



## **Being Your Own Record Label.**

*The blueprint to building your own artist business.*

In the music business of old, record labels were the "gatekeepers" because they held the keys to the three things no artist had:

- Knowledge.
- Capital.
- Infrastructure.

Essentially, if you weren't signed, your music effectively didn't exist.

Fast forward to 2026, and the gate is gone. The modern industry has democratised every single tool needed to create, develop, and promote a catalogue. For the proactive (independent) artist, this is a prime era to take control of your development. You no longer need permission to be a professional; you just need a system. In this article, we're breaking down the blueprint for running your own record company from the first demo in the studio to the complex world of global distribution and data-led marketing.

Before we dive into the logistics, let's clear up the terminology. Being "*independent*" doesn't mean you have no industry support. An artist project is considered independent the moment it operates without Major Label backing. You can have a manager, a booking agent, a sync team, and even support from a boutique indie label, and still be a true independent. It isn't about doing everything yourself; it's about owning the decision-making power and the majority of your equity.

Below is the blueprint to treating your artist business as your own label company.

### **Phase 1: Creative + A&R**

Music is a team sport.

Even if you're a solo act, your artist project still needs a department for Artist and Repertoire (A&R).

## 1. Building your Creative Roster

You need a curated list of partners to draw upon for every recording. This team includes songwriters, producers, mixing and mastering engineers. Having a consistent team that understands your vision, but continuously pushes your boundaries, ensuring that every record is a step up from the last.

## 2. The Feedback Ecosystem

The biggest perk of a label A&R is having an "objective ear." When you're in the thick of a project, you're often too close to the music to see its flaws. You must create an ecosystem with a trusted outside source who can provide constructive, often brutal, feedback during the writing and production stages. This person can be another artist, industry person, as long as they have a specific ear to breakdown what makes a record tick and how it links to the overall vision of the project.

This person should not just be a friend that knows nothing about music theory, or production knowledge.

## **Phase 2: Release + Promotion**

Once the master is finished, you move from Artist to Label Manager.

### 1. Distribution

There are 3 different types of distribution companies out there but only 2 that service independent acts, the third being exclusive to independent labels only.

*Aggregate distributors* (TuneCore, CD Baby, DistroKid) are a base level service designed to bulk upload catalogue. Although they are a fantastic starting point for releases, they do not offer a human touch to build your artist narrative at a store level (Spotify, Apple, META etc)

*Personalised distributors* offer the exact same level of upload as an aggregate, the only difference is they are focussed on a smaller roster of artists and 9/10 times you will be dealing directly with a human that will initially pitch you to digital streaming platforms. These are an integral member of an artist team because they are tapped into the platform your audiences are utilising to discover.

### 2. The Label-Standard Release Cycle

A release is not an event; it's a cycle, a repeatable system that covers everything from the point of distribution to the post-release long tail. Without a set structure, you aren't running a label; you're just dropping songs and hoping for a miracle.

We have written and spoken at length about what a label standard release cycle includes.

For more in depth information please read our [Release Cycle breakdown here](#) which covers Media strategy and pitching, digital and social strategy and an in depth discovery system.

### **3. Understanding Catalogue Data**

To work your catalogue on the front foot, you need to understand where the music is actually sticking.

- Chartmetric: Provides deep-dive data into playlisting, radio, and social growth across the global landscape.
- CoBrand (or similar tools): Helps track specific fan engagement and conversion metrics.

Music can be discovered at any time; data tells you when to double down on an old record that is suddenly gaining heat, or the moves of your listener you need to be on top of for the next release. In this day and age understanding your data is a legitimate super power because it allows you to stay in contact with your audience directly.

### **Phase 3: The Money (Royalties & Budgeting)**

If you don't understand the flow of money, you aren't a business; you're a hobbyist.

#### **1. The Revenue Streams**

You need to be registered across the board to ensure you aren't leaving money on the table:

- Mechanicals: The fee paid for the digital reproduction of your song (via your distributor).
- Performances (APRA AMCOS): Money collected when your song is played in public, on radio, or live.
- Master Royalties: The revenue from the sound recording itself, which you keep 100% of as an independent owner.
- Neighbouring Rights: Ensuring you are paid for the performance of the recording on radio and TV globally.

#### **2. Budgeting and Recouping**

Sustainability starts with the break even point. Before you spend a penny on promo, you should know exactly how many streams it takes to recoup your creative costs.

On average, Spotify pays roughly \$4500AUD per million streams (depending on the territory and listener tier). If your production and advertising cost \$3000, your first 666,667 streams are simply paying back the debt. Everything after that is profit.

The infrastructure to be your own label is available to anyone with an internet connection. If you still think you "need" a label to get started, you're either misinformed or you're lazy. Taking control of your own development is the only way to ensure that when a label finally does come knocking, you're signing a deal as a partner, not a servant.