The Guide to a SUCCESSFUL Album Release

How to Prepare, Release, Promote, and Sell Your Music

Presented by **DISC MAKERS**®

Getting ready for your release

If you're planning an album release on a specific date or to coincide with an event, you can't wait until the last minute to get organized. Planning a release date means working backwards to organize your rehearsals, recording, mixing, mastering, design and manufacturing as well as promotions well in advance of your release date. There are a number of things you need to have on your CD checklist, including:

1. Copyrighting

As soon as you produce a copy of a song — an audio recording, written transcription, or print-out of lyrics — your work is copyrighted. Still, it's a good idea to register your work with the Library of Congress. It's $35 to file a single application claim of an original work online, and $55 for a standard application.

2. Clearing all samples

If your audio master contains any loops or samples of previously recorded work, you are required to purchase a Master Use License. Disc Makers cannot begin manufacturing without the proper licenses. If you are performing covers on your CD, see Part II.

3. CD design

Your CD represents all the hard work you've put into your music and career. Unless you, someone on your team, or someone you are hiring is a professional designer, don't try to do it on your own! If you do have a designer working with you, make sure you use our CD design templates.

4. Mastering

Your album isn't ready for release until it has been professionally mastered. You've poured your heart into your music and recording, so why stop short of making your album sound the best that it can?

5. Collecting all your materials

You need five things when you send us your CD order:

1. Your audio master ready to upload or on CD-R
2. Your design files ready to upload (via the Project Center) or mail in
3. Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) documentation
4. A signed quote form (Not needed if done online)
5. Payment

6. Promo materials

Printed promotional materials like stickers, flyers, full-color posters, and postcards can help you spread the word at gigs and on the street. Plan ahead and make sure your promotional materials match your album in style, voice, and visual appeal.

7. CD packaging

Every CD package has a list of benefits and features that sets it apart. Digipaks offer a great opportunity to integrate interesting cover art, and are a "greener" alternative to Jewel Cases, the industry standard. Digipaks can have as many as eight panels, and both packages can offer printed booklets of up to 32 pages. Eco-Wallets also afford plenty of design and booklet options, and the CD Jacket is a lightweight recycled stock slip sleeve that can still deliver a graphic punch. Take the time to pick the best one for your album.

Licenses and copyrights for CDs and digital downloads

Answers to questions about mechanical licenses, courtesy of Limelight

If you plan to record a cover song for your release then you're going to need to make some choices. Any composition not written by you requires a mechanical license before you can record and release it as an album track, single, or download.

1. What is a mechanical license?

Copyright Law requires artists and labels to obtain a mechanical license before distributing a recording containing any song or composition you didn't write. Any time you reproduce and distribute a recording of a composition you do not control — through both physical and digital means — you need a mechanical license. Mechanical licenses are issued by the owner or controller of the composition. Typically, these are publishers acting on behalf of songwriters or composers.

2. How does this work for physical CDs?

The publishing royalty is a statutory rate set by law at 9.1¢ per unit for all recordings up to five minutes, and 1.75¢ per minute if a track is over five minutes in length. For each physical CD manufactured that includes the cover song material, the royalties owed correspond to the statutory rate of 9.1¢ per pressing, per song. For instance, if you were to manufacture 1,000 CDs of an album containing two cover songs, the royalties owed would be $182 (1,000 CDs x 2 songs x 9.1¢ per song). Limelight is a one-stop online tool that allows you to clear cover songs quickly and easily. The minimum number of physical pressings that Limelight will license is 25. (The same minimum applies to digital downloads.)

3. How does this work for digital?

The same statutory rate applies to digital downloads. For digital downloads, the royalties are calculated on the actual amount of downloads. For instance, if your album includes one cover song and is downloaded 500 times, the royalties owed are $45.50 (500 album downloads x 1 song x 9.1¢ per song). Additionally, if your cover songs are available as singles, the same rate applies to all downloaded single tracks of the song.

4. What is public domain?

Songs that are in the public domain do not require a license for you to record and distribute them. The public domain generally includes works that are ineligible for copyright protection or whose copyrights have expired, including songs or musical works first published in 1922 or earlier. PD Info Online is a good starting point to determine if a song falls into the public domain. One thing to keep in mind, even if a song is in the public domain, specific arrangements of songs can be copyrighted.

Preparing your order

Details you need to know to get your project done right and done on time

The best way to ensure a stress-free manufacturing process and flawless finished product is to make sure all the elements of your project are in perfect shape when they arrive at our plant. The extra care and time you take in preparing your materials before production will be rewarded with meeting deadlines and lots of happy fans and bandmates. Here are some things to keep in mind when preparing your order.

