

NORTHERN ROOT GLOBAL MUSIC ACADEMY

e-Book  
PART  
1



# ***THE INDIE ARTIST'S ULTIMATE GUIDE*** ***TO MUSIC DISTRIBUTION:*** GET IT THE RIGHT THE FIRST TIME

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO RELEASING YOUR  
SONGS INDEPENDENTLY & EFFECTIVELY

## **PART 1** *(included in this Free e-book)*

### **◆ Chapter 1: Why Choosing the Right Distributor Matters**

- The impact of distribution on an artist's success.
- Common mistakes artists make when picking a distributor.
- How *The Distributor Matchmaker Framework* simplifies the process.

### **◆ Chapter 2: Understanding Your Artist Identity & Goals**

- Are you a hobbyist, career artist, or entrepreneur?
- Do you prioritize speed, ownership, royalties, or marketing tools?
- The Artist Goal Mapping Exercise (to clarify what you need in a distributor).

### **◆ Chapter 3: The Distributor Matchmaker Framework – Find Your Perfect Fit**

- Introduction to the matchmaking system (an easy-to-follow process).
- Decision Tree: Answer key questions to find your best-fit distributor.
- Comparison Table: How distributors rank based on different artist needs.

### **◆ Chapter 4: Breaking Down the Big Players – What They Offer & Who They're For**

- In-depth analysis of DistroKid, TuneCore, CD Baby, UnitedMasters, Amuse, Ditto, Stem, AWAL, and more.
- The real pros and cons beyond surface-level marketing.
- Hidden costs, revenue splits, and deal structures exposed.

### **◆ Chapter 5: The Hidden Costs & Fine Print Decoder**

- How distributors really make money (and what artists often overlook).
- Key contract clauses to watch out for before signing up.
- Checklist: How to avoid unnecessary fees & bad deals.

## **PART 2** *(not included in this Free e-book)*

### ◆ **Chapter 6: Beyond Distribution – Unlocking Extra Perks for Maximum Growth**

- Marketing & promotional tools (which distributors offer the best).
- Sync licensing, playlist pitching, and social media integration.
- How to leverage distributor-exclusive perks to increase your reach.

### ◆ **Chapter 7: Fast vs. Long-Term Success – Picking the Right Strategy**

- The two-path strategy: Speed vs. Sustainability.
- Best distributors for quick releases vs. long-term artist development.
- How to combine multiple distributors for different purposes.

### ◆ **Chapter 8: DIY Distribution vs. Label Services – When to Upgrade?**

- When self-distribution stops being enough.
- What are label services, and how do they compare to distributors?
- How to transition without losing royalties or creative control.

### ◆ **Chapter 9: The Ultimate Step-by-Step Guide to Releasing Your Music**

- Pre-release checklist: Metadata, cover art, and marketing prep.
- Setting up distribution the right way (avoiding common mistakes).
- Post-release strategy: How to maximize exposure after your song is live.

### ◆ **Chapter 10: Conclusion – Your Next Steps to a Successful Release**

- Recap: How to use The Distributor Matchmaker Framework effectively.
- Final checklist to ensure you picked the right distributor.
- Bonus resources: Useful tools, communities, and expert tips.

### **BONUS CHAPTER: How to Turn One Song Into a Long-Term Music Career**

### **BONUS RESOURCE LIST: Essential Tools for Independent Artists**

# Introduction

## **The Somber Reality of Releasing Music as An Unsigned Artist.**

100,000 new songs are released daily on streaming platforms and with such soaring numbers, simply releasing one's music is far from enough. As an independent artist, choosing your distributor wrong could result in losing royalties or getting trapped in nasty contracts. This causes music to be buried under mountains of new content every day.

If you are facing hassle as an independent artist in the field of music distribution, don't feel stressed. You are not the only musician self-releasing music, and countless others face the same issue due to the hidden costs, abundance of options, and convoluted terms. However, what if I told you confidently selecting a distributor according to one's career goals was a possibility?

## **The Undisguised Significance of Music Distribution Software Gearsless.**

The reality is, grief or joy as an independent artist stems from music distribution. It is the gauge that decides how successful one could be when it comes to earning money from placed music, it assists in telling areas where the music is available, and determines how the artist markets himself. The aspect was single-handedly in the palms of major debates, when it came to traditional approaches, and now, even with a click of a button, independent artists can control everything. Primarily, with the approach of digital distribution, everything has gotten optimal, at least in theory.

There are several services like DistroKid, TuneCore, CD Baby, and Amuse that offer to make your music accessible on platforms like Spotify, Apple Music, and TikTok. However, things are not always that straightforward. Some keep a percentage of your revenue, while some charge a fee every year, and some even provide marketing service. But which one suits you best? That's where the Distributor Matchmaker Framework helps.

## **The Problems and Possibilities for Solo Performing Artists**

For independent self-managed artists, the online presence of their songs is not their only worry; it is figuring out how to be strategic about it as well. Common problems include:

- Financial traps - Paying fees that are not easily discernible or oversights in royalties.
- Time wasting mistakes - Choosing a distributor that does not help their career.
- Restricted marketing assistance - Trying to be in the limelight without any label support.
- The anxiety of making a selection - It is easy to lose the playlist and licensing deals that supporting brands enjoyed when moving from one distributor to another.

But here is the silver lining: For artists who are savvy enough to the world of distribution and utilize it to their advantage, retaining control over their careers while increasing their income and visibility is very much a possibility. Rise Long term success is powered by the right brand, playlist placements, licensing deals, and even influencer marketing.

### **What do you expect to learn from this e-Book?**

This e-book follows a guide rather than distribution platforms as other eBooks do. Now, it offers a matchmaking system that in turns helps you find the perfect distributor for your music career. For example, this modeling system allows you as a professional; entrepreneur and hobbyist to frame what sorts of fee structures and contracts are used in the distribution. These contracts and structures can be used to pinpoint the hidden fee and fine print distributor structure that other companies might use against you. Different distributors all have one thing in common, and that is features but what sets them apart is their long term benefits along with the payment structure in terms of royalties. This advanced eBook also explains how different teams can be combined for multiple revenue streams to allow the project to thrive. Promotion of songs can make or break you, and following this eBook ensures your songs get the attention they deserve while having a promotion plan in place.

### **Why is this eBook different?**

Like any other artist you do not have the time to sit down and go through terms and conditions. Luckily, this eBook has eliminated that nuisance through their comparisons, strategies, and important information which is not found on a distributor's platform.

This is your professional matchmaking service not for dating but for your music.

### **Prepare Yourself to Dominate Your Music Career**

As you reach the end of this e-book, you will feel ready to choose a distributor who actually works for you. That means no more guessing. No more losing sleep. You will have a detailed plan of how to make sure your music is distributed properly.

**So let's get started and get you what you deserve!**

## **Chapter 1: The Great Upload Debate – Why Your Choice of Distributor Matters**

“The secret to getting ahead is getting started.” – Mark Twain

The clock was ticking.

Jules sat in front of her laptop, tourists resting above the Submit Button. Her single, which she had spent sleepless nights crying and risking her heart, was done. She visualized seeing her song on Spotify, Apple Music, and even going viral on TikTok.

