplate** (soundplate.com)

- Free curator submissions
- Lower response rates but no cost

4. **Indiemono / Indie Music Filter / Daily Playlists**

- Search Google for “[your genre] Spotify playlist submissions”
- Many indie curators have submission forms on their websites or Instagram profiles

How to pitch curators (what actually works): - Listen to the playlist before pitching. Reference a specific track on it. - Keep it short — 3-5 sentences max - Tell them the track name, genre, mood, and why it fits their playlist - Don't beg. Don't say “I know it'd be perfect.” Let the music speak. - Include a Spotify link and a streaming/listening link

Realistic expectations: - Expect 5-15% acceptance rate on cold pitches - A playlist with 10,000 followers that adds your track might generate 200-500 streams - It adds up. 20 playlist adds = meaningful algorithm boost

Chapter 4: Sync Licensing — The Quiet Multiplier

What You'll Have After This Chapter

Your catalog uploaded to sync licensing platforms, metadata optimized for search, and passive income potential activated.

What Sync Licensing Is

Sync licensing is when your music gets licensed to appear in visual media: TV shows, films, commercials, video games, YouTube videos, social media ads, corporate videos.

Every time you hear music in a show and think “what song is that?” — that song has a sync license.

The copyright holder (you, if you own your masters and publishing) gets paid: 1. **Sync fee** — one-time payment for the right to use the track in that specific project 2. **Performance royalties** — ongoing royalties every time the show airs (via your PRO — see Chapter 7)

Sync fees range from \$50 for a small YouTube video to \$50,000+ for a network TV show or national commercial. Most indie sync deals fall between \$250-\$2,500 per placement.

The Passive Part

Here's what makes sync interesting: once your music is in a licensing library, it can be discovered and licensed years later. A track you made in 2024 might land in a documentary in 2028. You don't have to do anything.

This is catalog value. Every track you make and register increases the surface area for passive income.

The Best Sync Licensing Platforms

These are the platforms music supervisors actually use:

Artlist (artlist.io)

- Subscription-based library for content creators
- Pay once per year, license unlimited music
- They take a percentage of your earnings
- Good volume, lots of content creators (YouTubers, filmmakers)
- **Application process:** Submit through their artist portal; they curate

Musicbed (musicbed.com)

- Premium sync library, higher quality bar
- Used by brands, ad agencies, documentary filmmakers
- Non-exclusive options available
- **Application process:** Apply with your music; acceptance rate is selective

Pond5 (pond5.com)

- Open marketplace — you upload, set your price, keep 40-50%
- Huge catalog, but also huge competition
- Good for instrumentals and ambient/background music
- **Getting started:** Create an account and upload directly

Epidemic Sound

- Subscription library, similar to Artlist
- Popular with content creators and small brands
- They own the music they license (work-for-hire model) — know this before applying
- **Best if:** You want guaranteed upfront payment and don't mind giving up ownership

Songtradr

- Marketplace connecting artists with sync opportunities
- Free to upload, they take a percentage on placements
- Good for emerging artists

Musicosm / Marmoset / Music Vine

- Boutique sync libraries
- Curated, harder to get into, but better placement quality

Soundsnap / AudioJungle (Envato Market)

- Lower-end marketplace, lots of stock music
 - Good for volume, not prestige
 - Lower per-placement fees
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What Makes Music Sync-Ready

Music supervisors are searching a database. Your music needs to be findable and usable.

Deliverables to prepare for each track: 1. **Full mix** — the standard release version 2. **Instrumental version** — no vocals (essential; many placements require this) 3. **Stems** — individual track elements (drums, bass, keys, vocals) — not always required but increases your licensing value significantly 4. **Clean version** — no explicit content (for broadcast) 5. **60-second edit** — for ads and social content 6. **30-second edit** — for shorter spots

Metadata for sync search: Music supervisors search by: - Mood (happy, dark, tense, nostalgic, triumphant) - Energy (low, medium, high) - Tempo (BPM) - Instrumentation (guitar, piano, orchestral, electronic) - Genre - Use case (action, romance, documentary, corporate)

Tag your tracks thoroughly. When you upload to Pond5 or Musicbed, fill in every metadata field. A track tagged with 15 relevant keywords gets found 10x more than a track with 3.