1. Your audio master

Make sure your audio master (the disc you're sending us of your finished recording — or the file you are uploading) sounds and functions exactly the way you want it to. The finished discs you get back from us will be an exact match of the master you send us (unless you're ordering post-production mastering), so it's important that your master sounds exactly the way you want it to, with all of the tracks in the correct order and the right amount of spacing between songs. Always make a safety copy of your master before you ship or deliver it anywhere!

You don't need to send us a master disc if you opt to upload your audio files online. For audio CD orders, we accept replication-ready DDP files, but we also can accept and prepare individual audio files such as WAV and AIF for replication. Learn more about preparing your master.

If you need professional mastering, the engineers at the SoundLAB at Disc Makers can give your music the soaring highs and booming lows you need to compete with the other releases out there. They will even do a free mastering review to let you know if your recording would benefit from post-production mastering.

2. Your design files

If you are providing completed graphics in a Disc Makers CD template, there is a lot you can do to ensure your finished product looks great and your project moves along as smoothly as possible.

1. Make sure that you leave the size of the template page as is.
Simply place your art into the print area following the bleed, trim, and safety guides as shown. Don't copy the template elements into a new page of your own, crop the page, or move any of the template elements around. The page size and white space

surrounding the template guides and crop marks is intentional. When preparing your disc design, simply place your art into the square as shown, don't mask the art into a circle or punch out the center hole – we take care of that during production.

2. **When you are happy with your design, export your file from your design program as a PDF/X-4**. Although this sounds complicated, this PDF export preset is a common industry-standard that's available in the "File" menu of every current professional layout program. It yields a high-resolution, press-ready file for the best possible results on your printed product. If you'd like to see how to export a PDF/X-4 from the design programs that we support, we've made videos to show you how it's done. Go to www.discmakers.com/templates, and click the orange "Learn how to create & export a PDF" link near the bottom of the page. We've got a video for every program.

3. **Before you export, make sure that the "Template Guides" layer is hidden,** or set to non-printing. If the Template Guides layer is left on, and printable, the guides are going to show up on your finished product. You can verify that you've exported your PDF properly without the guides by opening the PDF that you have exported and taking a quick look before you upload.

4. **Make sure your images do not exceed 300 dpi** at 100% output size, and that complex transparency effects are flattened before you export your PDF. If your file is taking a really long time to upload, it may be the result of unnecessarily high-resolution image files, or complex un-flattened artwork.

Some additional design items to be mindful of:

- **Carefully check your design for typos.** It's always a good idea to have someone else give it a critical look before sending it in.

- **Make sure all your images are 300 dpi.** Remember, this is getting printed — high resolution images only!

- **Avoid gradients on your on-disc design.** Discs are silk-screened, and gradients don't render well in the silk-screen process.

- **Use a professional designer** and professional design program that allows you to design in CMYK.

- **Read all of our** design FAQs for answers to more of your questions.

- If you're supplying graphics files on a CD-R, enclose a physical printout of what the design will look like.

 If you need professional design services, consider the award-winning professionals at the Design Studio at Disc Makers. You've poured your heart, soul, time, and money into the writing, arranging, rehearsing, performing and recording of your music — don't let amateur design bring your project down.

3. Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) & Mechanical Licenses

Before we can legally reproduce the product you're ordering, we need to know that you own the rights to the music. Without a completed IPR form, we cannot start your order. Click here for more information about Intellectual Property Rights, samples, copyrights, and more.

PART 4

Deadlines and production times

Get your discs in time for your release party or event.

About production times

Our turn times tell you how fast your job will get through our manufacturing plant once it's approved, but there are other steps you need to account for. There's the pre-approval process that includes prepping your art files and master (a process that can range from two to seven days), the time it takes for you to approve your proofs, and two-day shipping to your doorstep.

You can skip the pre-approval process entirely by uploading your prepared files using our Project Center. When you order our most popular packages online, you instantly get to see a PDF and 3D proof of the art you just uploaded. We call it NOWProof™. Upload art, view your NowProof™ in seconds, approve it online, and your project goes straight into production.

10-day (Economy) production time

- 4 business days of pre-approval time
- 10 business days of production time after you approve your proofs
- Total turn time is 14 business days
- Add time for shipping

5-day (Standard) production time

- 3 days of pre-approval time
- 5 days of production time
- Total turn time is 8 business days
- Add time for shipping

3-day (Priority) production time

- 2 days of pre-approval time
- 3 days of production time
- Total turn time is 5 business days
- Add time for shipping

Note: Turn times quoted are for CDs in jewel cases with 2- to 6-page inserts, Digipaks with 4 or 6 panels, and 4-panel Wallets. To get an exact deadline for your order (or if you don't see the package or options you are interested in), call your product specialist today at 1-800-468-9353.