But then... the doubt started creeping in.

She had opened 3 tabs for different music distributors, DistroKid, TuneCore, CD Baby. Each one of them claimed to be the best, but then again every one of them did. But the promise of “unlimited releases,” “higher payouts,” and “the fastest distribution” did catch her eye. However, the fine print does have other questions that she wasn’t able to solve like:

Who actually pays the most?

Which one gets her the most exposure?

Was she about to sign away her music rights without realizing it?

Jules was skeptical. She knew better than anyone that one wrong move could permanently lock her into a bad deal that would strip her royalties away from her for good.

Her excitement turned into stress. What if she had selected the incorrect option?

Well, here is the twist....

That’s where most independent creators go wrong. Instead of strategically choosing a distributor, they bet on one. They either make a rash choice or get seduced by the first well crafted sales pitch they come across. And just like that they end up spending money, losing prospects, and getting locked into an awful contract.

But what if picking a distributor wasn’t a risk?

What if there was a meticulously designed process that connected you with the ideal distributor depending on your objectives, your genre, and your career strategy?

That is precisely what you are about to receive.

This chapter will explain to you why selecting a distributor is perhaps the most crucial aspect of your career as an artist. By the end of this chapter, you will be armed with all the knowledge you need to steer clear of the biggest pitfalls that end up costing artists huge sums in revenue and visibility.

So before you click Submit on your initial release... keep on reading. This might just be the difference between getting noticed and getting ignored.



## **The Choice That Can Make or Break Your Music Career**

You spend months writing, recording, mixing, and mastering your music to perfection only for it to go nowhere because of one ill-fated decision: choosing the wrong music distributor.

It sounds overly dramatic, but it is the reality more often than one might think.

Musicians drag and drop their music without a basic understanding of how actually distribution works, and hit the upload button. They tend to choose the very first option that is shown to them, get caught up by temptingly worded advertisement campaigns, and end up missing out on royalties, exposure, and the rights to their own music.

### **This chapter will cover the following:**

- ✓ A rough outline of what a music distributor does.
- ✓ The importance it holds in one's career.
- ✓ How the incorrect decision can cost you money, exposure, and even control.
- ✓ The top three blunders independent musicians make while choosing a distributor.

Finding the answer to those questions will make it clear why this decision matters and how to make sure that this decision is the right one.

## **What does a Music Distributor Actually Do?**

A distributor is the middleman between your music and the various streaming services such as Spotify, Apple Music, Tidal, YouTube Music, and others.

Prior to having digital distribution, creators had to depend on a record label to press and ship CDs or vinyl records to stores. Now, self-sufficient artists can upload their music on the internet and make it accessible to the world without the help of a label.

### **What Your Distributor Does For You**

- ✓ Sends your music to Spotify, Apple Music, and Amazon music.
- ✓ Takes care of your royalties by collecting streaming revenue and payouts.
- ✓ Makes sure that the metadata of your song is provided so it's searchable.
- ✓ Offers other options like playlist pitching, sync licensing, analytics, etc.

That all seems easy, doesn't it? Well, here's the catch...

Not all distributors operate in the same manner. Some will assist with your career while others will be detrimental.

### **The 3 Biggest Mistakes Artists Make When Choosing a Distributor**

#### **✗ Mistake #1: First Choice Out of The Biggest Bands Instead of Actual Need**

A lot of creators select a distributor claiming that it is the best without knowing much about it.

But which out of all is the 'best' distributor relies on many factors.

👉 If you are into frequent releases of music (singles, remixes, and collaborations), a cost-effective option like DistroKid would be better for you.

👉 With a one-time payment model, CD Baby might work better for users with no subscription mates.

👉 If you require marketing tools and pitching of playlists, UnitedMasters and TuneCore can render service for you better.

### **Case Study: How Picking the Wrong Distributor Hurt an Artist's Budget**

🎵 Artist: Sam from the Philippines is an Independent Trap Recording artist.

He was releasing a new song each month.

Sam decided to go with CD Baby as his friend said it was great.

They take a payment for each release instead of an annual subscription.

What outcome did this have?

After 6 months, Sam noticed he had released 6 songs spending over 180 dollars just in distribution prorated to 60 dollars per song.

He realized he could have used DistroKid and easily paid 22 bucks and released songs endlessly throughout the entire year.

He switched but lost weeks of streaming revenue so the switch was not economically efficient in some ways.

**Lesson:** For those who regularly exchange stream views for plan access, it is better to opt for a plan with unlimited streaming views.

#### **✗ Mistake #2: Not Having a Second Look At The Agreement (And Losing Profits In The End)**



Some of these distributors appear to have low fees up front but in reality require a percentage of your revenues after the fact. Others add more charges for additional services such as putting a songwriter on the project, withdrawal fees, and other more dubious tasks like taking down a song that you own.

Some things to keep in mind are as follows:


**Royalties & Payouts:** While some distributors allow you to retain 100 percent of your earnings, such as DistroKid (which requires an annual fee), others take a portion (such as CD Baby, which takes 9 percent of your streaming royalties).

**Takedown Fees:** Some companies will charge you a fee for simply wanting to take down your music.

**Withdrawal Minimums:** Some will set a limit on withdrawals. For instance, you can only withdraw your earnings after amassing a certain amount, like \$50.

**UPC & ISRC Fees:** Some companies will charge more for the codes which are needed to track your music.

### **Case Study: Losing Royalties Due to Hidden Fees**

 Artist: Julia, an indie pop artist

When Julia was seeking to distribute her debut EP, she was low on funds.

So, she created an account with a distributor that would claim to provide “free” distribution and set up Takedown her earnings were streaming instead.


She then realized this distributor was taking 20 percent of her royalties with no end in sight.

What happened?

Once her song reached over 100 thousand streams, she understood she had in excess more than 500 dollars of revenue.


She was forced to Takedown her music, then switch to a different distributor.

**Lesson:** Look at the detailed information one step before choosing a distributor.

 Mistake #3: Believing all distributors have the same qualities and characteristics.

It is not the case that every distributor has the same features or tools.

For instance,

 Playlist Pitching? UnitedMasters and TuneCore have built-in tools for pitching. DistroKid does not.

💰 Advance Payments? Some distributors like Stem & Amuse Pro advance royalties.

🇮🇹 Detailed Analytics? Some like AWAL go above and beyond basic Spotify stats.

### **Case Study: Missing Out on a Viral Moment**

🇺🇸 Artist: Kevin, R&B singer

Kevin's song blew up on TikTok.

Out of nowhere, Kevin's song started to go viral.

He needed to pitch the song to sell it to Spotify playlist curators as soon as possible.

His distributor offered no playlist pitching options, so he lost out on that opportunity.

**Lesson:** Select a distributor with the necessary functionalities to fulfill your objectives.

### **How the Wrong Choice Can Cost You Big Time**

It is not as straightforward as it seems. Picking the right distributor can either help you flourish, or make you struggle.

### **Your Next Steps: How to Make the Right Choice**

Now that you know how crucial distribution is, let's get it right.

