



The People Behind the Project.

Roles That Support Independent Artists in AUNZ

It beckoned to us recently, that most artists (at varying levels of their development) have absolutely zero idea of the team & systems it takes to develop a sustainable artist project at a full time level. In many of our conversations artists are focussed on one thing and one thing only, the music, and 100% of the time if the expectation is a full time career and your only focus is music, you're simply in the wrong game.

The purpose of this article is to upskill artists on the industry roles and resources available to them in different areas of their development. It is important to note that **not all** of these roles are vital to the development of projects and depending on the goals, strengths and weaknesses and abilities of the artist, it may be something the artist can ultimately do themselves or the roles aren't overly suited to where they wish to progress.

Lastly, as an artist it is really important for you to understand that if you wish to operate with these types of businesses with the goal of furthering your artist project, that you will incur a cost for any of the below resources. Just like paying a mechanic to service your car, paying for an artist service is an investment in the betterment of your brand. The first step in this process is understanding what you need in order to grow and what areas of growth you cannot do alone. From there you are able to prioritise where to best invest your money. Some of the roles and resources below require an upfront payment, others work on a percentage basis, so the overall investment is dependent on the role.

Please note that if you do not have access to the money with which to invest in services or support, that is ok, but we would advise you to spend some time researching best practices and build up those skills yourself first.

Below is a detailed rundown of key industry roles and what they do. Although we have not highlighted all roles we feel that this article is a solid guide to assist artists in understanding what's available to them.

Producer

Independent and developing artists in Australia/New Zealand can collaborate with many kinds of producers, each with distinct expertise. Below we outline key producer roles – noting how these roles may shift in DIY versus label settings.

An **Executive Producer** oversees a project at the highest level – handling budgets, schedules, and team assembly rather than the technical music. They typically come on board early, securing funding and coordinating managers, producers, and marketing.

A **Record (Track) Producer** is the creative leader who shapes the song or album. They work directly with the artist on arrangements, performances, and recording methods. Traditionally, this person oversees the entire recording project, keeping budgets, scheduling recordings, hiring studios and engineers

A **Beatmaker** (often operating in the electronic or Hip-Hop sphere) specialises in creating instrumental backing tracks. They craft drum patterns, synth lines, and samples to form the musical foundation.

A **Vocal Producer** is dedicated to the singer's performance. They work closely in the studio to get the best vocal takes and interpret the song's emotion.

A **Co-Producer** shares production duties with another producer. This can be an experienced producer collaborating with another producer, or an assistant taking on more creative tasks. In practice, a co-producer could be someone who suggests structural song changes or embellishments, provides alternate mixes and other technical advice, or both

A **Remix Producer** takes an existing track and reimagines it, usually for dance, radio, or alternate genre appeal. Unlike other producers, remixers start after the original song is complete. They receive the song's stems (vocals, instruments) and produce a new version – often changing the beat, tempo, and arrangement to give the track a different vibe.

Each producer role fits differently into the AUNZ music scene. Independent artists often multitask or work with local studios and freelance producers to stay within budget, whereas label-supported artists can afford larger teams of specialists.

Mixing Engineer

A mixing engineer is responsible for blending all the recorded elements of a song—vocals, instruments, and effects—into a polished, balanced, and cohesive track. They adjust volume levels, apply EQ and compression, pan sounds across the stereo field, and add effects like reverb or delay to create space and dimension. Their goal is to ensure each element sits well in the mix and the track translates clearly across different playback systems.

Mixing engineers collaborate closely with producers and artists to bring the creative vision to life, using technical tools and audio expertise. Whether working in major studios or independent setups across Australia and New Zealand, a skilled mix engineer is key to ensuring a track is release-ready and competitive in today's digital-first music landscape.

