

THE NO-MONEY MUSIC BUSINESS SYSTEM

WORKBOOK 1
OF THREE

The No-Money Music Business System

The complete working system for building a real music career — starting today, with what you already have.

Companion to

NO-MONEY MUSIC • by Aron Leigh

nomoneymusic.com

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HOW TO USE THIS WORKBOOK

Read This First

This is not a passive read. It's the operating manual for the system in the book — the place where everything I learned in twenty-five years of professional songwriting and producing in Nashville gets applied to your specific situation, your music, and your career.

Every section contains four things:

1. **The system.** The exact method, explained in actionable terms. The core knowledge from a career inside the music business, distilled into steps you can run today.
2. **Insider Insight.** What working professionals know that most artists never learn. The unwritten rules. The things that protect your money, your rights, and your time.
3. **Maya's workbook.** A worked example. Maya Chen is a fictional indie-folk artist in Asheville, NC, starting from zero. You'll watch her fill out every form so you can see what "done" looks like before you do your own.
4. **Your work.** Worksheets, trackers, fill-in fields. Where you apply the system to your own situation. This is where the real work happens.

At the end of every section, you'll see a **Completion Gate** — the specific, observable signs that you can move on. Don't move on without them. Half-finished sections compound into half-built careers.

Work through it in order the first time. After that, return to individual sections as your career develops. Your release planner looks different at month one than it does at month eighteen. That's the point.

The music business still rewards people who understand how it works. This workbook is designed to make sure you are one of those people.

— ARON LEIGH

YOUR WORKED EXAMPLE, THROUGHOUT

Meet Maya

Maya Chen, 26, lives in Asheville, NC. She works part-time at a coffee shop and has been writing indie-folk songs in her bedroom for three years. She owns: an iPhone 13, a six-year-old MacBook Air, a Martin acoustic guitar her grandmother gave her, and a pair of Sony over-ear headphones. That's it.

She has zero releases, zero followers, no email list, no website, no PRO registration, and \$0 to spend on her music career.

She has thirty hours of voice memos on her phone — verses, choruses, melody fragments. She's never finished a song to release-ready quality. She believes she's not a "real" artist yet because she hasn't released anything.

Over the next 18 months, following this workbook, Maya will release six singles, register with all four royalty organizations, build an email list of 340 engaged subscribers, place one song in a YouTube creator's video for \$400, and earn approximately \$1,180 from music across eight income streams.

She'll do this with \$0 of new equipment, **\$44.99 of distribution costs**, and 6–8 hours per week. Every form in this workbook will be filled out by Maya before you're asked to fill out yours. Watch what she does. Then do yours.

You don't have to be Maya. Your situation is different. But if you read this workbook all the way through and follow the system, the gap between you and Maya at month eighteen will be measured in hours of effort, not dollars of investment.

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PART ONE

Your Foundation

Before you release a single song, you need to know who you are as an artist, what tools you actually have, and how to use them at a professional level. Most artists skip this. That is why most artists struggle.

§ 1

Your Artist Identity System

Every professional decision in your music career flows from knowing who you are as an artist.

Not who you want to be eventually — who you are right now. This is your starting point.

INSIDER INSIGHT · WHY IDENTITY COMES FIRST

Sync supervisors, playlist curators, booking agents, and labels all ask the same question the moment they encounter your music: who is this for? The artists who can answer that in one sentence, without hesitating, are the ones who get the call back. Not because they compromised their artistry — because they did the work of understanding it.

Your identity is not a box. It's a compass. It tells you which opportunities to say yes to, which collaborators will fit, what your cover art should look like, and which playlists to pitch. Without it, every decision is a guess.

The four defining questions

Answer in plain language. Not aspirational language. The artist you are right now.

1. WHAT DO YOU MAKE? (SOUND, FEEL, MEANING — NOT JUST GENRE)

2. WHO IS IT FOR? (AGE, WHERE THEY ARE IN LIFE, WHAT THEY ALREADY LOVE)

3. WHAT MAKES IT YOURS? (YOUR COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE — SMALL AND SPECIFIC IS FINE)

4. YOUR ONE-SENTENCE ARTIST STATEMENT

MAYA'S WORKBOOK · WORKED EXAMPLE

1. What do you make? Quiet, confessional indie-folk built around fingerstyle guitar and close-mic vocals — songs that sound like they were recorded at midnight in a small room.

2. Who is it for? Women in their late twenties who are between chapters of their lives — a breakup, a move, a career pivot. The people who reach for Phoebe Bridgers at 2 a.m. and Adrianne Lenker on long drives.

3. What makes it mine? I write about the specific weather in the Blue Ridge Mountains and the specific quiet of empty Appalachian highways. Not generic sadness — geographic sadness.

4. One-sentence statement: I make Appalachian indie-folk for women who are between who they were and who they're becoming.

INSIDER INSIGHT · THE ONE-SENTENCE TEST

Say your one-sentence statement out loud to someone who doesn't know your music. If their eyes light up and they say "oh, I want to hear that" — you've got it. If they nod politely and say "cool" — keep working. Billie Eilish, age thirteen: dark pop, made in a bedroom, about the things teenagers actually feel. That's the level of clarity that launches careers.

Your Artist Identity Card

Fill this in completely. Pin it above your workspace. Every creative and business decision gets measured against it.

FIELD	YOUR ANSWER
Artist name (locked — never vary across platforms)	
Legal name (for royalty registration)	
Genre — primary	
Genre — secondary	
City / region (your home market)	
Target listener	
My unique element	
My one-sentence artist statement	
Three comparable artists	
My core theme / message	

INSIDER INSIGHT · THE ARTIST NAME RULE — READ BEFORE YOU RELEASE A SINGLE NOTE

One of the most expensive mistakes I've watched independent artists make: releasing music under slightly different name variations across platforms. "Jordan" on Spotify, "Jordan T." on Apple, "JordanT_Music" on the distributor. Streaming platforms create separate artist profiles for each variation. Your audience fragments. Your royalties scatter. Your catalog gets split across three different "artists" who happen to be the same person.

Choose one name today. Lock it. Never deviate — not on releases, not on social handles if you can help it. Use your full legal name on splits sheets. This single decision, made on day one, prevents about a dozen headaches you'd otherwise discover three years from now.

✦ COMPLETION GATE

You're done with this section when:

- ☐ You can say your one-sentence artist statement out loud, from memory, without hesitating.
- ☐ Your artist name is locked across every platform you use today.
- ☐ You've named three real, current artists you're comparable to (not aspirational — actual reference points).
- ☐ You know who your music is for, specifically enough that you could describe one ideal listener as a person.