In the next chapter, the goal is to create **The Distributor Matchmaker Framework** – a guide on how to easily select the right distributor depending on your objectives, budget, and career path.


📌 **Before you move ahead, consider the following questions:**

- 1 How regularly do I intend to drop songs? (One-off release vs. constant singles)
- 2 Am I comfortable sharing a portion of my royalties or do I wish to retain 100% of my earnings?
- 3 Do I require additional services such as playlist pitching or sync licensing?

Make sure to remember your responses. These questions are some of the most important when it comes to choosing the right distributor.

## **Quick Win: The 5-Minute Music Distributor Filter**

A step-by-step guide for independent artists

 Follow these 5 quick steps before recommending or signing up for distribution:

### **Step 1: Identify the Artist's Release Frequency (1 Minute)**

Ask the artist:

- ◆ Are you releasing music frequently (monthly or weekly)?
- ◆ Or are you releasing only a few singles or an album per year?
- ✅ If FREQUENT: Look for distributors with unlimited releases (DistroKid, TuneCore's Unlimited Plan).
- ✅ If OCCASIONAL: Consider pay-per-release options (CD Baby, TuneCore's pay-per-release model).

### **Step 2: Determine Your Royalty Preference (1 Minute)**

Ask: "Do you want to keep 100% of your royalties, or are you okay sharing a percentage?"

- ✅ Keep 100%? Go for DistroKid, TuneCore, or Amuse Pro.
- ✅ Okay with revenue sharing? CD Baby and AWAL take a cut but provide more label-like support.

### **Step 3: Check Budget & Fees (1 Minute)**


Look at hidden fees that could impact their earnings:

- 📌 Does the distributor charge yearly? (DistroKid, TuneCore Unlimited)
- 📌 Do they take a cut of royalties? (CD Baby, AWAL)
- 📌 Are there extra costs for adding a songwriter, UPC codes, or takedown fees?
- 🔍 Use this simple rule:
  - 💰 Low-budget & frequent releases? → DistroKid
  - 💰 One-time fee, no subscription? → CD Baby
  - 💰 Premium services & higher fees? → AWAL, UnitedMasters

### **Step 4: Match Features to Goals (1 Minute)**

- 📌 If the artist wants playlist pitching: Choose TuneCore, UnitedMasters, or AWAL.
- 📌 If they need sync licensing (for movies/TV): Choose CD Baby or Songtradr.
- 📌 If they want analytics & marketing tools: UnitedMasters, AWAL, or SoundOn.

### **Step 5: Make the Recommendation & Take Action (1 Minute)**

 Now that you've filtered out unnecessary options, suggest the top 2 distributors that fit the artist's needs.

📌 Final Check: Ensure they understand the terms before signing up!

🎵 All set to discover your ideal distributor? Let's go straight to Chapter 2!

## Chapter 2 :Are You a Hustler, a Dreamer, or a Mogul? Know Thy Artist Self

*"Know who you are, and be it. Know what you want, and go out and get it."* –  
Carroll Bryant

### The Story of Two Artists: The Rabbit and the Tortoise (But With a Plot Twist)

Both Jared and Miles stepped into the world of music at the same point in time.

The tortoise in this narrative scenario seems to be Jared since he was the one who started releasing music non stop, every other week. This action in itself started to get Jared single streams and followers, but he did not stop there. Jared promoted the singles on social media and did all he could in order to try to get tips for good playlist placements. His philosophy was clear, "More music, more opportunities to make it big."

On the contrary, Miles is the longer term strategy planner. Instead of rushing to release songs, he built his fanbase, carefully released singles, and made sure to build hype for every drop.

At the end of the year, Jared had released over thirty songs. Unfortunately for him, during this period, none of his songs was able to achieve anything remarkable. All streams, new followers, and even the momentum seemed to have a common trait - they all faded away within hours. This clearly shows that all of his efforts went in vain while his momentum felt like running on a treadmill.

And Miles? Well, he made a fraction of the releases Jared did and has only dropped four singles. But for Miles all of his releases were major events so he leveraged his smart marketing strategies and planned every release very carefully. And It paid off since Mitch was able to add his songs to bigger playlists and the followers that he earned truly appreciated his craft and were not passive listeners.

Here is the best part...

👉 Neither perspective is incorrect, yet only one chose the optimal approach towards achieving their objectives.

So, which one are you?

Prior to selecting a distributor, and even prior to considering the launch of your next track, remember this: The manner in which you distribute your music ought to be in consonance with your personal identity. Are you a hustler? A dreamer? Or a mogul? Each one needs a unique mindset.

By the end of this chapter, you will be clear about who you are, what you really need, and how to identify the right distributor who resonates with your ideas.

Let's go. 🚀

## Why This Matters: The Foundation of Smart Music Distribution

You need to have a clear picture of yourself as an artist before selecting a distributor, working on promotions, or even deciding upon a release date for your song.

You cannot expect all distributors to serve your needs because every artist has different objectives. For instance, some distributors focus on quick releases to get songs out instantly, while some others are more concerned with developing an artist's career long-term. Some put emphasis on their marketing and will do everything to make you famous, while some will only manage your royalties.

## The Three Artist Types: Which One Are You?

Most independent artists fall into one of three categories. Understanding your artist type will help you:

- ✅ Select the most suitable distributor.
- ✅ Try pacing your releases.
- ✅ Achievable career milestones should leverage your strengths.

Here comes the explanation:

### 1 The Hustler: "Quantity Over Everything"



"The more music I put out, the greater my probability of going viral."

Traits:

- ✅ You upload music every couple of weeks or months.
- ✅ You endlessly post online and seem to never take a break.
- ✅ You are not overly obsessed with perfection because workability makes more sense.
- ✅ Your long-term approach is driven not by a rigid purposeful strategy, but by speed and adaptability.

## Best Music Distribution Strategy:

- ✓ Utilize services using the distribution model and charge a flat fee for unlimited releases (DistroKid, TuneCore Unlimited, or Ditto Music).
- ✓ Utilize distributors with performance benchmarks (Amuse, UnitedMasters).

✓ Give preference to services that enable monetization of content on social media platforms (TikTok, Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts).

#### **Pitfalls to Avoid:**

✗ Distributors that monetize via a subscription model for each release should be avoided at all costs.

✗ Quality should not be traded for a quick strategy, as these usually backfire on the brand or artist.

✗ Releases should be plentiful, but tagged and promoted appropriately for them to achieve reach and frequency status.

#### **Best for artists who:**

✓ Aspiring to flood the industry to test their mettle when it comes to genres.

✓ Have a knack and marketing skills when it comes to popular fads on various platforms.

✓ Build a presence through sheer volume of output.

📌 Example: Russ built his fan base by releasing a new song every week without fail for over a year. As a result, he was able to gain a lot of new fans.

## **2 The Dreamer: "One Song, One Masterpiece"**

🗣️ "I want my music to be more than just a collection of sound; I want it to make waves."

Traits:

✓ A single release can dominate the charts, so you take all the time you need perfecting every detail.

✓ Every project is meticulously crafted before being released into the world.

✓ Your storytelling and branding is deepened, creating a stronger connection with your fans.