Mastering Engineer

A mastering engineer applies the final polish to a track, ensuring it sounds balanced, consistent, and professional across all playback systems and formats. They adjust overall EQ, dynamics, and stereo imaging, optimise loudness for streaming or radio, and prepare release-ready files tailored for platforms like Spotify, Apple Music, vinyl, or CD. Mastering also includes quality control—detecting errors, ensuring cohesion across an EP or album, and confirming the track meets industry standards. For independent artists in Australia and New Zealand, a mastering engineer is essential to ensure your music can compete with commercial releases and translate well to every listener.

A&R (Artist & Repertoire)

An A&R is a key industry figure responsible for discovering new talent and guiding artists through their creative and commercial development. They help shape an artist's sound and image, connect them with producers and songwriters, and oversee the recording process to ensure the music aligns with both the artist's vision and industry expectations. A&Rs also assist in choosing singles, building out release strategies, and liaising with other teams like marketing, distribution, and publicity.

In the Australian and New Zealand landscape, A&Rs often work more hands-on, especially with independent and developing acts. Whether based at a label, publisher, or operating independently, a good A&R acts as a long-term collaborator and career strategist—ensuring the artist's work is not only creatively strong but commercially competitive.

Distributor

A music distributor is responsible for delivering an artist's music to digital platforms such as Spotify, Apple Music,

Amazon, YouTube, and more. Their core role is to ensure the music is correctly uploaded, packaged with metadata, and delivered on time, making it accessible for global audiences to stream or purchase. Distributors also collect royalties from digital sales and streams, and pay them out to the artist or rights holder. Some distributors offer basic analytics and reporting, allowing artists to track performance across platforms.

Beyond logistics, many modern distributors—particularly in the independent sector—offer additional services such as playlist pitching, marketing support, YouTube monetisation, or sync opportunities. Choosing the right distributor is crucial for independent artists, especially in the AUNZ market, where localised support, fast royalty processing, and strong DSP relationships can significantly affect reach and revenue.

Publisher

A music publisher manages and monetises the rights to an artist's compositions, ensuring songwriters are paid whenever their music is used—whether it's streamed, broadcast, performed live, or placed in film, TV, or advertising. They handle royalty collection, copyright registration, and work with rights organisations like APRA AMCOS to track usage globally. Publishers also secure sync opportunities, negotiate licences, and often create co-writing or collaboration opportunities to expand an artist's catalogue and reach.

In Australia and New Zealand, publishers play a critical role in helping artists access international royalties and exposure, especially as digital platforms grow. Whether working with a major, boutique, or admin-only publisher, songwriters benefit from having a professional advocate who can unlock creative opportunities and ensure their work generates long-term income.

Sync & Licensing Rep

A sync and licensing representative focuses specifically on securing placements for music in visual media such as films, TV shows, advertisements, video games, and more. Their role involves building relationships with music supervisors, advertising agencies, and film studios to pitch songs that fit the specific needs of a project. They negotiate the licensing agreements, ensuring that the artist or rights holder is properly compensated for the use of their music, and handle the legalities of clearing rights for these placements. Unlike music publishers, sync reps specialise solely in monetising music through media syncs rather than managing the broader rights and royalties of an artist's catalogue.

Booking Agent + Promoter

A booking agent is responsible for securing live performance opportunities for an artist, such as club shows, support slots, festivals, and tours. They negotiate performance fees and logistics, plan tour routes, and ensure that each show aligns with the artist's career trajectory. Acting as the direct link between the artist and promoters or event organisers, they help build a sustainable live career by placing the artist in the right rooms at the right time.

While the promoter handles the event's marketing, ticketing, and production, the booking agent brings the artist to the table and ensures the artist's needs and value are met in the deal. In the AUNZ market, where geography and scale require smart touring strategies, a strong agent is essential for developing momentum and visibility through live performance.

Tour Manager

A tour manager is responsible for overseeing all logistical and operational aspects of an artist's tour, ensuring everything runs smoothly from show to show. Their duties include managing travel arrangements, accommodation, schedules, budgets, advancing shows with promoters and venues, and acting as the main point of contact for crew and local staff.