§ 2

Your Equipment & Tools Audit

What you actually have vs. what you actually need.

The single most damaging belief in music is "I'll start when I have better equipment." This section replaces that belief with reality. You will audit exactly what you have, identify the free tools that fill the gaps, and establish a professional-quality recording setup today — with zero budget.

INSIDER INSIGHT · THE EQUIPMENT MYTH

Twenty-five years inside the professional music industry has taught me one consistent thing: equipment does not make careers. Chance the Rapper recorded *10 Day* in a friend's basement. Billie Eilish's first viral recordings came from a bedroom with a USB microphone. Charlie Puth was on YouTube with a laptop and a cheap mic before any label.

The artists who wait for perfect equipment are still waiting. The artists who started with what they had have catalogs, audiences, and income. What matters: finishing songs and releasing them consistently. Full stop.

What you have right now

ITEM	HAVE IT?	QUALITY 1-5	NOTES / MODEL
Smartphone	Y / N		
Laptop or desktop computer	Y / N		
Tablet (iPad / Android)	Y / N		
Headphones / earbuds	Y / N		
Dedicated microphone (USB or XLR)	Y / N		
Audio interface	Y / N		
MIDI keyboard / controller	Y / N		
Instrument (guitar, keys, etc.)	Y / N		
Studio monitors / speakers	Y / N		
Stable internet connection	Y / N		

MAYA'S WORKBOOK · WORKED EXAMPLE

iPhone 13 (5/5), MacBook Air 2018 (3/5 — slow but works), no tablet, Sony WH-1000XM3 over-ear headphones (5/5), no dedicated mic, no interface, no MIDI controller, Martin acoustic

guitar (5/5), no monitors, stable internet at home and at the coffee shop. Total spent on equipment: \$0. Total needed to start releasing at a quality streaming platforms accept: \$0.

INSIDER INSIGHT · YOUR PHONE IS A PROFESSIONAL TOOL

The phone in your pocket records audio at 44.1 kHz / 16-bit — the exact same standard used for commercial CDs and streaming platforms. The limitation is not the hardware. It's knowing how to use it. A phone held six to eight inches from your mouth in a quiet room with soft surfaces — a closet full of clothes is perfect — produces recordings that are distribution-ready. Cost of this setup: \$0.

Free software setup matrix

Leave this page with at least one DAW installed and one project started — not perfectly recorded, just started.

TOOL	PLATFORM	WHAT IT'S FOR	SET UP?
GarageBand	iPhone / iPad / Mac (preinstalled)	Full DAW. Best free option on Apple.	
BandLab	Browser, iOS, Android, Windows	Full DAW + cloud collaboration. Universal.	
Cakewalk by BandLab	Windows PC	Professional-grade DAW for Windows.	
Audacity	Windows / Mac / Linux	Audio editor. Good for simple recording.	
Phone Voice Memos	Any smartphone	Capture ideas the moment they hit.	
Google Drive	Any device	Free cloud backup. Never lose a session.	
Canva	Browser / app	Cover art, social posts, lyric videos.	
Notion or Apple Notes	Any device	Lyrics, ideas, project management.	

Your free DAW choice

Pick one. Do not pick two. You'll spend the next twelve months becoming fluent in this one tool.

MY DEVICE

MY DAW

WHY I CHOSE IT

THE ONE THING I WILL RECORD THIS WEEK (KEEP IT SMALL)

✦ COMPLETION GATE

- ☐ You have one DAW installed and a project (any project, even one chord) saved.
- ☐ You know which device is your primary recording device.
- ☐ You have a backup destination set up (Google Drive, iCloud, or BandLab cloud).
- ☐ You've named the one thing you will record this week.

§ 3

Your Recording Foundation

Professional habits that cost nothing but attention.

The difference between amateur recordings and professional recordings is rarely the equipment. It's almost always the process. These are the habits working professionals apply on every session — including when they're recording on their phones.

INSIDER INSIGHT · THE RECORDING CHAIN

Every recording — from a bedroom demo to a major label production — passes through the same four stages: Source (the sound going in), Capture (recording it), Editing & Production (shaping it), and Output (the finished file). Most amateur problems happen at the Source stage — too much room noise, wrong mic placement, poor gain. Fix the source first. Everything downstream gets easier.

Pre-recording checklist

Run through this before every session. Five minutes. Saves hours later.

ENVIRONMENT

- ☐ Room is as quiet as possible — phone on silent, AC off, door closed.
- ☐ Soft surfaces around your space (clothes, blankets, pillows, rugs).
- ☐ No hum from electronics near the recording device.
- ☐ Test recording done and listened back through headphones before the real take.

LEVELS & TECHNIQUE

- ☐ Input level checked — peaks at -12dB to -6dB, never clipping into the red.
- ☐ Microphone distance consistent — six to eight inches for vocals.
- ☐ Pop filter or windscreen in place (pantyhose over a wire frame works).
- ☐ Headphones on to monitor while recording.

FILES & ORGANIZATION

- ☐ Project named clearly: ArtistName_SongTitle_Date (underscores, no spaces).
- ☐ Saving to cloud — BandLab auto-saves; GarageBand can sync to iCloud.
- ☐ Know where your exported files will land before you export.

INSIDER INSIGHT · THE CLOSET STUDIO

The best free acoustic treatment in most homes is a walk-in closet full of hanging clothes. The clothes absorb the reflections that cause the "bathroom echo" of amateur recordings. Professional studios pay tens of thousands for acoustic panels that do exactly what your closet does for free. Some commercially released vocals you've heard on the radio were tracked in closets on tour buses.

Finishing songs — the professional standard

The most important skill in music is finishing. Not polishing. Not perfecting. Finishing.

INSIDER INSIGHT · THE COMPLETION PROBLEM

In twenty-five years, the pattern is consistent: the artists who build careers are not necessarily the most talented. They're the ones who finish songs. Professional rule: every session ends with either a finished piece or a clear next step. "I'll come back to it" is the most expensive phrase in music.

MAYA'S WORKBOOK · WORKED EXAMPLE

Maya counts her unfinished songs: 47 voice memos with at least a chorus and a verse. 9 with full lyrics. 3 she truly believes in. She picks one — "Highway 40 in November" — and commits to finishing it within two weeks. Her specific next action isn't "work on it." It's: "Tonight, write a third verse that ties back to the first verse's image of the empty gas station." Something she can actually do.

NUMBER OF UNFINISHED SONGS I CURRENTLY HAVE

THE ONE UNFINISHED SONG I WILL COMPLETE THIS WEEK

WHAT'S STOPPING ME FROM FINISHING IT (BE HONEST)

THE SPECIFIC NEXT ACTION — NOT "WORK ON IT," THE ACTUAL NEXT STEP

♦ COMPLETION GATE

- ☐ You've listed every unfinished song you currently have.
- ☐ You've picked exactly one song to finish this week.