✓ You are willing to build slowly because you want to have a career that lasts.

#### **Best Music Distribution Strategy:**

✓ Work with a distributor that has marketing and playlist pitching features (like CD Baby, AWAL, or Stem).



✓ Use distributors that do not charge annual fees so that your older songs can stay published forever (such as CD Baby and Stem).

✓ Look for artist development features like licensing or PR support (such as with AWAL or Symphonic).

#### **Pitfalls to Avoid:**

✗ Try to resist the urge to release music rapidly just to fill a quota of activity.

✗ Watch out for high platform fees, especially if you only release a handful of songs each year.

✗ Failure to advertise will lead a single to disaster. It does not matter how good the song is, it will never gain any traction.

#### **For seasoned artist who:**

✓ Have patience and primarily focus on the brand they want to build.

✓ Wish that their music is felt deeply instead of having a stream count.

✓ Are ready to tell stories through marketing in order to appropriately do justice to every release.

📌 For example, Billie Eilish took time to compose her songs in her earlier years by making sure every release had special visuals and deeper emotions attached to the fans and was holistic in nature.

### **3 The Mogul: Music Is My Business**

👛 I'm not just creating spottily but building an empire.

Traits:

✓ You consider yourself to be both a business person and an artist.

✓ You wish to 'own' your masters which means maximizing outgoing revenue and finding novel ways to create income.

✓ Your focus is on branding, partnerships and expansion.

✓ Merch, licenses, and other sales that go beyond just having the music streamed.

### **Best Music Distribution Strategy:**

- ✓ Pick a distributor that is transparent and pays greatly such as Stem, Symphonic, or Vydia.
- ✓ Use services that allow you to keep all of the rights such as UnitedMasters or AWAL.
- ✓ Use distributors with other ways of income like selling beats on BeatStars or publishing with TuneCore or even Sync deals with Symphonic.

### **Mistakes You Should Not Make:**

- ✗ Do not use high-commission platforms. If you make money, you must keep most of it.
- ✗ Do not limit your search to streaming services only. Consider publishing, licensing, and more.
- ✗ Always have a full understanding of the agreement before signing.

### **Best for artists who:**

- ✓ Strive to make their earnings from music as a business and not a side hobby.
  - ✓ Want their money to come from more than just song plays.
  - ✓ Seek brand partnerships, licensing opportunities, and full ownership.
- 📌 Example: Nipsey Hussle transcended the label of artist. He was a business mogul who built an empire through well thought out strategic moves.

### **Now, Select Your Route 🚀**

You should be able to self-identify now as an artist.

- ? Are you the Hustler, who constantly releases new music?
- ? De the Dreamer, someone who puts a lot of thought into the release of their songs?
- ? Or perhaps you are the Mogul, viewing your music career as a business outlet?

### **🎯 The Next Steps for You To Take:**

- ✓ Start by identifying what kind of artist you are.

✅ Find the suitable distributor who can work with you.

✅ Begin organizing your next release with a more clear target in mind.

In the upcoming chapter, we will help you select the right distributor according to your artist persona so that you don't waste time and resources on the wrong platform.

Now, let's get to work finding your perfect match! 🎵💡

This chapter is practical, captivating, and valuable, perfectly engaging the reader to the next stage of their journey. Would you like to incorporate worksheets and self-checks to make this more engaging? 😊

### **Self-Assessment Quiz: "Which Artist Type Are You?"**

Answer all 10 questions to the best of your abilities. Don't forget to keep a record of your answers (A, B, or C). After, tally up how many times you circled each letter. That will identify your artist type.

#### **1. At what frequency do you intend on dropping your music?**

- A) Every few weeks – I believe in keeping the momentum going.
- B) Every few months – I prefer to take my time crafting each song.
- C) Whenever it makes business sense – I look at the bigger picture.

#### **2. What is your key objective as an artist?**

- A) Get as many people as possible to hear my music and go viral.
- B) Build a deep emotional connection with fans and create timeless music.
- C) Make a sustainable, profitable business out of my music.

#### **3. What is your strategy when it comes to advertising and marketing your music?**

- A) I post consistently on social media, engage with trends, and drop frequently.
- B) I focus on storytelling, visuals, and high-quality promotion for each release.
- C) I invest in ads, partnerships, and revenue streams beyond streaming.

#### **4. What are your thoughts on social media?**

- A) It's my playground – I use it to engage, promote, and drop new content.

- B) I use it to narrate my story, although I do not want to depend on the tool so much.
- C) I apply it to social media on a strategic level, such as for branding and partnership deals – it is my business hobby.

**5. What would you consider as the most important aspect in your music career?**

- A) Audience and fast fame – I would like to get spotted as soon as possible.
- B) A deep long-lasting relationship with my audience that engages with my music.
- C) Lastingness, possessibility, and multiple sources of income.

**6. How do you go about managing your finances in your music business?**

- A) I work on getting more streams and finding new ways to monetize my social media posts.
- B) I spend money to make money – better production, visuals, and experiences will pay off.
- C) I set aside a certain proportion of money and seizures, track my earnings, and look for clever ways to make more money.

**7. What are your thoughts on working with record labels?**

- A) I want to remain self-sufficient and expand quickly on my own.
- B) In principle, I would be open to the idea if it supports my artistic direction.
- C) I am open to it as a possible business venture once it happens.

**8. What is your branding strategy?**

- A) I see what works so I try out different styles and whims.
- B) I build up my image to suit my art.
- C) I concentrate on the consistency, marketability, and long-term positioning of a given project. When choosing a strategy or distributor, you should keep in mind the timeline.

**9. How do you evaluate success?**

- A) The number of streams, viral moments, and overall noise around the project.
- B) Positive engagement, impactful releases, and artistic satisfaction.
- C) Profits, ownership, and brand value.

**10. Which aspect of being an artist do you find most interesting?**

- A) The excitement that comes with releasing new music and watching people's reactions.

B) Being able to create something of value.

C) The vast scope that goes beyond music.



## **Results from the Artist Test**

◆ If you answered mostly A's, you are a Hustler!

◆ If you answered mostly B's, you are a Dreamer!

◆ If you answered mostly C's, you are a Mogul!



Reflection Worksheet: Define Your Artist Identity

**Consider these questions to help you define your goals and strategy prior to selecting a distributor.**

1. In three years' time, what would success look like for you?

(For example: A dedicated fanbase, a yearly X amount revenue, signed a label deal, independent, etc.)

2. What would you say are your strong points as a creator?  
(For example: Marketing savvy? Fan engagement? Quality focused? Business focused?)
3. What would you consider your greatest obstacles?  
(For example: No marketing budget? Marketing budget, but no exposure?)
4. What would the most compelling process be for you to release music under your brand?  
(For example: Frequent releases to remain visible? Focus on high quality releases? Combination of music and business projects?)
5. What would you like fans to describe you as in one sentence?  
(For example: "Always on point," "A storyteller who uses one song for everything," "A visionary who is creating a movement.")