What sync supervisors avoid: - Samples you don't own (huge legal liability for them — clear all samples) - Vocals about specific people, brands, or events (limits placement contexts) - Very genre-specific production that dates badly - Tracks with obvious sonic quality issues

Setting Realistic Expectations

Your first sync placement probably won't happen in month one. It might not happen in year one.

But here's the math that makes it worth doing:

- You make 100 tracks over 3 years
- 10% get placed at some point (conservative)
- Average placement fee: \$500
- That's \$5,000 in passive income from work you already did

The catalog is the asset. Upload everything. Tag everything. Then forget about it and keep making music.

Danny's note: A few of my tracks have ended up in Netflix projects through Artlist. I didn't pitch them. I uploaded them to Artlist, filled in the metadata, and moved on. Eighteen months later, royalty checks started arriving. That's the whole strategy.

Chapter 5: Social Media Without Losing Your Mind

What You'll Have After This Chapter

A sustainable content habit — 3-5 posts per week — that builds a real audience without burning you out.

The Only Rule That Matters

Show the process, not just the product.

The finished track is the least interesting content you have. What's interesting is how you made it, what you were thinking, what failed, what surprised you, the moment it clicked.

Every “behind the scenes” post outperforms the final release post. This isn't an opinion — it's consistent across every music creator with an engaged audience.

Why this works: - Audiences don't just follow music. They follow people. - The process creates narrative. People want to see what happens next. - It's infinitely easier to create — you're documenting what you're already doing.

TikTok and Instagram Reels: The Short-Form Strategy

Short-form video (15-90 seconds) is the primary discovery engine for music in 2024-2025. Here's how to use it.

The format that works: 1. **Hook in the first 2 seconds** — visual or audio, not text 2. **Show something real** — your screen, your studio, your hands on a keyboard 3. **One idea per video** — don't pack in five things 4. **Audio is your product** — let the music play under the video

Content categories that work for musicians:

Making-of content: - Screen recording of a beat being built - Before/after: rough demo vs finished track - "I started this song with just this loop..." - The moment a track came together

Reaction and response: - Play your track for someone and film their reaction - Respond to comments with a video - React to your own old music

Educational/behind-the-scenes: - "Here's how I made this drum pattern" - "This is the sample I flipped" - "Here's what my setup actually looks like"

Story content: - The inspiration behind a track - The struggle ("this song almost never existed") - The creative decision you almost got wrong

Using the Signal Engine Tools as Content

If you're using the Style Prompter or Vibe Prompter from Signal Engine (covered in Books 1 and 2), these tools are ready-made content.

Ideas: - Screen record yourself using the Style Prompter to generate a new direction - Post the output with "this is how I decide what to make next" - Show the Vibe Prompter results and then show yourself interpreting them in a track - "Watch me build a track from this

prompt” (start to finish, compressed into 60 seconds)

Your creative tools are interesting to other creators. Show them.

How Often to Post

The rule: Consistency over volume.

Posting 5 times on Monday and nothing for two weeks performs worse than posting once per day, every day.

Sustainable starting cadence: - **TikTok/Reels:** 3-5 posts per week - **Instagram feed:** 2-3 posts per week (can be reposts from Reels) - **Stories:** Daily (low effort — polls, questions, reposts)

Batching: Spend 2 hours on Sunday creating content for the week. Film 5 short videos. You don't need to post in real-time. Schedule with Later, Buffer, or just save as drafts.

Platform-Specific Notes

TikTok: - Use trending sounds when it makes sense (but don't force it) - The algorithm here is the most powerful — a single video can reach millions with zero followers - Caption with keywords (the algorithm reads captions) - First 7 posts matter most — TikTok “tests” new accounts in this window

Instagram: - Reels get the most reach - Stories keep your existing followers engaged - The grid is your brand portfolio — curate it - Use the Close Friends feature for super fans (premium content)

YouTube: - Long-form content for the most dedicated fans - Post-production vlogs, full making-of content, track walkthroughs - Takes longer to build but audience is more loyal

What to skip (for now): Twitter/X, Facebook, LinkedIn. Unless you're already building there, don't split your energy. Master 1-2 platforms first.