- ☐ You've written down the specific next action — not the abstract goal.
- ☐ You've blocked time on your calendar this week for the session that moves it forward.

PART TWO

Your Release System

Distribution, metadata, and release strategy — the infrastructure that determines whether you get paid and whether people find you.

§ 4

Distribution Selection & Setup

How to get your music onto every platform in the world.

Distribution is the system that puts your music on Spotify, Apple Music, Amazon, Tidal, YouTube Music, and dozens of other platforms. Choosing the right distributor for your situation is one of the most important decisions you'll make — and once you make it, switching later is annoying enough that most people don't.

INSIDER INSIGHT · WHAT DISTRIBUTION ACTUALLY DOES (AND DOESN'T)

Distributors collect master recording royalties (money from streams of your specific recording). They do NOT collect your publishing royalties (money from the underlying composition). That requires PRO and MLC registration — covered in §10 and §11. Most independent artists lose hundreds to thousands of dollars annually by not understanding this distinction.

A distributor puts your music in the store. It does not get customers there. It does not pitch playlists, promote, or build audience. It is infrastructure, not promotion.

Distributor comparison

Verified pricing as of 2026. Always confirm at the distributor's site before signing up — pricing shifts.

DISTRIBUTOR	COST	ROYALTY CUT	BEST FOR
UnitedMasters (free DEBUT)	\$0	Keeps 10% (90/10 split)	Zero budget, hip-hop/R&B, brand-deal access. 100% royalties require DEBUT+ (\$19.99/yr).
DistroKid (Musician)	\$24.99/yr	0% — keep 100%	Regular releasers. Unlimited uploads. Industry standard for indies.
DistroKid (Musician Plus)	\$44.99/yr	0% — keep 100%	Custom release dates (needed for Friday releases & pre-saves). Realistic minimum for serious strategy.
TuneCore	Subscription — see site	0% — keep 100%	Strong analytics dashboard and detailed reporting.
CD Baby	\$9.99/release one-time	~9% of royalties	Digital only. Pay once, music stays up — no annual fee. (Physical CD/vinyl distribution ended June 2023; now UMG-owned.)

INSIDER INSIGHT · THE DISTROKID "LEAVE A LEGACY" TRAP

DistroKid's \$24.99/year is genuinely cheap — until you learn that if you cancel, your music gets pulled from every platform unless you've paid for "Leave a Legacy": \$29 per single, \$49 per album, on top of the subscription. For an artist with twenty singles, that's \$580 just to keep your catalog online if you ever stop paying.

This isn't a reason to avoid DistroKid — it's the best value in the category for active releasers. It's a reason to know what you're signing up for. CD Baby handles this differently: your music stays up after the one-time per-release fee, no recurring subscription required.

MAYA'S WORKBOOK · WORKED EXAMPLE

Maya picks DistroKid Musician Plus at \$44.99/year. Her reasoning: she plans to release 6 singles in year one, which makes per-release pricing worse than the subscription. She wants custom release dates to target Fridays and pre-save campaigns. She skips Leave a Legacy on her first single but commits to buying it for any single that crosses 10,000 lifetime streams.

DISTRIBUTOR I CHOSE

WHY I CHOSE IT

ACCOUNT EMAIL

DATE ACCOUNT CREATED

♦ COMPLETION GATE

- ☐ You've chosen a distributor and created the account.
- ☐ You know whether you'll need Leave a Legacy or equivalent permanence (DistroKid only).
- ☐ Your distributor login is saved somewhere you'll find it in three years.
- ☐ You understand the distributor handles master royalties, not publishing — addressed in §11.

§ 5

The Metadata Master Sheet

The information that determines whether you get paid.

Metadata is the information attached to your music that tells platforms, royalty organizations, and listeners who made it, who owns it, and how to categorize it. Getting this wrong does not delay royalties. It loses them permanently.

INSIDER INSIGHT · THE ROYALTY DISAPPEARANCE PROBLEM

Every year, hundreds of millions in royalties go uncollected — not because they aren't owed, but because the metadata is wrong. The three most common errors: (1) inconsistent artist name across platforms — creates multiple profiles, splits audience and royalties; (2) missing songwriter credits — performance royalties go to an unclaimed pool; (3) missing or unrecorded ISRC code — streaming royalties have nowhere to land. Take twenty extra minutes per release to verify every field. Highest-ROI activity in your music business.

Release metadata master sheet

Complete one copy for every song you release. File it permanently.

FIELD	YOUR ENTRY
Song title (clean — no "Final Mix")	
Artist name (EXACTLY as every other release)	
Songwriter(s) — full legal names + split %	
Producer(s) — full legal names	
Publisher — your name OR "self-published"	
ISRC code (record IMMEDIATELY)	
UPC code (release-level)	
Primary genre / Secondary genre	
Language	
Release type (Single / EP / Album)	
Release date (Friday, 4–6 weeks out)	
Distributor used	
Copyright year and owner	

PRO / MLC registration confirmation #	
SoundExchange registration (confirmed?)	

INSIDER INSIGHT · ISRC VS. UPC

ISRC (International Standard Recording Code, 12 characters) identifies your specific recording — re-record a song and the new version gets a new ISRC. UPC (Universal Product Code) identifies the release as a product — one UPC per release; each track on it has its own ISRC. Both are assigned automatically by your distributor, but it's your job to record them and use them when registering with royalty organizations. Screenshot them. Log them.

Your ISRC code log

SONG TITLE	REC. DATE	ISRC CODE	DISTRIBUTOR	RELEASE DATE	STATUS

♦ COMPLETION GATE

- ☐ You have a permanent location where every release's metadata sheet will live.
- ☐ You understand the difference between ISRC and UPC and where each gets assigned.
- ☐ You have a system for recording ISRC codes the same day they're issued.
- ☐ Your artist name across distributor, social, and PRO is identical — character by character.

§ 6

Your Release Strategy Planner

How professionals plan and execute releases.

A release without a strategy is just uploading a file. A release with a strategy is a career move. The difference is thinking through the sequence of events — before, during, and after — that maximize the chance of your music reaching the right people.

INSIDER INSIGHT · THE 4-WEEK MINIMUM (AND WHY FRIDAY WINS)

Editorial teams require a minimum of 7 days' notice to consider new releases for playlists. Most curators want 4 weeks; most journalists want 6–8. Release the same day you finish and you get zero editorial consideration. Friday is the standard because chart cycles run Friday-to-Thursday and Spotify refreshes Release Radar and Discover Weekly on Fridays. The release isn't the campaign — it's the peak of a campaign that started weeks earlier.