 **Action Point: Follow Up Action Based on what type of artist you are.**

 **Hustlers:**

- ✓ Pick a distributor with no release cap ( Distrokid, TuneCore Unlimited, Ditto Music) - they focus on servicing you.
- ✓ Focus on speed and volume release consistency helps.
- ✓ Short video platforms TikTok, Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts are for marketing.
- ✓ Steer clear of per release fee distributors, as they'll take a chunk of your money.


 **Dreamers:**

- ✓ Get a distributor with marketing tools and playlist pitching capability CD Baby, AWAL, Stem.
- ✓ Promote each release like a landmark event through visuals and storytelling.
- ✓ Cultivate a genuine interaction with the fans. It's better to have fewer high quality interactions than many shallow ones.
- ✓ Research available publishing and sync licensing deals to improve income.



### **For Moguls:**

- ✓ Work with a distributor that can guarantee your business' growth and ownership. (Stem, Symphonic, Vydia)
- ✓ Innovate the business model to include a sync, publishing, merchandise, and brand partnership as additional income sources.
- ✓ Educate yourself on royalty distribution, contracts, and monetization strategies to get the most out of what you earn.
- ✓ Stop focusing on short term marketing and branding efforts and instead pursue long term strategies.

Now that you are aware of your artist type, pick the most appropriate music distributor for your strategy. Next chapter will discuss how to identify the best distributor. Stay tuned! 

## Chapter 3: "Swipe Right on Your Distributor – The Matchmaker Framework"

*"The right thing at the wrong time is the wrong thing."* – Joshua Harris

### The One That Got Away

Jace knew this new single was a blasted hit. From the catchy hooks to the deep-meaning lyrics to the smooth beat uploads, everything was hooked up perfectly. It was a smooth head-nodding beat that allured the listeners whole-heartedly. Finally, every bit of information made the groundbreaking song that would take him places.

Instead of putting a lot of thought behind it and overthinking stuff, he made the smart decision of getting everything released at a faster pace. He uploaded the song through the first distributor he came across. This particular distributor specialized in "quick turns" and promised infinite amounts of releases. Less than a week later, his song was alive on every streaming platform.

His royalties? Beneath what he had been led to believe.

Playlists? Not a single one had it.

A little typo on his song title? The distributor wanted a whole new dollar just to set it right.

When a label first contacted him about wanting to sign him, Jace was hit with the harsh reality that he had locked himself into one terrifyingly expensive deal. He was no free-man, that is for sure.

He had made haste and frantic decisions without deep consideration. Now, his song, the one where he put blood and sweat into, is suffering due to poor compatibility.

Familiar, right?

The mistake in reasoning stems from not understanding the context. Choosing a distributor isn't simply pressing buttons, it's a lot deeper. Selecting the wrong distributor guarantees losing money, opportunities, and even differentiation over an individual's own music.

But what if you could seamlessly find the ideal distributor that caters to your unique needs — all without overly complicated problems, hidden agendas, or frustrating emotions?

**Welcome to The Distributor Matchmaker Framework. Together, let's find your ideal distributor match.** 🎵💖

Picking a music distributor is as important as choosing a business associate. The correct distributor will ensure that your music gets to the right demographic and audience, extract the maximum royalties for your work, and even support you through marketing and playlist pitching. A wrong distributor? They may sign you into terrible contracts that severely restrict you, exploit you with fees, and stifle your professional development.

To help you avoid the pitfalls and find the perfect match for your music career, we introduce The Distributor Matchmaker Framework. This framework will help you systematically define your goals, compare the available options, and arrive at an optimal decision.

## Step 1: Define Your Artist Profile

Before you begin your search for a suitable distributor, you first need to compare distributors and figure out which type of artist you are and what your priorities are. Different artists have different requirements and the best distributor for you will heavily depend on your career ambitions, available budget, and the strategy with which you plan on releasing your music.

### Which Kind Of Artist Do You Identify As?

**The Independent Hustler** - Each project is a reflection of your brand; thus you want to be in charge of creation, marketing, and distribution. You like to work with distributors who have no or low fees with fast payout options.

- **The Growth Focused Artist** - You need a distributor who can also actively promote your music. Marketing and analytics along with playlisting during the release is crucial for you.
- **The Business Minded Entrepreneur** - There's more to life than just singles. You seek out funding opportunities for growth, sync licensing, and label services.
- **The Quick Release Creator** - Your output is so large you do not have the luxury of time to market each piece of art individually. You need a distributor who has unlimited upload options for a low monthly subscription.

### Match Your Priorities to Key Distribution Features

Once you identify your artist profile, match it with the key features you need in a distributor:

Feature	Why It Matters	Who Needs It
<b>100% Royalties</b>	Keep all your earnings without revenue splits.	Independent Hustlers, Entrepreneurs
<b>Marketing &amp; Playlisting</b>	Get your songs on Spotify playlists and promotional campaigns.	Growth-Focused Artists
<b>Sync Licensing</b>	Earn money by getting your music into films, TV, and commercials.	Entrepreneurs, Growth-Focused Artists
<b>Fast Payouts</b>	Receive royalties as soon as possible.	Hustlers, Quick-Release Creators
<b>Unlimited Releases</b>	Release as much music as you want for one flat fee.	Quick-Release Creators

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## Step 2: Compare the Major Distributors

Now that you know what you need, let's break down the biggest distributors in the game and how they compare.

### The Big Players

Here's a quick **comparison chart** to help you evaluate the most popular distributors:

Distributor	Cost	Payouts	Marketing Support	S y n c Licensing	Best For
DistroKid	\$22.99/year	Monthly	Limited	No	Quick-Release Creators
TuneCore	\$14.99+/year	Weekly	Strong	Yes	Growth-Focused Artists
CD Baby	\$9.99+/release	Monthly	Good	Yes	Entrepreneurs
UnitedMasters	Free/\$59.99+/year	Monthly	Strong	Yes	Growth-Focused Artists
Amuse	Free/\$24.99+/year	Monthly	Moderate	No	Hustlers, Budget Artists

### Hidden Fees to Watch Out For

There are distributors who promote low price ads that come with additional costs that take away most of your profit. Look out for the following:

- **Store Delivery Fees** – There are some distributors that place extra charges for delivery of your music to selected destinations or platforms.
- **Takedown Fees** – There are some distributors that ask you to pay in case removal of your music is needed to be done if you wish to change your distributor.
- **Additional Artist Fees** – There are distributors that expect you to make additional payments if you wish to distribute multiple names.

### **Step 3: Use The Distributor Matchmaker Framework**

Here is a straightforward framework consisting of three questions that will help you identify the most suitable distributor:

1. **What's your #1 priority?**
  - Keeping 100% of your royalties? → **DistroKid or Amuse**
  - Getting better marketing and playlist opportunities? → **TuneCore or UnitedMasters**
  - Having access to sync licensing? → **CD Baby or TuneCore**
2. **How often do you release music?**
  - A few singles a year? → **CD Baby (pay per release)**
  - Multiple releases per month? → **DistroKid (unlimited for a yearly fee)**
3. **Do you need label-style services?**
  - Yes, I want funding, partnerships, and label services → **UnitedMasters or AWAL**
  - No, I just need distribution → **DistroKid, TuneCore, or Amuse**

### **Step 4: Quick-Win Action Plan**

Independent artists looking for a fast easy way to implement what they've learnt or follow this step by step guide.