For independent and developing artists touring Australia and New Zealand—where travel distances, venue sizes, and transport logistics vary widely—a tour manager is crucial in keeping the tour organised and stress-free. They allow the artist to focus on performing, while handling behind-the-scenes issues like delays, technical setups, payments, and day-to-day coordination.

Artist Development Consultant

An artist development consultant provides personalized support across music, image, performance, and branding. They focus on long-term strategy and preparing the artist for the next stage of their career. Separate to a manager, consultants are typically bought in to address a specific area within their expertise and do not have any financial stake in the business of the artist project.

Music Manager

An artist manager is essentially the business gatekeeper within an artist team. They handle negotiations, source opportunities and organise the many other business affairs as the main delegator / mediator / communicator with booking agents, record labels, publishers, distributors, PR companies etc. They are also responsible for providing guidance to the artist on their development and should have critical knowledge about the project messaging and goals, intimate knowledge about the industry as a whole and possess a fierce belief in the artist they are representing. A manager provides a service in order for the artist to focus all of their attention on their music and the creative processes.

Publicist:

A publicist manages media outreach to build the artist's profile. This includes securing coverage in blogs, radio, and press, as well as coordinating premieres, interviews, and reviews. Publicists can often have different areas of expertise as listed below:

Radio Plugger: Specializes in promoting music to radio stations, aiming to secure airplay and interviews.

Indie Playlist Rep: Focuses on getting songs added to independent and algorithm-driven playlists on streaming platforms, enhancing discoverability.

Crisis communications: Crafts messaging and positioning during times with which an artist brand / reputation has publicly shifted.

Please note a publicist is **NOT** a vital role at a local level if the focus of an artist project is to develop repeat listenership.

Grants & Funding Consultant

A Grants & Funding Consultant helps artists identify and secure financial support from public and private funding bodies, such as government arts councils, industry initiatives, and philanthropic grants. They guide artists through the often complex application process—assisting with proposal writing, budgeting, eligibility criteria, and aligning project goals with the objectives of the funding body.

In Australia and New Zealand, where grant support plays a vital role in sustaining independent music careers, these consultants are invaluable for helping artists access resources for touring, recording, marketing, professional development, or cultural initiatives. A well-prepared grant application can unlock crucial funding that elevates an artist's project from concept to reality.

Business Manager / Music Accountant

A business manager or music accountant oversees the financial health of an artist's career, managing income, expenses, budgeting, taxes, and long-term financial planning. They handle day-to-day money matters such as tour budgets, royalty tracking, invoicing, and ensuring timely payments to collaborators and crew.

For independent and developing artists, particularly in the AUNZ market where cash flow can be unpredictable, a trusted business manager helps maintain financial clarity and sustainability. They also work closely with lawyers and managers to ensure all contracts and decisions align with the artist's financial goals and obligations, helping build a stable foundation for growth.

Music Lawyer (Entertainment Lawyer)

A music lawyer, or entertainment lawyer, specialises in the legal aspects of the music industry, protecting an artist's rights and interests across contracts, copyright, licensing, royalties, and disputes. They review, draft, and negotiate

agreements such as recording contracts, publishing deals, management agreements, sync licences, and distribution terms—ensuring that the artist fully understands their obligations and entitlements before signing.

For independent and developing artists in Australia and New Zealand, a music lawyer is essential when entering any binding agreement, especially as opportunities and exposure grow. Beyond contracts, they also advise on copyright ownership, protect intellectual property, and represent artists in disputes, helping safeguard long-term careers and creative control.

There are plenty more roles, resources and support available to artists including but not limited to:

- Creative directors.
- Sponsorships and partnerships rep.
- Digital and social Strategy.
- Marketing.

In conclusion, artists are not alone, but understanding how, why and when the above resources are suitable to chase is a really important step for artists to understand. In some cases most of the above can be irrelevant depending on an artist's goals and priorities.