Pre-release timeline

TIMELINE	WHAT TO DO	DONE?
6 weeks out	Submit to distributor. Set a Friday release date. Claim Spotify for Artists. File the editorial pitch (the 7-day-minimum window).	
5 weeks out	Begin teaser content. "Something is coming" — behind-the-scenes clip, no title yet.	
4 weeks out	Announce title and date. Share a 15-second hook clip. Build the pre-save link.	
3 weeks out	Reveal artwork. Tell the story behind the song.	
2 weeks out	Longer preview (30–60 sec). Direct ask for pre-saves. Email list announcement.	
1 week out	Build urgency. Full artwork post. Personal, human content.	
Release day	Multiple posts. Direct ask: "add it to your library." Share to your own public playlist. Respond to every comment.	
Week after	Share listener reactions and how-it-was-made content. Don't go silent — the algorithm is watching most closely now.	

INSIDER INSIGHT · SAVES MATTER MORE THAN STREAMS

Spotify evaluates a new song most heavily in the first 28 days. The saves-to-streams ratio is one of the strongest signals it uses to decide whether to push the song to new listeners. Ask

your audience specifically to **SAVE** the song — "add it to your library" — not just stream it. The artists who know this build algorithmic momentum 2–3x faster.

INSIDER INSIGHT · THE SPOTIFY 1,000-STREAM THRESHOLD (SINCE 2024)

Since April 2024, a track must reach at least 1,000 streams in the previous 12 months to be eligible for royalty payments. Tracks under that earn nothing — those streams flow back into the general pool. Your first goal isn't "go viral." It's "hit 1,000 streams in 12 months" on every track — achievable through email + a small playlist + your own social, but only if you're actively promoting.

MAYA'S WORKBOOK · WORKED EXAMPLE

Maya's first release: "Highway 40 in November," Friday March 6, 2026. Submitted to DistroKid Jan 23 (six weeks out). Three things in the four weeks before: (1) a 90-second iPhone video fingerpicking the chorus in her closet — teaser at 4 weeks out; (2) email her 22-person list at 2 weeks out, asking them to pre-save **AND** share with one person; (3) submit to 8 indie-folk curators on SubmitHub at 5 weeks out (~\$24 — her one paid line item).

SONG TITLE

TARGET RELEASE DATE (FRIDAY)

DISTRIBUTOR I'LL USE

THREE SPECIFIC THINGS I'LL DO IN THE FOUR WEEKS BEFORE RELEASE

♦ COMPLETION GATE

- ☐ You have a release date set on a specific Friday at least 4 weeks out.
- ☐ Your editorial pitch is submitted at least 7 days before release.
- ☐ Your pre-save link exists and you know where you'll share it from.
- ☐ You've planned content for at least 4 of the 6 pre-release weeks.
- ☐ You know to ask your audience to **SAVE** the song, not just stream it.

PART THREE

Your Audience System

The difference between followers and fans. Platform strategy. And the asset that will outlast every platform ever built.

§ 7

Platform Strategy Worksheet

One platform at a time. Done right.

The biggest mistake artists make with social media is trying to be everywhere at once, doing everything poorly. Professional platform strategy means choosing the right platform for your specific music and audience — and mastering it before adding another.

INSIDER INSIGHT · PLATFORM SELECTION BY GENRE

Not all platforms serve all genres equally. TikTok and Instagram Reels are strongest for pop, hip-hop, R&B, dance. YouTube dominates rock, metal, country, and tutorial content. SoundCloud leads underground electronic and hip-hop. Choose the platform where your target listener already spends time — not the one with the most users overall. 2,000 engaged YouTube subscribers will out-earn 50,000 passive TikTok followers who don't care about your genre.

Platform selection matrix

Pick one primary, one secondary. Skip the rest until those two are running consistently.

PLATFORM	STRONGEST FOR	YOUR PRIORITY
TikTok	Discovery — pop, hip-hop, R&B, dance, country	Primary / Secondary / Skip
Instagram Reels	Relationship building, visual artists	Primary / Secondary / Skip
YouTube	Long-form, rock, country, tutorials	Primary / Secondary / Skip
YouTube Shorts	Discovery in the YouTube ecosystem	Primary / Secondary / Skip
SoundCloud	Underground hip-hop, electronic, demos	Primary / Secondary / Skip
Spotify (Artist)	All genres — your streaming home base	Primary — everyone
Facebook	Age 35+, events, community groups	Primary / Secondary / Skip
Bandcamp	Direct-to-fan sales, indie/alt/folk	Primary / Secondary / Skip
Email list	Owned channel — never algorithm-dependent	Primary — everyone

MAYA'S WORKBOOK · WORKED EXAMPLE

Maya picks YouTube Shorts as primary and Instagram Reels as secondary. Indie-folk holds search value for years on YouTube, and Shorts feeds the long-form channel she'll build later. She skips TikTok for the first six months — spreading across three platforms means doing all of them badly. Commitment: 3 Shorts + 2 Reels per week, batch-recorded on Sundays.

MY PRIMARY PLATFORM

WHY THIS PLATFORM FOR MY MUSIC

MY SECONDARY PLATFORM / POSTING FREQUENCY COMMITMENT

SPECIFIC CONTENT I'LL POST IN THE FIRST MONTH (BE CONCRETE)

✦ COMPLETION GATE

- ☐ You've chosen exactly one primary and one secondary platform.
- ☐ You know your posting cadence and have it on your calendar.
- ☐ You've named at least three specific pieces of content you'll create this month.
- ☐ You have a free scheduling tool (Buffer, Later, or native) set up.

§ 8

The Email List Builder

The only audience asset you actually own.

Every social platform can disappear, change its algorithm, or get banned overnight. Your email list cannot be taken from you. It is the only audience asset in music that is truly yours — and it is the most underutilized tool in independent music.

INSIDER INSIGHT · THE TIKTOK LESSON

TikTok faced a legislative ban in the United States in early 2025. Artists who'd built their entire following there and nowhere else faced real career risk overnight. The platform survived; the lesson didn't. Use TikTok and Instagram aggressively for discovery — but treat your email list as your permanent home. A list of 500 people who genuinely want to hear from you is worth significantly more than 50,000 passive social followers.

Free email platform comparison (2026)

Verified 2026. Free tiers change often — confirm current limits before committing.