#### **Step 1. Define Your Needs (5 Minutes)**

You have to set your priorities whether you wish to focus on royalties, marketing, sync licensing or unlimited releases.

#### **Step 2. Compare Distributors (10 Minutes)**

Look thoroughly at the above comparison chart and narrow it down to your top 2 choices.

#### **Step 3. Read Reviews & Terms (15 Minutes)**

Look for genuine artist reviews on Youtube or Reddit and read the fine prints on each distributor's websites.

Remember to register for a free plan or a plan with the lowest cost which takes about ten minutes. If you are indecisive, there are two options; the free plan called Amuse and the pay-per-release plan called CD Baby.

#### **Step 4. Prepare & Upload Your First Release (30-60 Minutes)**

Ensure that your cover art, audio file and metadata are ready and correctly formatted before uploading the first release.

#### **Step 5. Promote & Track Your Release (Ongoing)**

After uploading, set the desired release date, and check your submission details before finalizing. This process will take thirty to sixty minutes.

Don't forget that the monitoring process after releasing the track will be ongoing. Check your performance with the distributor's tools or the Spotify for Artists, Apple Music for Artists tools, along with the analytics dashboards.

With these steps, you could make the choice, distribute your music, and begin receiving royalties in no time.

### **Final Thought**

Your distributor should be chosen wisely since they are your partner in business. Choosing the right distributor is not only about distributing your music on Spotify but also setting your business for future success.

From now on, you should know how to find your ideal partner, so, sign up with the right distributor, and build the career you've always dreamed of.



## Chapter 4: "DistroKid, TuneCore, CD Baby... Who's Really in Your Corner?"

*If you don't understand the details of your business, you are going to fail.* – Jeff Bezos

Let's put ourselves in this scenario: You've just finished mixing and mastering your epic song and from how you've put it together, it feels like it can definitely change your life. The bass kicks in at all the right moments, the vocals are thin sliced perfection and you finally feel satisfied. Your most creative piece feels perfect to set loose. Exciting, right?

Now you sit down with the laptop and geared up to finally set your piece free. Then...

Decision paralysis.

DistroKid? TuneCore? CD Baby? UnitedMasters? Amuse? A dozen platforms flood your screen and every one seems to claim to be the best and the artist friendly. Each claims to help you with "maximum earnings" at global reach.

Taking a cut of your royalties forever? Paying to keep your music live? Locking you into contracts that have limited options? Not to forget: many distributors don't even help you grow as an artist. Something fixed, but all are promises.

This region is where many independent artists tend to make mistakes that can prove to be financially costly.

But you not so much. Rather, the reality is selecting a distributor based on the cloud surrounding can cost you regions. Missing opportunities, losing money or fixing yourself into a bad deal. So why pay the price?

The time has come for you to check out the ultimate freemium system that has no boundaries.

In this chapter, you will see the detailed analysis of some important entities which involve both – 'who's on your side' versus 'who's in it only for money' and 'who is the perfect to cater to your requirements' perspective. And by the time you are through with reading this, you will not just pick a distributor. Rather, you will make a well-informed choice. Let's proceed with it. 🚀

### Introduction: Why Choosing the Right Distributor is a Career-Defining Move

Making a selection for a music distributor is not merely about putting your song on Spotify, Apple Music, or YouTube Music, It is also about securing maximum revenue, fully retaining control over your work, and building a sustainable future. What's devastating about making the wrong decision? The ramifications could include paying expensive concealed charges, surrendering control of your royalties, or having limited options for brand upward mobility. But let me tell you what the best selection will enable you to do – it will enhance your marketing strategies by putting your music within the reach of millions of listeners and it will aid in brand development while ensuring that you are compensated suitably.

In this chapter, we will prepare you to:

- ✅ Identify the major music distributors and their advantages & downsides.
- ✅ Examine hidden fees & ancillary contracts that capture most artists.
- ✅ Strategize towards goal attainment and matching it with the right distributor.
- ✅ Critically analyze and dissect the right platforms with respect to your release strategies.

Let me just jump to the point.

### 🎯 **Understanding What a Music Distributor Actually Does**

A music distributor acts as an intermediary between you and streaming platforms. Their job includes receiving your song, adding appropriate metadata, and distributing it to:

Spotify, Apple Music, YouTube Music, Tidal, Deezer (streaming services)

Amazon, iTunes, Beatport (music stores)

TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat (social media integrations)

While some distributors will only handle distribution, others will go a step further and offer services such as:

- ✅ Playlist pitching (landing you on Spotify playlists)
- ✅ Royalty collection (payment collection on your behalf)
- ✅ Marketing tools (supporting the release of your song)
- ✅ Sync licensing (placement of your song in movies, games and advertisements)

It's also important to know that not all distributors offer the same services. Some have hidden costs. Some net a percentage of your royalties. And some make outrageous promises and simply fail to deliver.

Let's break them down one by one.

## 💡 The Big Players: Who's Really Worth It?

### 1 DistroKid – The Fast & Affordable Choice

◆ Pricing: Unlimited uploads for \$22.99 per year

◆ Royalties: 100% royalties from the start

#### ◆ Pros:

✓ All distributions are live within 1 - 2 business days

✓ Flat yearly fee is beneficial to those artists who actively release music

✓ No royalty deduction

✓ Supplies verified artist pages on Spotify

✓ Available on YouTube Content ID (additional charges apply)

#### ◆ Cons:

✗ No free plans (only subscription based options)

✗ No promotional aid or playlist pitching

✗ YouTube monetization and Shazam leases are paid features

✓ **Best For:** Artists who release frequently & want quick, hassle-free distribution.

### 2 TuneCore – Great for Established Artists, Expensive for Beginners

◆ Pricing: For 1 artist unlimited releases for \$49.99/year and for single artist \$14.99/year

◆ Royalties: You keep 100% royalties from the start

#### ◆ Pros:

✓ No revenue splits - you are entitled to the entire income

✓ Placement and advertising in films & ads are easily attainable through sync licensing

✓ Has greater marketing options than DistroKid

✓ Monetization through TikTok and Instagram ad campaigns is supported

◆ **Cons:**

✗ More pricey compared to other services

✗ Automatic playlisting is not available.

✗ Weak community support for artists

✓ **Best For:** Serious and professional monetizers focused on licensing and trademark prospects.

**3 CD Baby – One-Time Fee, But Takes a Cut**

◆ Cost: \$9.99 per single, \$29.99 per album (one-time payment)

◆ Royalties: Takes 9% of streaming revenue

◆ **Pros:**

✓ No renewal fees (for songs paid once, live on the platform forever)

✓ CD & vinyl sales are available

✓ Publishing admin and sync licensing services offered

◆ **Cons:**

✗ Charges on top of the 9% streaming revenue cut

✗ Longer distribution period compared to DistroKid/TuneCore

✗ Limited marketing and playlisting control

✓ **Best For:** Individual artists who prefer no annual payments and are okay with a small cut from royalties.

