THE ARTIST GUIDES

SINGLE RELEASE CHECKLIST



THE ULTIMATE SINGLE RELEASE CHECKLIST & TIMELINE

YOUR STEP-BY-STEP ROADMAP TO A SUCCESSFUL MUSIC RELEASE

Releasing music is exciting — but it can also feel overwhelming if you're not sure what to do or when to do it. That's why we've created this *Ultimate Single Release Checklist & Timeline* for you. It's a clear, step-by-step guide that takes you from finishing your track all the way through promoting it after release.

If you'd like us by your side to guide you through this process, keep you accountable, and share strategies, we're here to help with our 1:1 coaching service.

Contact us:

hello@theartistguides.net

MAKE YOUR VISION
A REALITY TODAY

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WHY YOU NEED THIS PLAN

RELEASING MUSIC TODAY IS ABOUT SO MUCH MORE THAN JUST UPLOADING A TRACK TO SPOTIFY.

With over 100,000 tracks hitting streaming platforms every single day, you need more than great music — you need organisation, strategy, and a clear plan.

Without preparation:

- Your release can easily get lost in the flood of new music.
- Playlist and press opportunities may pass you by if you submit too late.
- Your budget might spiral if you don't plan ahead.
- Fans may not engage if your promotion isn't consistent and intentional.

ORGANISATION → STRATEGY → PLAN → SUCCESS

AVOID **COMMON MISTAKES**

Having a checklist helps you avoid those pitfalls. It makes sure nothing slips through the cracks — from mastering to promotion

INDUSTRY **TIMINGS & DEADLINES**

A timeline keeps you accountable to deadlines that align with industry standards (such as submitting to Spotify editorial playlists weeks in advance).

Stay organized, avoid missing key opportunities, and make sure your music gets the attention it deserves.

By following this plan, you'll be building not just one successful release, but real momentum for your long-term growth as an artist.

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WHY THIS RELEASE CHECKLIST & TIMELINE MATTERS

Who It's Useful To

Independent Artist

If you're releasing music without a label, this gives you a clear plan to manage both the creative and business side of your release.

Emerging Artist

If you're building your fan base and want to stand out in a crowded digital market, this structure will help you do it with confidence.

Artist Manager

If you manage talent, this checklist gives you a streamlined process to keep everything on track and maximize results.

Small Label or Collective

If you're part of an indie team, this timeline helps you create an efficient workflow for your roster.

All Creators

If you're producing, writing, or performing your own music, this keeps your distribution, marketing, and promotion organized so you don't feel overwhelmed.

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WHY THIS RELEASE CHECKLIST & TIMELINE MATTERS

The Importance of Preparation & Strategy

Maximizing Reach

When you plan ahead, you can line up press coverage, playlist submissions, and content rollouts that build excitement — instead of scrambling at the last minute.

Professionalism

A structured release shows curators, blogs, press, and collaborators that you're serious and reliable. That makes them far more likely to support your release.

Financial Control

By setting your budget in advance, you'll avoid overspending and make sure your money goes where it matters most — visuals, content, PR, ads, or wherever your campaign needs the biggest push.

Sustained Momentum

Your strategy shouldn't stop on release day. Having post-release content planned ensures your single keeps growing instead of fading too quickly.

Career Growth

A consistent series of well-executed single releases builds your credibility, strengthens fan engagement, and grows your audience — all of which help you land future opportunities like label interest, booking agents, or artist management.

In short: this Checklist & Timeline transforms your single release into a full launch campaign — giving your music the best chance to stand out, cut through the noise, and truly reach the listeners who need to hear it.

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BUDGETING FOR YOUR RELEASE

NO MATTER HOW BIG OR SMALL YOUR BUDGET IS, PLANNING YOUR FINANCES IS ESSENTIAL.

Too many artists don't do any budgeting. A clear budget helps you stay professional, avoid overspending, and make sure you don't run out of money before your release is complete.

EVEN WITH LIMITED FUNDS, TRACKING EVERY COST LETS YOU PRIORITIZE WHAT MATTERS MOST AND GET THE BEST RESULTS FROM WHAT YOU HAVE.

Budget Planning

- Plan your studio, production, mixing, and mastering costs.
- Decide how much you'll invest in marketing (ads, PR, playlist pitching).
- Budget for visuals (cover art, music video, promo clips, photoshoot).
- Consider PR costs (hiring a publicist or marketing services).
- Think about live promotion (release party, tour dates, events, gigs, etc.).

On the next page is a simple budget chart for you to use. It contains a list of typical costs that you may need to consider and budget for.

Get planning! Think about which costs will deliver the most benefit for your artist project. All artists will have different priorities:

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BUDGETING FOR YOUR RELEASE

ITEM	NOTES/QUANTITY	COST
Producer/Music Production		
Mixing/Mastering		
Cover Art/Visuals		
Music Video		
Video content/clips/visualisers		
Photography/Press Shots		
Marketing/Ads		
PR/Playlist Pitching		
Merchandise/Physical Copies		
Miscellaneous/Expenses		
	TOTAL	

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Your Ultimate Single Release Checklist & Timeline

This checklist timeline walks you step by step through the entire single release process, from preparing your track to sustaining momentum after release. Follow it in order, and you'll stay organized, reduce stress, and give your music the best chance to shine.



You're Not Alone!

We provide 1:1 coaching to walk you through this entire process. Contact us at hello@theartistguides.net and we can guide you every step of the way.