The Mindset Shift

Social media for musicians is not about going viral. It's about **building a consistent signal**.

A musician with 2,000 dedicated followers who open every post, save every song, and buy merch when you drop it is worth more than 200,000 passive followers who found you through one viral video and never engaged again.

Post consistently. Show the work. Let the right people find you.

Chapter 6: Your Website and Email List

What You'll Have After This Chapter

A live artist website and an email list starting to grow — owned assets that no algorithm can take away.

Why You Need Both

Streaming platforms can change their algorithm. Social media platforms can suspend accounts. TikTok almost got banned in the US. Instagram has throttled reach a dozen times.

Your email list cannot be taken from you.

Your website is the hub. Your email list is the direct line. These are assets you own — not rented space on someone else's platform.

When you release a new track, you want to be able to reach fans directly. Not hope the algorithm shows them. Email them.

Setting Up Your Artist Website

You do not need a developer. You do not need to code. Here are the three best options:

Bandzoogle (bandzoogle.com)

Best for: Musicians who want everything in one place - Built specifically for musicians - Includes music player, store, mailing list, tour dates, EPK - ~\$10-\$15/month - Templates look professional - Sells music and merch without taking a cut

Squarespace (squarespace.com)

Best for: Musicians who want a beautiful, design-forward site - Better visual templates than Bandzoogle - ~\$16-\$23/month - Has e-commerce built in - Slightly steeper learning curve

Custom (Framer, Webflow, or coded)

Best for: Musicians with specific design visions or technical comfort - Full control - More time investment - Framer is the easiest “no-code” option for custom designs

What every artist website needs:

1. **Home page** — your name, a photo, and the latest release prominently featured
2. **Music page** — embeds of all your releases (Spotify or SoundCloud)
3. **Bio** — 3-4 sentences about you, written in third person for press use
4. **Contact** — a booking/press contact form or email
5. **Email signup** — prominent, with a reason to sign up (see below)
6. **Links to streaming platforms** — everywhere

Your domain: Get yourname.com or yourname.band. Your distributor name (like dani.band) is good. Keep it simple and consistent.

Building an Email List From Zero

Nobody signs up for a newsletter that says “sign up for updates.” Give them a reason.

The free gift strategy: Offer something of value in exchange for an email address.

Ideas for musicians: - “Get my unreleased demo + production notes” (exclusive content) - “Download the instrumental version of [track]” (format only fans get) - “Get my sample pack / preset pack” (if you make beats) - “First access to new releases before Spotify” (exclusivity) - “Behind-the-scenes making-of PDF for [your most popular track]”

Pick one. Create it. Put it behind an email signup.

Where to build your list: - **Mailchimp** (free up to 500 subscribers) — easiest to start - **Kit (formerly ConvertKit)** — built for creators, better automation, free up to 10,000 subscribers (limited features) - **Beehiiv** — newer, newsletter-focused, growing fast

What to Send: The Email Sequence

Welcome email (send immediately after signup): - Deliver the free gift - Introduce yourself in 3-4 sentences - Tell them what to expect (how often you'll email, what you'll send) - Ask one question to start a conversation

Release announcement email: - Subject line: the track name + one hook line - One paragraph about the track and its story - The Spotify/Apple link prominently - Ask them to save it, share it, or add it to a playlist

The update email (every 2-4 weeks): - What you're working on - Behind the scenes of a project - Something interesting you discovered - Maybe a question or poll

Rules: - Never email just to email. Have something to say. - Keep emails short (under 500 words) - Make the primary link obvious - Unsubscribers are fine — they weren't going to engage anyway

Chapter 7: Understanding Your Royalties

What You'll Have After This Chapter

A clear understanding of where your money comes from and the systems in place to collect every dollar.

The Three Types of Royalties

Music copyright creates three separate royalty streams. Most musicians only collect one.