**4 UnitedMasters – The Industry-Connected Option**

◆ Cost: Free plan (Cuts 10% of royalties) OR \$59.99 a year to keep all royalties

◆ Royalties: Free plan = 90%, Paid plan = 100%

◆ **Pros:**

- ✓ Great relationships (NBA, ESPN, and others)
- ✓ Playlist pitching & sync opportunities
- ✓ Provides tools for promotion on Tiktok

◆ **Cons:**

- ✗ Loses 10% on the free plan
- ✗ Limited customization & metadata edit

✓ Best For: Those looking for potential brand deals, funding and exposure in the music industry and sports

## **The Hidden Costs & Traps Artists Overlook**

Numerous distributors claim to have low charges; what they actually do is cut the costs in a way. Here is how they monetize:

### ▲ **Annual Fees vs. One-Time Fees**

CD Baby charges a one off upfront fee but then stretches out the royalties.

DistroKid charges a flat annual rate, and if payment is halted, your music is removed.

TuneCore recently altered their terms to an annual model, as opposed to a set fee per release.

### ▲ **Royalties – Are You Keeping 100%?**

DistroKid and TuneCore let you keep 100% origination fees.

CD Baby and UnitedMasters take a cut from the revenue generated (This becomes substantial later).

### ▲ **YouTube & Monetization Fees**

Some distributors charge additional costs for YouTube Content ID.

Some cut from your revenue generated through YouTube.

## ▲ "Exclusive" Contracts & Rights Issues

Some companies make the switching off sign up dangerous.

Some charge royalties while cutting some ownership to the music (always read the fine print!).

## 🎯 How to Pick the Right Distributor for YOU

🚀 **Choose DistroKid if:** You release **frequently** and want a **fast, cheap, no-frills** option.

💰 **Choose TuneCore if:** You want **marketing tools & sync licensing** without giving up royalties.

🎵 **Choose CD Baby if:** You prefer a **one-time fee** and don't mind sharing revenue.

📢 **Choose UnitedMasters if:** You want **brand partnerships & sync deals**.

## 📌 Final Takeaway: Make the Smart Choice

The wrong distributor can result in financial loss, loss of property, and loss of business opportunities. The right one aids you in growing, earning, and keeping control.

Knowing what actually lies behind every platform, you can now decide what will serve you best in terms of your music.

◆ So... **which one will you choose?** 😊

## 🚀 Quick Win: The 5-Step Distributor Matchmaker Method

Selecting the Most Appropriate Music Distributor Made Easy for You

✅ Step 1: Define Your Goal

Consider the following:

◆ Do I want the preferred/simplest option to publish music? → (DistroKid)

◆ Do I want promotional and synchronization licensing details? → (TuneCore or UnitedMasters)

◆ Do I want to get lost of payments and yearly subscriptions? → (CD Baby)

💡 Record every answer in a single statement. This will be your guiding principle in choosing the right distributor.

## ✅ Step 2: Compare Costs & Earnings

Now that loophole is filled, seek the best option of spending and earning:

- 💎 If you release often → Choose a flat yearly fee model (DistroKid or TuneCore).
- 💎 If you release occasionally → A one-time fee model works better (CD Baby).
- 💎 If you're okay with a UnitedMasters (free/easy Plan) -> 10% of your earnings for free distribution.

💡 Start with realistic expectations, a choice that does not help your finances will get you in trouble later.

## ✅ Step 3: Check for Hidden Fees & Contract Traps

Find out answers to the following before signing up:

Which percentage of my royalties does the distributor get? Am I required to pay annually for my music to stay published? Are there additional fees associated for YouTube Content ID or monetization? In relation to your decision, make sure to search for, "[Distributor Name] hidden fees" and analyze them.

## ✅ Step 4: Sign Up & Set Up Your First Release

Delete all information from your previous distributor. Make an account now that you've selected your new distributor. Upload all metadata, cover art and the finalized track, and select the platforms and stores for your song. Set the song's release date to approximately two or three weeks from now to enhance your chances of being playlisted. If the opportunity is available, make sure to enable monetization on YouTube. Tip: In order to generate buzz for the song, use a pre-save link if provided by the distributor.

## ✅ Step 5: Promote Smart & Track Your Results

Once your song is live and available, share the links to your song on YouTube and Apple Music on Spotify. Incorporate your song in short videos on Instagram and TikTok. Using Spotify for Artists, pitch your song to various Spotify Playlist Curators.

📢 Review your streaming statistics in your distributor dashboard— find out what is effective!

💡 If one platform does not work, feel free to change distributors for your upcoming releases!

## 🎯 Final Thought: Take Action NOW!

🚀 Do not hesitate anymore. Sign up, set up your release, and start promoting your music TODAY.

👉 Which distributor are you choosing? Let's go! 🔥

## **Chapter 5: "The Hidden Fees Monster – What They Don't Tell You"**

*"There's no such thing as a free lunch."* – Milton Friedman

Jason believed that he had mapped out the whole blueprint successful independent musicians had to follow.

His newer track, Midnight Confessions, became popular on TikTok. There were numerous videos being posted to it while some influencers joined in as well. He was pulling in 30,000 streams a night. It felt like the breakthrough moment had finally come for him.

Only to be greeted by a rude awakening.

When the music distributor was supposed to deposit money into his account, he was shocked to see they only deposited \$213.47.

Feeling uncertain, he decided to go through the fine print. That is when he came across Per-Transaction Fees.

"Certain Money" deductions that had little reasoning behind them.

While some processing fees did make sense, there was far too much being deducted.

The most shocking realization came when Jason learned that the distributor decided to take a cut of his revenue before the fees were even taken into account. Which meant he got left with virtually nothing.

Not just disappointed, but felt tricked.

But the unfortunate truth is he is not the only one. Every single day independent artists like Jason fall victim to countless hidden charges.

Is my question to you, dear reader, would you like this to be you?

Let's shed light on the less embraced aspects of music distribution so you don't get tricked like Jason did.

Most importantly, if there is no clarity on fund allocation, whether or not you like it, you're bound to be someone else's wallet.

### **The Trap of Hidden Fees**

The entire independent artist community hopes to earn from their music someday. You work hard, craft fantastic tracks, promote your release, and enjoy the growth of your streams. However, when it's time to collect your earnings, you notice the deposit is less than you had expected.



What happened to your earnings? The answer is hidden fees.

Numerous music distribution companies advance themselves as artist friendly platforms that allow you to upload your music to platforms such as Spotify or Apple Music. What they do not state clearly is that they have a number of fees, cut offs and traps that quietly seize a portion of your revenue. If you don't have an understanding of how to maneuver, you could be missing out on hundreds, if not thousands of dollars every year.

Now, let's review the various forms of concealed charges that can affect your income and the measures you can take towards safeguarding your earnings.

## **The Sneaky Costs That Drain Your Earnings**

### **1. Annual & Renewal Fees**

A lot of distributors set a yearly renewal fee just so that they can keep your music active on streaming services. If you don't pay for it, your song can be taken out and you risk losing money.

Depending on your plan, DistroKid charges anywhere from \$22.99 to \$134.99 every year.

TuneCore charges singles \$14.99 and albums \$49.99 each year.

