Music Licensing Checklist

These are the essentials that are necessary to start pitching your tracks. I've been asked many times, over the years, what is needed to get started in licensing, so I've put together a checklist of things you should have ready to go and things you should do, prior to pitching your tracks.

- ✓ **Ten to twenty, high quality, fully produced, ready to be licensed tracks.**
  There isn't a hard and fast rule when it comes to how many tracks you need to start licensing your music, but based on my own experience, and hundreds of interviews I've done over the last few years, I'd say somewhere between 10 and 20 tracks is ideal to start with.   If you only have one or two great tracks, it's really hard to generate much interest. The chances that you have the perfect song for a specific opportunity with just one or two songs is slim.

  The more tracks you have and the more diverse your tracks are, the greater the odds are that something will get placed. Also, if you present two or three tracks to a library or supervisor, and they love them, usually they'll want to hear more. There's a considerable amount of paperwork and time involved with signing a new artist, so most places, although not all, prefer artists that have an album's worth of material at least. There are exceptions though, and in fact, I got started in licensing with literally one song that I signed to my first publisher and built my catalog from there. Either way though, you should work towards building a sizeable catalog in order to license more tracks in more places.

- ✓ **Instrumental & Vocal Versions –** At a minimum you should have both vocal (for vocal tracks) and instrumental versions of all your tracks ready to go when you

start pitching your music. These two versions you will almost always be asked for. Often times, depending on the company, you'll also be asked for alternate mixes as well, such as a "vocal down" version, a version with just bass and drums, and different length mixes, such as 30 seconds, 60 seconds and so on. It really varies a lot from company to company, so I tend to approach this on a case by case basis. But again, at the very least, you should always have a vocal and instrumental version of all your tracks ready to go. You can create alternate mixes and edits when they're requested.

✓ **Wav And MP3 Files** – It's a good idea to always have both mp3 and wav files of your tracks on the ready. Often times companies will have you initially submit an mp3 version for them to check out. Then, if they like your tracks, they'll have you send them a higher quality wav file once you move forward. It's best to have both formats ready to go at the outset so you don't have to worry about doing this later.

✓ **Add Metadata To Your Tracks -** Be sure to add metadata to all your tracks that includes the artist name, song title, album name, composer name, cover art and so on. Although you can't add metadata to wav files directly within Windows (for PC users), you can use third party programs in order to embed the requisite metadata into your tracks. MP3 tag is a good, free program that will allow you to add metadata to both mp3 and wav files.

✓ **Register Your Titles** – Be sure to register your tracks with your PRO prior to pitching them. In order to get paid performance royalties from your PRO, your tracks need to be registered. It's best to do this before you start shopping them around and submitting to different companies, to make sure nothing falls through the cracks.

One word of caution is that keep in mind some companies will register titles on your behalf when you work with them. If they are not changing the title and they register a duplicate title, that you've already registered, it will show up as a duplicate entry in your PRO's database. This creates confusion since there are now two duplicate entries with different information. So, be sure whenever you're signing with a new library or publisher, to ask them how they handle title registration in order to avoid duplicate title registrations.

✓ **Copyright Your tracks –** Although not technically a pre-requisite for licensing your tracks, it's a good idea to first "copyright" your tracks prior to putting them out into the world. By default, you own the "copyright" to your tracks the moment you compose them. Copyright literally means the write to copy or reproduce. If you wrote a song or composition you automatically have that right, it's your music after all, but it's a good idea to "copyright" them by registering with the Library Of

Congress, or whatever the equivalent is in your country, if you live outside the U.S. That way, if you're ever in a situation where someone tries to steal your music, or you need to prove that a song you wrote is yours, you'll have legal proof that you own the copyright.

More info: https://www.copyright.gov/registration/

- ✓ **Do you have a publisher?** If you sign your tracks to a publisher, then you don't need to worry about this step. But, if you're going the music library route, it's important to know that not all libraries take your publishing. Some libraries only take a percentage of your sync fee, or a percentage of your publishing in addition to the sync fee. If you work with libraries that don't take all of your publishing, it's best to have a publishing company set up so that you can collect the publishing share of your performance royalty, in addition to you writer royalty.

  Anyone can set up a publishing entity, but it works a little differently depending on which PRO you belong to. Check with your PRO for details on how to establish yourself as a publisher, in addition to a writer member, if you plan to license your tracks through companies that don't take publishing. This way you'll be sure to get all the royalties owed to you when your songs are used.

  Here's info on how to join as a publisher with ASCAP and BMI:

  ASCAP - https://ome.ascap.com/

  BMI - https://www.bmi.com/creators

  ✓**Music Submission Spreadsheet –** This isn't a pre-requisite per se, but it's a good idea to have some sort of a spreadsheet that you can use to keep track of the submissions you make and to document which songs are accepted by different libraries and publishers. If you have a lot of tracks and you're pitching and signing them with a lot of different places, it can get confusing fast. You need to organize which songs are where and whether they're signed exclusively or non-exclusively and so on. Having a spread-sheet you use to document everything will help you stay organized. (We have a template you can use in the resource section of HTLYM premium)

For in depth resources related to licensing your music in tv, films, ads and more, be sure to join HTLYM Premium. Your premium membership includes daily licensing leads, one on one coaching, in depth music business courses, a weekly live video mastermind

session, up to date industry directories, a music licensing reference library and much more.

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