PLATFORM	FREE TIER	BEST FEATURE
Kit (formerly ConvertKit)	Up to 10,000 subscribers — most generous free tier in the industry	Built for creators. Sell digital products without a separate processor.
MailerLite	250 subscribers, 2,500 emails/month (as of July 2026)	Clean templates, easy automations.
Mailchimp	250 contacts, 500 emails/month (automation removed)	Most widely known; easiest to find tutorials for. Tightest free tier of the three.

INSIDER INSIGHT · MY RECOMMENDATION: KIT, IN 2026

I'm not paid by any of these — this is genuinely the right call. Kit (rebranded from ConvertKit in October 2024) overhauled its free tier to allow up to 10,000 subscribers with unlimited emails. That's roughly 40x the headroom of Mailchimp's or MailerLite's current free tiers. Most independent artists will never need to pay anything.

It's also built for creators specifically — newsletters, selling digital products, tip jars. Mailchimp is built for businesses with marketing departments. The difference matters when you're doing this on a Tuesday night between takes.

The signup incentive that actually works

Offer something specific and immediately valuable in exchange for the signup — not "sign up for my newsletter." What works: an unreleased track, an acoustic version, early access, a free chord/tab sheet, a behind-the-scenes video. Something you already have or can create in an hour.

MAYA'S WORKBOOK · WORKED EXAMPLE

Maya picks Kit (free, 10,000 ceiling). Her incentive: a stripped-down acoustic demo of "Highway 40 in November," recorded on her phone in her closet, never released to streaming. She titles it "The 2 a.m. Version." It costs her one Sunday afternoon. She places the signup link in her Instagram bio, YouTube description, Spotify bio, and on a printed QR code in her guitar case.

MY EMAIL PLATFORM

MY SIGNUP INCENTIVE

WHERE I'LL PROMOTE MY EMAIL LIST (EVERY PLACE)

Email list growth tracker

MONTH	SIZE (START)	NEW SUBS	SOURCE	SIZE (END)

♦ COMPLETION GATE

- ☐ Your email platform account is created.
- ☐ Your signup incentive exists as an actual file you can send.
- ☐ Your signup link is in at least three places online today.
- ☐ Your welcome email is written and set to send automatically to new subscribers.
- ☐ If you'll play live: a QR code is printed and lives in your guitar case or bag.

§ 9

Content That Actually Builds Audiences

The content types that build real fans, in the right ratio.

Most artists post the wrong things. They post "OUT NOW!" graphics, links to streaming platforms, professional headshots with quotes overlaid. None of this builds audiences. Here's what does.

INSIDER INSIGHT · THE 70/30 RULE AND THE FOUR CONTENT TYPES

The content that builds real audiences, in this order: (1) **Performance clips** — you playing/singing, raw, one take. (2) **Process content** — the song being written, the beat made, the vocal tracked. (3) **Story content** — why you wrote this song, what this lyric means. (4) **Personality content** — who you are as a human. The ratio that works: 70% of these four types, 30% promotion. Most artists run it backwards. That's the difference.

4-week content calendar

Plan a month ahead. Batch-create. Write what you'll actually post.

WEEK	DAY	PLATFORM	CONTENT TYPE	TOPIC / HOOK	DONE?
1					
2					
3					
4					

MAYA'S WORKBOOK · WORKED EXAMPLE

Maya's first week: Mon — Reels: writing the chorus in her notebook (process). Wed — Shorts: full-take fingerstyle of the bridge in her closet (performance). Fri — Reels: the original phone voice-memo idea with text overlay on how it became the released version (story). Sat — Reels: at a coffee shop talking about why November in the Blue Ridge feels lonelier (personality). Total: ~2 hours on Sunday. Buffer handles posting.

♦ COMPLETION GATE

- ☐ You've planned at least one full week of content using the four content types.
- ☐ Your week honors roughly the 70/30 ratio (most posts are not promotional).
- ☐ You have a recording day scheduled to batch-create the content.

- ☐ You have a free scheduler set up so you don't post manually each day.

PART FOUR

Your Rights & Money System

*The two copyrights in every song. How to register them.
How to collect every dollar you are owed.*

§ 10

The Four Essential Registrations

Every registration you need — and why it matters.

Every song you create generates two separate copyrights. Each generates different royalties. Each requires a different registration to collect. Most independent artists collect less than half of what they're owed because they only know about one or two of the four organizations below.

INSIDER INSIGHT · THE TWO-COPYRIGHT SYSTEM — READ THIS TWICE

Copyright 1 — The Composition. The underlying song: melody, lyrics, chords. Owned by the songwriter(s). Generates performance royalties, mechanical royalties, and sync fees. Registered with: the U.S. Copyright Office, your PRO (ASCAP or BMI), and the MLC.

Copyright 2 — The Master Recording. The specific audio recording. Owned by whoever paid for it (you, if you recorded it). Generates streaming master royalties (your distributor), digital performance royalties from Pandora/SiriusXM (SoundExchange), and sync master fees. Registered with: the U.S. Copyright Office and SoundExchange.

As an artist who writes and records your own music, you own BOTH copyrights — and collect from both income streams. Guard your masters. Never sign them away without an attorney and a very good reason.

Registration 1 — U.S. Copyright Office

copyright.gov · Cost: \$45–\$65 per registration (one-time, covers you permanently)

Copyright attaches automatically the moment you create a work, but federal registration is required to sue for statutory damages and attorney's fees if someone steals it. Register before you release.

- ☐ Account created at copyright.gov.
- ☐ Composition registered (group registration of multiple compositions is the cheapest path).
- ☐ Sound recording (the master) registered separately.
- ☐ Registration date and confirmation number recorded in your Metadata Master Sheet.

Registration 2 — Your PRO (ASCAP or BMI)

ascap.com · bmi.com · Free to join as a songwriter. SESAC exists too but is invitation-only.

Your PRO collects performance royalties on the composition — every time your song plays on radio, streaming, in a venue, on TV, in a film. You can only join one. (Full setup in §11.)

- ☐ Choose ONE: ASCAP or BMI.
- ☐ Register as a songwriter member.
- ☐ Understand your publisher options (covered in §11) before deciding whether to affiliate a publishing entity.
- ☐ Register every song you release the moment it goes live.
- ☐ Set a calendar reminder to check royalty statements quarterly.

Registration 3 — The MLC

themlc.com · Free to register

The Mechanical Licensing Collective collects mechanical royalties from US streaming — separate from your distributor payments. If you haven't registered, those royalties go into an unclaimed pool. This is not hypothetical — it happens every day.

- ☐ Account created at themlc.com.
- ☐ Registered as songwriter / publisher.
- ☐ All released works submitted by ISRC code.
- ☐ Checked for unclaimed royalties already owed to you (search your name and prior releases).