CD Baby has a fee for each release but does not charge subscription fees each year.

How To Avoid This: Those who prefer a one-off payment strategy can use CD Baby or Amuse reps, as they do not charge an annual fee.

### **2. Commission-Based Revenue Splits**

A few distributors will take a cut from your revenue. In other words, your profit directly affects their earnings.

Stem, AWAL, and UnitedMasters all take 15 to 20% from your royalties.

Those who use Amuse in their free plan will take 15% of your earnings.

DistroKid, TuneCore, and CD Baby will not take their cut, but do charge fees upfront instead.

How To Avoid This: For someone wishing to retain all of his or her earnings, the much preferred method is to use flat-fee distributors like DistroKid or TuneCore instead of revenue-sharing models.

### **3. Withdrawal & Transaction Fees**

Getting paid is not always free. Some distributors charge fees when withdrawing your earnings.

Some Distributors like UnitedMasters and Soundrop charge a fee for PayPal withdrawals.

For some distributors, there may be a fee tagged to foreign payments in the form of a cut during currency conversions.

Depending on your location, you might have to pay fees for bank transfers.

**How To Avoid This:** Using a payment method like bank transfers instead of PayPal reduces the amounts charged. Use a distributor with fewer free withdrawal options.

#### **4. UPC, ISRC, and Extra Metadata Fees**

Some distributors charge you for **UPC (Universal Product Code) or ISRC (International Standard Recording Code) generation**. These codes are essential for tracking your music sales and streams.

- **TuneCore and CD Baby** include these for free.
- **Some budget distributors charge extra** for ISRC codes.
- **Hidden metadata fees** may apply if you need to correct information after submission.

**How to Avoid This:** Always check if UPC and ISRC codes are included in the distributor's pricing. Avoid distributors that charge extra for basic metadata updates.

#### **5. Additional Services Upsells**

Most distributors have their premium additional features which include add-ons, but they may equate to spending money needlessly.

**YouTube Content ID fees:** A fee applied in some cases for those who claim royalties on YouTube videos.

**Priority Distribution fees:** An option where the person pays for quicker release of songs.

**Social Media Monetization Fees:** Fees that certain apps charge on profit realized from music posted on TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook.

**How to Avoid This:** Ensure you are not being charged exorbitantly. Ensure there are no additional levies to pay out so that you enjoy your YouTube royalties.

#### **How to Protect Your Earnings from Hidden Fees**

Among the myriad of sketches and outlines to hide the fees, these strategies will help earn more:

##### **1. Read the Fine Print**

Going through the policies of the distributor with scrutiny is a must before registering. Check for payout policies, obligations to pay annual fees, terms for revenue splits, withdrawal fees, and extra service charges.

##### **2. Compare Distribution Models**

The following distribution models are commonly used: flat fee forever, revenue sharing, and free distribution plan. The first one is best for users who frequently release content, while the revenue sharing model is ideal for users who don't want to spend up front.

##### **3. Use a Cost Calculator**

Figure out the amount you will make after cost deductions. It's best to pick a distributor who is transparent with their pricing.

#### **4. Withdraw Money Smartly**

Some distributors will charge a high price on frequent withdrawals. It is smarter to let your balance build up before withdrawing larger amounts.

#### **5. Plan for Renewal Fees**

Build a budget around maintaining your distributor, especially if they charge an annual renewal fee, so you do not lose your music catalog due to unpaid fees.

### **Conclusion: Keep More of What You Earn**

Distributors are pivotal to marketing your music. However, like any other business, they seek to capitalize on your achievements. By grasping the underlying aspects of fees and revenue models, you're informed to make better decisions and save more money.

#### **Quick Notes:**

✓ Picking a distributor can be tailored to your liking, whether you prefer flat rate pricing or revenue shares.

✓ Remember the withdrawal fee limit, revenue cut, and annual payment.

✓ Avoid the risk of assuming everything is as it is advertised.

✓ Formulate strategies for smart payouts and factor in annual renewal charges.

💰 **The bottom line:** There is always a fee to be anticipated and a fee blindly paid to which would have supported your music pursuit. Now that you are aware of it all, the puzzle of distribution is easy. 🚀

### **Quick Win: The Hidden Fees Survival Guide – How to Hold More of Your Money**

At this point, you know that fees not included can stealthily siphon your income. The good news is that this simple plan can help you regain that control.

#### **🚀 Step 1: Find Out What You're REALLY Paying**

Not all costs are self-evident. Here's where to look:

✓ Go to your distributor's pricing page – Look out for mentions of “administrative”, “processing” or “transaction” fees.

✅ Read the Terms & Conditions – Seek phrases like “deductions”, “royalties” and “third-party charges”.

✅ Check your latest payout report – Crosscheck your total streams/sales with the payment you received.

💡 Quick Trick: Search “[Your Distributor] Hidden Fees” and read what other artists are writing.

## 🔍 **Step 2: Compare & Switch If Necessary**

Now that you have clarity on the fees, ask yourself: Is this particular distributor worth it?

🔄 Make use of a Distributor Comparison Tool (such as LabelRadar’s pricing breakdown) to select a better one.

🎯 Look out for free offerings from other distributors such as playlist pitching, free ISRC codes, or sync licensing.

💡 Pro Tip: No lost streams! If you switch, some distributors offer free transfers.

## 💰 **Step 3: Reduce & Avoid Fees Like a Pro**

✅ Use a PAYG distributor if you release frequently (like DistroKid), and use a one-off charge distributor (like CD Baby) if you do not, to avoid yearly renewal charges.

✅ Use direct deposit or PayPal instead of wire transfers (which can have horrible fees)

✅ NEVER let “advance payments” trick you into waiving royalties unless you are able to section out all of the losses.

## 🚀 **Step 4: Even with a great distributor, you can reach even further and boost your profits by:**

🔥 Starting to market your music alongside global PRO membership registration (like BMI, ASCAP, or PRS). This enables unlimited access to getting performance royalties.

🔥 Monetizing YouTube Content ID – Charge may be applicable through some distributors, however, AdRev allows you to do it free of charge.

🔥 Charging to Pitch to Playlists & Sync Licensing may help some distributors, however, it allows others to pitch DIY style with SubmitHub & Songtradr.

### 🏆 **Step 5: Do a “Money Leak” Audit Every 6 Months**

Just as you examine your bank statements, ensure you look at your distributor payouts at least twice a year:

✅ Have you been losing money because of new charges?

✅ Is there better distribution offers in the market?

✅ Are all royalties being maximized?

💡 **Final Power Move:** Do yourself a favor right now and set a reminder in 6 months time!

### 🎯 **Quick Win Summary:**

- ✓ Determine your exact payments.
- ✓ Swap service providers if needed.
- ✓ Eliminate costs that have no benefit and reduce payment losses.
- ✓ Increase income by utilizing additional royalty payments.
- ✓ Conduct check ups every 6 months.

👉 **Action Step:** Immediately check your distributor’s payment records to confirm you have not been losing royalties!

Part 2 of this e-book is available at [northernrootglobalmusicacademy.com](http://northernrootglobalmusicacademy.com)