1. Mechanical Royalties

What they are: Payment for the reproduction of your composition — every time a stream plays, a CD is pressed, or a download happens.

Who pays: Streaming platforms (via mechanical licensing organizations)

Who collects for you: - **US:** MLC (Mechanical Licensing Collective) — mechanicals.com -

Global: Your distributor handles this in most territories, or you register with your PRO

What you need to do: - Register with the MLC (free) if you're in the US - Make sure your publisher information is correct in your distributor account - Register your songs with the MLC's song database

2. Performance Royalties

What they are: Payment for the public performance of your music — streaming, radio airplay, live performance, TV broadcast.

Who pays: Streaming platforms, radio stations, TV networks (through your PRO)

Who collects for you: Your PRO (Performing Rights Organization)

PROs in the US: - **ASCAP** (ascap.com) — Free to join, quarterly payments - **BMI** (bmi.com) — Free to join, quarterly payments - **SESAC** — Invite-only, not for new artists

PROs internationally: - PRS (UK), SOCAN (Canada), APRA (Australia), GEMA (Germany), SACEM (France)

You must join ONE. You cannot be a member of multiple US PROs simultaneously.

Which to choose: Both ASCAP and BMI are solid. ASCAP is member-owned and has a slight edge in certain genres. BMI has no annual fee. Flip a coin if you're new — either is fine.

What to do after joining: 1. Register every song you release 2. Include the PRO registration number in your song metadata 3. Register co-writers and their splits

3. Sync Royalties

What they are: Payment when your music is licensed to appear in visual media.

Who pays: The production company, brand, or creator licensing your music.

Two components: - **Sync fee** — paid upfront when the license is granted (negotiated, one-time) - **Performance royalties from broadcast** — paid ongoing by your PRO every time the show airs

This is why having a PRO membership matters for sync: the upfront fee is nice, but the broadcast royalties compound over years.

The Royalty Stack: What One Sync Placement Pays

Here's a real example of how multiple royalty streams combine:

Your track appears in a Netflix documentary series that airs globally.

Royalty Type	Who Pays	When	Amount (Example)
Sync fee	Production company	At license signing	\$1,500
Mechanical (streaming)	Netflix via MLC	Quarterly	\$200-800/year

Royalty Type	Who Pays	When	Amount (Example)
Performance (broadcast)	Netflix via PRO	Quarterly	\$500-2,000/year

One placement. Three income streams. For years.

How to Track What You're Owed

Distributor dashboard: Log in regularly (monthly minimum). Download your statements. Note which tracks are performing.

PRO dashboard: Your PRO has a portal where you can see registered songs and royalty statements. Log in quarterly.

MLC portal: US artists: check mechanicals.com for unclaimed royalties. You'd be surprised what's sitting there uncollected.

Spreadsheet: Keep a simple spreadsheet: - Track name - ISRC code - Registration date with PRO - Registration date with MLC - Distributor confirmation - Date first streams appeared - Notes on any sync placements

This is your catalog management system. It takes 20 minutes to set up and saves you from losing money.

The Long Game: Catalog Value

Every track you release and properly register is an asset that pays you forever.

- Mechanical royalties flow for the life of the copyright (70 years after death in most territories)

- Performance royalties accumulate for every broadcast, forever
- Sync placements can be relicensed multiple times

A catalog of 50 tracks, properly registered, is worth significantly more than 50 individual tracks. The whole is worth more than the sum of its parts because sync supervisors, playlist editors, and algorithm feeds consider your full catalog depth.

Make music. Release it. Register it. Repeat.

Chapter 8: The Release Calendar

What You'll Have After This Chapter

A 12-month release plan that maintains algorithmic momentum and builds cumulative audience growth.

The Fundamental Principle

Every release teaches you something. Every release feeds the algorithm. Every release grows your audience incrementally. Silence costs you momentum.

The worst release strategy: One album per year, announced two weeks out, no content around it, then silence for 11 months.

The best release strategy: Consistent singles, each one a small campaign, each one feeding the next.