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6–8 WEEKS BEFORE RELEASE:

PREPARATION PHASE

Finalize Your Music & Assets

Ensure all assets are created according to your brand guidelines.

- Make sure your final master recording is ready (double-check quality and generate your ISRC if needed).
- Prepare alternate versions you might need (instrumental, radio edit, clean).
- Organize all metadata: song title, your name, featured artists, producer credits, songwriter credits.
- Register your song with your performing rights organization (PRO) if you are the songwriter (if you have a publisher they may do this).
- Register your copyright if applicable. (e.g. yes for US, but not required for UK. Check your own country's copyright advice).
- Double-check that all samples are cleared and licensed.
- Register your sound recording with a CMO, e.g. PPL in the UK, or SoundExchange in the US (if you have a label they may do this for you).
- Finalize your cover art (make sure it meets distributor specs).

Distribution & Logistics

- Choose a distributor (Here are some popular ones if you are still choosing: DistroKid, TuneCore, CD Baby, Ditto, AWAL, etc.).
- Upload your final master recording, cover art, and lyrics to your distributor
- Schedule your release date — give yourself at least 6 weeks to ensure you can stay organised.
- Secure your UPC codes. Many distributors supply these for you.
- Set up your pre-save or pre-order campaign, if you are running one (Spotify, Apple Music, Bandcamp, etc.).

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4-6 WEEKS BEFORE RELEASE:

MARKETING ASSET CREATION

Visual Content

- Shoot your press photos (high-resolution, multiple looks).
- Create a lyric video or visualiser.
- Shoot a music video (if you plan to).
- Start making short-form content for TikTok, Instagram Reels, or YouTube Shorts.
- Capture behind-the-scenes content to share with fans.

Written Content

- Write your press release and/or artist statement with key promotional points.
- Build or update your EPK (bio, photos, links, past press, achievements, tour dates).
- Draft social media captions and plan your posting calendar.
- Write your email drafts to promote single release to your email subscriber list.

Digital Assets

- Set up your pre-save link (Feature.fm, Hypeddit, ToneDen, SmartURL, Linktree, etc.).
- Claim your Spotify for Artists URI code, so you can login to your profile and add images, bio, etc.
- Create a private SoundCloud link to the single for pitching purposes.
- Create your Spotify Canvas video (8-second loop).
- Update your website with release information.

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2–4 WEEKS BEFORE RELEASE:

PROMOTION STRATEGY

Outreach & Partnerships

- Submit your track to Spotify for Artists and Apple Music for Artists for editorial playlist consideration.
- Pitch directly to your top key relevant independent curators, radio shows, playlists, and blogs, and follow-up one week later
- Pitch to independent curators, playlists, and blogs through submission sites (e.g. SubmitHub, Groover, MusoSoup, etc.).
- Coordinate with your PR team or publicist (if you have one).
- Reach out to influencers or TikTok creators for collaborations.
- Schedule interviews.

Fan Engagement

- Announce your release date on your social platforms.
- Launch your pre-save campaign — consider adding incentives (giveaways, merch, early access).
- Share teaser clips and snippets on TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts.
- Connect with fans through polls, Q&A sessions, or live streams.
- Post countdown content to build hype. Consider type of content and quantity. E.g. Avoid daily announcements that just countdown to release day because they are annoying and provide little value to your followers.

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RELEASE WEEK

POST-RELEASE

Day of Release

- Share your direct streaming links everywhere.
- Post your release-day announcement and visualiser on social media
- Send email to your subscriber list.
- Actively engage with fans — reply to comments, repost stories, thank people for support.
- Submit your track to independent playlists and discovery platforms.

Boost Visibility

- Launch your paid ads campaign (Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, YouTube, etc.).
- Collaborate with other artists or creators for cross-promotion.
- Push for press coverage: blogs, reviews, and playlist placements.

1–4 WEEKS AFTER RELEASE

POST-RELEASE

Sustain Momentum

- Keep sharing content — alternate versions (acoustic, remix, live), or behind-the-scenes footage.
- Upload your official music video or lyric video to YouTube 1 week after release, and post to social media. (If you already have an established and engaged audience then release your video on same day as audio release).
- Engage social media followers with strategic posts. Create TikTok or Instagram challenges or trends around your song.
- Share milestones like streaming numbers, playlist adds, and press
- Continue pitching to curators and independent playlists.
- Celebrate wins with your followers to strengthen connection.

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YOUR BRANDING GUIDELINES

MONITOR & EVALUATE

- Track your performance (Spotify for Artists, Apple Music, YouTube Studio, TikTok Insights, distributor data).
- Measure ROI (ads, PR, playlist pitching).
- Collect fan feedback and learn what worked best.
- Adjust your strategy for ongoing promotion and future releases.

Releasing a single isn't just about putting music out there; it's about giving your art the best chance to be heard and appreciated.

IF YOU'D LIKE US BY YOUR SIDE TO GUIDE YOU THROUGH THE PROCESS, KEEP YOU ACCOUNTABLE, AND SHARE STRATEGIES, WE'RE HERE TO HELP

Let's work together to make your release campaigns as successful as possible.

By following this checklist and timeline, you're already taking huge steps toward building your career with focus and intention.



We provide unrivalled expert coaching to help you develop your music, manage release campaigns, grow your audience monetize your art, and understand the music business.

Contact us for 1:1 coaching
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