Registration 4 — SoundExchange

soundexchange.com · Free to register

SoundExchange collects digital performance royalties for master owners — from non-interactive digital radio (Pandora, SiriusXM, webcasting). As an artist who owns your masters, you collect BOTH the artist share AND the rights-holder share — but only if you register both.

- ☐ Account created at soundexchange.com.
- ☐ Registered as Featured Artist (the performer).
- ☐ Registered as Rights Owner (you, since you self-recorded).
- ☐ All released works submitted; direct deposit set up.

MAYA'S WORKBOOK · WORKED EXAMPLE

Maya completes all four registrations in one weekend, before her first release. Total cost: **\$45** (Copyright Office, group registration of her three best songs). About 4 hours of clicking

through forms. She finds \$12.47 already waiting at the MLC from a song that ended up on Spotify through a BandLab integration two years ago — she had no idea. She sets a recurring quarterly event: "Check royalty accounts — PRO, MLC, SoundExchange, distributor." 15 minutes per quarter.

♦ COMPLETION GATE

- ☐ All four organizations have an account created in your name.
- ☐ Every released song is registered with all four (or scheduled for its release date).
- ☐ You have a quarterly calendar reminder to check all four accounts.
- ☐ You understand composition royalties (PRO, MLC) vs. master royalties (distributor, SoundExchange).

§ 11

Your PRO & Publishing Setup

Understanding the writer's share, the publisher's share, and what each PRO actually does.

This is one of the most misunderstood steps in independent music — and the one where wrong information costs artists the most. Done right, it takes about thirty extra minutes and makes sure none of your performance royalties sit unclaimed.

INSIDER INSIGHT · THE WRITER'S SHARE, THE PUBLISHER'S SHARE, AND WHAT'S ACTUALLY TRUE

Performance royalties on a composition are split into two halves: the **writer's share** (50%) and the **publisher's share** (50%). You want to make sure you collect both. But how you do that depends on your PRO — and the common advice to "set up a publisher account or lose half your money" is not accurate across the board:

- **With BMI:** if you're affiliated as a writer, BMI pays you **both** the writer's and the publisher's share directly on any self-published works — you do *not* need to affiliate a separate publishing entity to receive your full royalties. You're not leaving money on the table by skipping it.
- **With ASCAP:** registering a publisher entity is the standard way to capture the publisher's share as a self-published writer.

So setting up your own publishing company is a real option — useful when you want to separate your royalty streams, sign other writers, or formalize the business for liability/estate reasons. It is not an emergency you must handle on day one, and at BMI it carries a one-time fee (below). Decide based on your actual business needs, not fear of "losing half."

ASCAP vs. BMI — how to choose

Functionally similar for most independent artists. Pick one. Don't overthink it.

	ASCAP	BMI
Cost to join (writer)	One-time application fee (~\$50)	Free
Publisher affiliation	~\$50 one-time	One-time: \$175 individual / \$250 corporation or LLC / \$500 partnership
Self-published payout	Affiliate a publisher entity to capture the publisher's share	Pays writer + publisher shares to the writer without a separate publisher entity
Distribution speed	Quarterly	Quarterly
Switching	Possible later (notice period)	Possible later (similar process)

Step-by-step: setting up your PRO

1. **Choose your PRO.** For most independent artists starting out, BMI is the simplest entry point: free to join as a writer, and it pays you both royalty shares on self-published songs.
2. **Create a writer account.** Use your full legal name exactly as on official documents — never a stage name. This is what royalty checks are made out to.
3. **Decide on a publishing entity.** Optional. If you choose to set one up, pick a name different from your artist name (e.g., artist "Jordan Rivers" → publisher "Rivers Songbook Publishing"). Affiliate it with the same PRO and pay the one-time fee. If you're just starting and writing your own material, you can skip this until your catalog or business justifies it.
4. **Save your IPI numbers** (the unique identifiers your PRO assigns) somewhere permanent. You'll need them for every song registration.
5. **Register every song you've already released.** Then make song registration the last step of every future release.

MAYA'S WORKBOOK · WORKED EXAMPLE

Maya picks BMI and registers as a writer (Maya Chen) — free. Because BMI pays her both the writer's and publisher's shares on her self-published songs, she decides **not** to pay the \$175 to affiliate a separate publishing entity yet; she'll set up "Blue Ridge Songs" later, when her catalog or a sync deal makes the separation worthwhile. She saves her writer IPI number in a Notion doc titled "Maya — Permanent Records" and registers "Highway 40 in November" the day it releases. **Cost so far: \$0.** Royalties she'll now collect that she would have lost: none — BMI routes her full performance royalties to her as the writer.

MY PRO (ASCAP OR BMI)

MY WRITER ACCOUNT NAME (LEGAL NAME)

MY WRITER IPI NUMBER

PUBLISHER ENTITY NAME (IF/WHEN I SET ONE UP)

MY PUBLISHER IPI NUMBER (IF APPLICABLE)

DATE ACCOUNT(S) CONFIRMED

♦ COMPLETION GATE

- ☐ You have a writer account at your PRO, registered under your full legal name.
- ☐ You understand how your specific PRO pays the publisher's share — and decided whether you need a publisher entity yet.
- ☐ Your IPI number(s) are saved somewhere permanent.
- ☐ Every released song is registered under your account.

§ 12

The Eight Income Streams Tracker

Building multiple income sources from the same body of work.

Professional music careers are not built on one income stream. They're built on the compound effect of multiple streams — each generating modest income that, together, creates something sustainable. Here are all eight.

STREAM	WHAT IT IS / TYPICAL RATE
1. Streaming royalties	Streams on Spotify, Apple, Amazon, Tidal, YouTube Music. ~\$0.003–\$0.005/stream on Spotify. Floor: 1,000 annual streams per track to be eligible (since 2024).
2. Performance income	Live shows, open mics, private/corporate events, online streams. \$0 (open mic) to \$5,000+ (corporate). Most start at \$50–\$150/local show.
3. Sync licensing	Film, TV, ads, games, YouTube. Sync fee + ongoing performance royalties. \$50 (small creator) to \$50,000+ (major film); \$200–\$2,500 common. Make instrumental versions of every song.
4. Merchandise	Print-on-demand (Printful, Printify, Merch by Amazon) — zero upfront inventory. \$8–\$15/shirt. Bundle with a digital download.
5. YouTube monetization	Ad revenue. Requires 1,000 subs + 4,000 watch hours (or 1,000 subs + 10M Shorts views in 90 days). Content ID pays you when others use your music. \$1–\$5 RPM for music.
6. Teaching & consulting	Lessons, workshops, courses. \$20–\$100+/hr private; \$50–\$200 group; \$1,000+ course if you build an audience first.
7. Digital products	Sample packs, presets, backing tracks, beat leases, PDF chord sheets. Create once, sell indefinitely. Be specific in naming.
8. Direct fan support	Patreon, Ko-fi, Buy Me a Coffee, Bandcamp. \$3–\$25/month per patron. 20 patrons at \$5 = \$100/month. Bandcamp Fridays = 0% fee.