Singles Strategy vs Album Strategy

Singles strategy: - Release one track every 4-8 weeks - Each release gets its own editorial pitch, promotion cycle, and content push - Builds consistent streaming presence and algorithmic activity - Fans stay engaged year-round

Album strategy: - Release one full body of work with multiple months of lead-up - Requires significant marketing investment to cut through noise - Best when you have an established audience and a strong concept - Higher ceiling, but higher risk

Hybrid strategy (recommended for most artists): 1. Release singles every 4-8 weeks 2. After 4-6 singles, compile them + 2-3 new tracks into an EP 3. The EP release reactivates interest in all the singles 4. Repeat

This gives you consistent algorithmic activity from singles AND the prestige moment of a project release.

Spacing Releases for Algorithmic Benefit

The algorithm memory window: Spotify's algorithms pay most attention to your last 30 days of activity. After 90 days of silence, your algorithmic presence drops significantly.

Practical spacing rules: - Minimum 3 weeks between releases (less and you're cannibalizing your own momentum) - Maximum 8 weeks between releases (longer and you lose algorithm presence) - Sweet spot: every 4-6 weeks

What happens when you release consistently: - Each new release triggers Release Radar for your followers - Each new release gives you another editorial pitch opportunity - Your artist profile stays "active" in Spotify's systems - New listeners discovering an old track find a rich catalog to follow

Building Momentum: How Each Release Feeds the Next

The compounding effect:

Release 1: 50 streams, 10 followers Release 2: 100 streams, 25 followers (Release Radar reached more people) Release 3: 250 streams, 60 followers (more followers = more Release Radar reach) Release 4: 500 streams, 120 followers ...

Each release grows your follower base. Each additional follower expands the Release Radar reach of your next release. This is not hypothetical — it's the actual mechanism.

Cross-referencing releases: When you release a new single, update your Spotify profile's Artist Pick to feature it. Add a reference to your new track in your bio or note section. This drives traffic from fans discovering older tracks.

Your 12-Month Release Plan

Here's a template. Customize based on your current release volume.

Months 1-2: Launch Mode - Release single #1 (your strongest track) - Set up distributor, Spotify for Artists, PRO membership, website, email list - Begin content creation around the track

Months 3-4: Build - Release single #2 - Grow email list to 50+ subscribers - Establish posting cadence on 1-2 social platforms - Submit to sync licensing platforms

Months 5-6: Momentum - Release single #3 - Begin pitching to independent playlist curators - Send first email to list about upcoming release - Analyze which content performs best and double down

Month 6-7: EP Assembly - Announce EP (3-4 prior singles + 2-3 new tracks) - Begin pre-save campaign - Schedule editorial pitch for lead single from EP

Month 7: EP Release - Release the EP - Major content push (making-of content, track-by-track) - Email list announcement

Months 8-9: Post-EP Push - Release standalone single to maintain momentum post-EP - Pitch EP tracks to playlist curators - Begin working on next batch of songs

Months 10-12: Year-End Strategy - Release 2 more singles - Begin “best of” content (year in review) - Plan next year’s release calendar - Evaluate what worked

Your Calendar, Filled In

Template: Weekly

Week	Action
Week 1 of release month	Submit to distributor
Week 2	Pitch to Spotify editorial (as soon as track is in system)
Week 3	Pre-save campaign live, social teases begin
Week 4	Release day (Friday)
Week 5	Pitch to independent curators
Week 6	Content push: making-of, reaction, behind-scenes
Week 7	Analyze first 30 days data; plan next release
Week 8	Begin cycle again

Quick Reference

Distributor Comparison Table

Distributor	Pricing	Royalty Split	Speed	Best For
DistroKid	\$22.99/year unlimited	100%	24-72 hrs	Prolific artists
TuneCore	\$9.99/single, \$29.99/album/year	100%	24-72 hrs	Selective releasing
CD Baby	\$9.95 single, \$29 album (one-time)	91%	3-5 days	Permanent catalog
Amuse (free)	Free	80%	2-10 days	Zero budget start
RouteNote (free)	Free	85%	3-7 days	Zero budget start
Ditto Music	~\$19/year unlimited	100%	2-5 days	UK-based artists

Release Checklist

Audio

- WAV or FLAC format
- 44.1 kHz, 16-bit or 24-bit
- Stereo
- Mastered (not a rough mix)
- No silence >2 seconds at start/end
- No audio errors (pops, clips, distortion)
- Instrumental version created
- Clean version created (if explicit)

Metadata

- Artist name (consistent with all previous releases)
- Track title (proper capitalization)
- Release title
- Genre selected
- All contributors credited (co-writers, producers, engineers)
- Explicit content flagged if needed
- Language set
- Release date set (3-4 weeks out)
- ISRC assigned (automatic via distributor)

Cover Art

- 3000 x 3000 pixels minimum
- JPG or PNG
- RGB color mode
- Under 10MB
- Readable at small sizes
- No streaming platform logos
- No copyright violations

Distribution

- Track submitted to distributor
- Release date confirmed (Friday, 3-4 weeks out)
- All platforms selected
- YouTube Content ID enabled (if using DistroKid)
- Confirmation email received

Playlist Pitching

- Spotify for Artists profile claimed
- Editorial pitch submitted (7+ days before release)
- SubmitHub curator list prepared
- Pre-save link created and shared

Marketing

- Release announced on social media
- Email sent to list (if you have one)
- Content calendar for release week planned
- Website updated with new release

Sync Licensing Platforms

Platform	Type	Revenue Split	Best For
Artlist	Subscription library	Artist pays you per license	Content creators, YouTube
Musicbed	Premium curated	Competitive splits	Brands, ads, film
Pond5	Open marketplace	40-50% to artist	Instrumentals, ambient
Epidemic Sound	Work-for-hire library	Upfront payment	Guaranteed income
Songtradr	Marketplace	Variable	All genres
Music Vine	Curated boutique	Competitive	Film, documentary
AudioJungle	Stock marketplace	33-55% to artist	High volume, lower fees

Requirements for most sync platforms: - Full mix (WAV) - Instrumental version (WAV) - Clean versions if explicit - BPM and key tagged - Mood and energy tags filled - No uncleared samples - 100% original composition

Social Media Content Calendar Template

Weekly Content Rhythm:

Day	Content Type	Platform
Monday	Making-of clip or process video	TikTok + Reels
Tuesday	Story/poll or Q&A	Instagram Stories
Wednesday	Behind-the-scenes photo or video	Instagram Feed or TikTok
Thursday	Educational clip (“here’s how I made...”)	TikTok + Reels
Friday	New release announcement OR music clip	All platforms
Saturday	Throwback / archive content	Instagram
Sunday	Upcoming week teaser or personal update	Stories

Monthly Content Priorities: - Week 1: Release week content (if releasing) - Week 2: Process and making-of content - Week 3: Community engagement (reply to comments as videos) - Week 4: Planning and teasing next release

Batch production Sunday checklist: - Film 3-5 short videos (set up phone, 30-60 min) - Schedule or draft for the week - Reply to comments from last week - Check what performed best and note it

PRO & Royalty Registration Checklist

For each new release:

- Song registered with your PRO (ASCAP or BMI)
 - Co-writers' splits confirmed and registered
 - Song registered with MLC (US mechanical royalties)
 - ISRC code noted in your catalog spreadsheet
 - Distributor account has correct publisher info
 - Sync versions (instrumental, clean) noted in your catalog
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Final Word

The music exists. You made it. That's the part that required everything — the late nights, the revisions, the doubt, the moment it finally worked.

Getting it into the world is just logistics.

Follow the steps in this book and your music will be on every platform within 30 days. It will be eligible for playlists. It will be in sync licensing catalogs building passive income while you work on the next thing. And you'll own every dollar of every royalty it generates.

The only thing left to do is start.

Pick a distributor. Prep your file. Set a release date.

The rest follows.

*Book 1: [Signal Engine Book 1 Title] Book 2: [Signal Engine Book 2 Title] Book 3: From
Bedroom to Release*

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