INSIDER INSIGHT · THE COMPOUND EFFECT

A sustainable independent income at a modest level: \$150/mo streaming, \$80 performance royalties, \$200 live shows, \$60 merch, \$100 sync, \$200 from two students, \$50 Bandcamp = \$840/month. Not from being famous — from being systematic. The ladder: Months 1–6 near zero (investment). 6–18 occasional income. Year 2–3 \$50–\$300/mo. Year 3–5 \$500–\$2,000/mo. The mistake is treating Stage 1 income as evidence the career isn't viable. It's only evidence you're at the beginning.

Monthly income tracker

SOURCE	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN
1. Streaming						
2. Performance						
3. Sync						
4. Merchandise						
5. YouTube						
6. Teaching						
7. Digital products						
8. Fan support						
TOTAL						

My activation priority

Rank the eight in order of which you'll activate first (1 = highest priority for your situation).

♦ COMPLETION GATE

- ☐ You've ranked all 8 income streams in priority order for your situation.
- ☐ You've identified your top 3 to activate in the next 90 days.
- ☐ You have a monthly tracker where you'll record actual income.
- ☐ You understand that no single stream replaces a job — combinations do, over time.

PART FIVE

Your Career Architecture

Industry navigation. Evaluating opportunities. Building catalog as wealth. The long game.

§ 13

Industry Navigation

Who does what — and when you actually need them.

The music industry has specific roles that exist for specific reasons. Understanding what each person does — and when you actually need them versus when someone is trying to take advantage of you — is essential professional knowledge.

INSIDER INSIGHT · THE PREMATURE TEAM MISTAKE

One of the most costly mistakes new artists make is hiring a manager or signing with a label before they have anything worth managing or releasing. A manager's job is to scale what already works. If nothing is working yet, there's nothing to scale — and a percentage of zero is still zero. The right time for a manager: when you have consistent income, a growing audience, and more opportunities than you can handle alone.

Industry roles — and when you actually need them

ROLE	WHEN YOU NEED THEM	COST
Manager	Consistent income and more opportunities than you can manage. NEVER when starting out.	15–20% of gross
Booking agent	Venues reaching out; turning down shows due to volume.	10–15% of fees
Entertainment attorney	Before signing ANYTHING significant — record/publishing/sync deal over \$1,000, management.	\$300–\$500/hr; many offer free 30-min consults
Music publisher	When your catalog is strong enough that pitching is more work than you can do. Most indies don't need one.	25–50% of publishing
Publicist / PR	Significant releases where earned media would meaningfully matter.	\$500–\$3,000+/mo
Sync agent	When you have 20+ pro-quality tracks and sync is a strategic goal.	25–50% of sync fees
Distributor	From your very first release. Not optional.	\$0–\$50/yr
PRO (ASCAP/BMI)	Before your first release. Not negotiable.	Free to join as a writer

INSIDER INSIGHT · RED FLAGS — WALK AWAY IF YOU SEE THESE

Any manager who asks for money upfront or monthly retainers before you're earning. Any booking agency charging "registration" fees. Any publisher wanting ownership of your songs without a very compelling reason (demand an administration deal instead — you keep 100% ownership, they take 15–25% to administer). Any "label" that asks you to pay for your own marketing, recording, or PR. Any contract with "in perpetuity" or "all rights worldwide" without an attorney walk-through.

♦ COMPLETION GATE

- ☐ You can name what each of the eight industry roles does without looking back.
- ☐ You know you don't currently need a manager, label, or publicist — and why that's good news.
- ☐ You have one entertainment attorney's name in your phone for if-and-when an offer comes.
- ☐ You can identify at least three contract red flags from memory.

§ 14

Evaluating Opportunities

The professional's decision filter.

INSIDER INSIGHT · THE THREE-QUESTION TEST

Every opportunity — every deal, partnership, collaboration, "investment" in your career — should pass three questions before you say yes:

1. Does this put money in my pocket, or take money out?
2. Does this grow my audience, catalog, or income — specifically how?
3. Do I own more after this than I owned before?

If the answer to all three isn't clearly yes, the answer to the opportunity is no.

Opportunity evaluation worksheet

One copy per offer.

OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION (WHAT IS BEING OFFERED)

QUESTION	YOUR ASSESSMENT
Money in my pocket or out?	In / Out / Both
Grows audience, catalog, or income? How?	
Do I own more after than before?	Yes / No / Unclear
What am I giving up (rights, %, time, money)?	
What if it doesn't work — am I obligated?	
Attorney reviewed (if significant)?	Yes / No — flag / N/A
Verifiable reputation?	Verified / Unverified / Red flags
Worst case if it doesn't work out?	Minor / Moderate / Career-threatening

MY DECISION: ACCEPT · NEGOTIATE · DECLINE · SEEK LEGAL REVIEW FIRST — AND REASONING

INSIDER INSIGHT · MASTER OWNERSHIP IS THE WHOLE GAME

Every bad deal I've watched in twenty-five years traces back to one thing: an artist who didn't understand what they were signing away. Your masters are your most valuable long-term asset — streaming royalties, sync fees, SoundExchange income all flow from owning them. A label deal that requires you to sign over your masters is not the same as a distribution deal. An entertainment attorney for \$300–\$500 reviewing a significant deal isn't an expense — it's the cheapest career insurance you'll ever buy. Default position on any offer involving your masters: no, with a smile, until an attorney has read it.

✦ COMPLETION GATE

- ☐ You can recite the three questions from memory.
- ☐ You have a copy of the evaluation worksheet you can print or duplicate.
- ☐ You know the major contract red flags well enough to spot them in a real document.
- ☐ You commit to running every offer above \$1,000 past an entertainment attorney.

§ 15

Your Catalog Wealth Builder

The asset that pays you while you sleep — for the rest of your life and beyond.

Your catalog — the collection of songs you own — is the foundational wealth-building asset of a music career. Unlike a salary, which stops when you stop working, catalog income compounds over time. Songs you write today will generate income for 70 years after your death.

INSIDER INSIGHT · HOW CATALOG CREATES WEALTH

A song placed in a film earns a sync fee today, performance royalties every time the film airs, and mechanical royalties every time someone streams it because they heard it there. One song. Three income streams. Potentially for decades. A catalog of 50 well-registered, quality songs is worth substantially more than 5 — more surface area for sync, discovery, and licensing. The artists who build real wealth are often the ones who wrote the most songs and owned the most of what they wrote. Ownership is the game.

My catalog log

Every song you own is a financial asset. Track them all — past, present, future.

TITLE	RELEASED	ISRC	MONTHLY STREAMS	SYNC?	PRO ✓	MLC ✓

MAYA'S WORKBOOK · WORKED EXAMPLE

Maya's catalog log at month 12: six songs released and registered. Around \$72/month combined streaming, one sync placement at \$400 with a YouTube videographer, plus a small but real first PRO statement. The asset is small but it exists, it's hers, and it will keep paying her something every month for the rest of her life unless she sells it.

♦ COMPLETION GATE

- ☐ Every song you've released has its own row in this log.
- ☐ Every song's ISRC, PRO, and MLC registration is confirmed and documented.

- ☐ You have a recurring quarterly task to update the streams column.
- ☐ You understand this log is, mathematically, a financial asset — and you treat it like one.

PART SIX

Your Master System

Everything comes together here. Your weekly operating system. Your 12-month roadmap. Your commitment.

§ 16

The Weekly Operating System

What to do every week, in what order, and why.

Consistency is the only strategy that actually builds a music career. Not a single viral moment. Not a lucky break. Consistent output, consistently released, promoted, and registered. This weekly system makes consistency the default.

INSIDER INSIGHT · THE WEEK THAT BUILDS A CAREER

Professional musicians don't wait for inspiration. They have a system that creates the conditions for inspiration — and captures it when it comes. The artists who build careers are not more inspired than the ones who don't. They are more consistent. This system is about doing the right things in the right proportion, week after week — not doing everything every week.

The weekly schedule

DAY / FOCUS	SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES
Monday — Creation	45-minute songwriting session. Voice memos, no filtering. Review last week's ideas.
Tuesday — Production	Active recording: tracking, editing, or mixing. File and back up everything.
Wednesday — Business	Distributor dashboard. PRO statements. 15 min on email list. Pending decisions.
Thursday — Content	Batch 2-3 pieces of content. Schedule via Buffer/Later. Don't post live unless you must.
Friday — Outreach	Submit to 3-5 curators (SubmitHub/Groover). One networking outreach. Research one sync platform.
Saturday — Performance	Open mic, show, or online performance (2x/month). One intentional album front-to-back.
Sunday — Review & rest	What got done? Adjust next week. Then rest. Creative recovery is maintenance, not laziness.

MAYA'S WORKBOOK · WORKED EXAMPLE

Maya's schedule around her coffee-shop job: Mon 7-8pm (writing), Tue 8-10pm (production), Wed 6-6:30pm (business — short on purpose), Thu rest, Fri 7-9pm (outreach + content batch), Sat open mic twice a month + intentional listening, Sun planning + afternoon off.

About 8 hours/week. What gets her to year two is showing up at those eight hours without negotiating with herself.

MY PERSONALIZED WEEKLY SCHEDULE — REAL TIME BLOCKS, REAL TASKS

I will work on music every _____ and _____ at _____ for _____ minutes. My phone goes away. The session happens whether I feel inspired or not.

♦ COMPLETION GATE

- ☐ You have specific time blocks on your calendar for this week.
- ☐ Each day of the system has at least one concrete task assigned.
- ☐ You've committed to your weekly hours out loud (to yourself or another person).
- ☐ You know the system runs whether you feel like it or not.

§ 17

Your 12-Month Career Roadmap

What building a real music career actually looks like, month by month.

Built on one principle: the compound effect of consistent action. Month 1 looks nothing like Month 12. The work in Month 1 is what makes Month 12 possible. This is not inspiration. This is mathematics.

MONTHS	MILESTONES
1-2 · Foundation	§1-3 complete. Distributor account. PRO writer account active. MLC + SoundExchange registered. Email platform with welcome email + incentive. First song recorded. Spotify/Apple for Artists claimed.
3-4 · First release	First single with full pre-release strategy. Editorial pitch on time. Pre-save campaign 2+ weeks. Email announcement. Consistent posting. 10+ curators. Copyright Office registration. First merch design live.
5-6 · Audience building	Second single. Email list 100+. Live schedule started (1/month min). Submitted to 3 sync platforms. BTS content consistent. Collaboration conversations with 2-3 artists.
7-8 · Growth	Third/fourth single. Email list 250+. Revenue from 3+ streams (any amount). First collaboration release. Applied to one conference. All royalty accounts reviewed. Instrumentals submitted to sync.
9-10 · Deepening	Fifth single or EP planning. Email list 500+. 2-4 shows/month. Catalog 5-10 registered everywhere. Identified fastest-growing 2-3 streams; doubled down.
11-12 · Sustainability review	Full audit vs. Month 1. Income tracked across 8 streams. Catalog fully registered. List growth analyzed. Year 2 plan built on data. One genuine celebration — not optional.

MY YEAR 1 MUSIC INCOME TARGET

THE THREE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS I'LL DO IN THE NEXT 30 DAYS

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE FOR ME AT THE END OF YEAR 1 (BE SPECIFIC)

✦ COMPLETION GATE

☐ You've read the full 12-month roadmap.

- ☐ You've named your Months 1-2 goal in writing.
- ☐ You've identified your three priority actions for the next 30 days.
- ☐ You've defined what success at end of Year 1 looks like in concrete terms.

§ 18

Your Commitment

The system only works if you work the system.

You have something to say. The world needs to hear it. Everything else is just logistics.

— NO-MONEY MUSIC

This workbook is the logistics. Every form, every checkbox, every gate exists for one reason: to remove the obstacles between you and the work you were meant to do. There are no shortcuts past it. There is also no version of it that requires money to start.

Twenty-five years inside the music industry has taught me that the difference between artists who build careers and artists who don't is rarely talent. It is almost always whether they did the unglamorous work — registering, releasing, tracking, showing up, consistently, for long enough.

You can be one of those artists. The work is in the workbook. The decision is yours.

THE ONE THING I WILL DO TODAY (NOT TOMORROW) TO BEGIN

MY 8-WEEK GOAL (SPECIFIC, ACTION-BASED, ENTIRELY WITHIN MY CONTROL)

THE PERSON I WILL TELL ABOUT WHAT I'M BUILDING (ACCOUNTABILITY)

♦ I COMMIT TO SHOWING UP

I will work on music every _____ and _____ at _____ for _____ minutes. The session happens whether I feel inspired or not. The system does not require my mood. It only requires my presence.

SIGNATURE

DATE

This is the end of Workbook 1. The Business System is now in your hands.
Continue with Workbook 2: The Creative Mastery System.

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