From Song to Payday: The Quantum Rule of Music Production

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By Nimrod Elbert Lauriano

Working title - the author may rename this book.

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The Rice Story

Before you read one more page of this book, I want to tell you a story about rice.

I could not cook rice. Every time I tried, I turned the heat up and I burned it. That was my way. Turn it up, walk away, and come back to a burnt pot. I did that for years.

One day I read a book called Quantum Rule. It had a saying in it, and the saying stayed with me. It said it does not matter what kind of man you are. It does not matter if you are short or fat or big or slim. If you follow the rule, you are going to achieve your goal. That is the rule. Follow it, and you get there. It does not matter who you are.

I decided to test it myself. I went to my wife and I said, "Teach me how to cook rice."

She taught me. She said, "Babe, this is the way you put it. This is how much water. Put a little salt. Put a little fat." And she explained it to me: keep the heat low. I did not even know that. I always turned the heat up. She said keep the heat low.

The first time I cooked the rice, she was there, and it came out okay. The second time I cooked it, she was not there, and I messed it up. The third time I messed it up again.

She came back and she said, "I told you, use your

finger to test the water. The water should not be so high over the rice, because it is going to come out sticky. And it should not be so low to the rice, because it is going to come out hard. And the fat should not be so high."

I said, "Man, all right."

The next time I tried — bam. One Sunday, the rice cooked good. Next Sunday, the rice cooked good. After that, every Sunday my wife asked me to cook the rice. I am the rice cooker now. I am cooking rice and beans. I am cooking spinach rice. I am cooking vegetable rice. I am cooking fry rice. I am cooking all kinds of rice.

So I know the Quantum Rule works. I proved it myself, in my own kitchen, with my own hands.

That is what this book is. This book is the rice.

I am going to show you every step, from the beginning of creation to the money in your pocket. I am going to tell you exactly what to do, in order, and you are going to follow it. You do not skip a step. You do not go around in circles. You follow the instructions, one after the other, the same way I followed my wife's instructions for the rice. And the same way the rice came out good, the money is going to come.

This book is written for you. It is written for the man or woman who can already make the music but was

never taught how to get paid for it. That was me. My uncle taught me to play the guitar. I went to school for the piano. I can play the piano. I can play the guitar. I can write a song. I can sing a good song. But nobody taught me how to produce the song to get paid for the song. That is the problem. That is why I wrote this book — so that nobody has to wait forty years to learn it the way I did.

Read it. Follow every instruction. And then cook your rice.

What Is the Quantum Rule

The Quantum Rule is simple. It says: if you follow the rule, you are going to achieve your goal. It does not matter who you are. It does not matter if you are short or fat or big or slim. It does not matter where you come from or how much money you have in your pocket right now. If you follow the instructions exactly, you get the result. That is the rule.

Let me say it another way, because this is the key to the whole book. They say if you follow a rich man, and he tells you exactly what to do, and you do it, you are going to get rich. If you follow exactly what he said, you get rich. That is what I have learned.

It is the same with a trade. If a plumber teaches you plumbing, and he knows the trade good, and he teaches you, and you follow the instructions, you are going to be good. This repeats itself over and over. It is not a trick. It is not a secret. It is a rule, and it works every time you follow it.

The Quantum Rule is about the steps. Life gives you steps. The rice had steps: how much water, a little salt, a little fat, keep the heat low, test the water with your finger. I followed the steps and the rice cooked good. Music has steps too: write the song, play it, record it, produce it, register it, put it out, advertise it, get it played, collect the money. Follow the steps and the money comes. Skip the steps and it

does not.

Now, I want to be clear about one thing, because this matters to me. There is no luck. Luck is the biggest bullshit you ever heard in the world. Anything is strategy. There is no luck. Even if you walk and pick up something, that is not luck. You just found something. That is all it is.

Do not tell yourself you are unlucky. Do not tell yourself some other man got lucky. A new artist comes out, he is nineteen years old, and his song is playing on every station in the world. That is not luck. Somebody worked a strategy. Somebody followed steps. A team pushed that song, or a video caught fire, or a plugger carried it to every station. There was a plan behind it, and the plan was followed.

You are going to have a plan too. That is what this book is: the plan, written down, step by step, so you can follow it the same way I followed the rice.

Why are you going to succeed if you follow these instructions? Because the instructions are the whole job. Most people fail at music for one reason: they do the part they love and they skip the part they were never taught. They write the song and they stop. They record the song and they stop. They put it on the internet and they stop. They never register it. They never promote it. They never collect the money.

The money is sitting there, waiting, and nobody goes to get it.

This book does not let you stop. Each chapter is the next step. You finish one chapter, you do what it says, and then you move to the next chapter. By the last chapter, the song is written, played, recorded, produced, registered, distributed, advertised, broadcast, and paid for. Nothing is left undone. That is why, if you follow these instructions, you are definitely going to be a success. Not because of anything magic. Because every step got done.

One more thing before we start. This book is at least one hundred and twenty pages, and I wrote it to explain without mistakes. If a price or a rule changes on one of the websites in this book, check the current one on their own page. The steps do not change. The places you go to do the steps might change their forms or their prices, but the order stays the same: write, play, record, produce, register, distribute, advertise, broadcast, collect. That order is the Quantum Rule for music.

The rule in other trades

The Quantum Rule is not only for music. It is for every trade, and you have seen it work in every trade if you look.

A builder builds a house by following steps.

Foundation first, then walls, then roof. If he puts the roof on before the walls, the house falls down. If he follows the steps in order, the house stands. That is the Quantum Rule in building.

A fisherman catches fish by following steps. He goes where the fish are, at the time the fish feed, with the right bait, and he waits. If he goes to the wrong place at the wrong time with the wrong bait, he catches nothing. If he follows the steps, he eats. That is the Quantum Rule in fishing.

A plumber fixes a leak by following steps. Find the leak. Turn off the water. Replace the broken part. Turn the water back on. Test it. If he skips a step — if he replaces the part without turning off the water — he floods the house. If he follows the steps, the leak stops. That is the Quantum Rule in plumbing, and I know it because I am a plumber, and I have lived it.

Music is the same. Write, play, record, produce, register, distribute, advertise, broadcast, collect. Follow the steps in order, and the money comes. Skip a step, and the money leaks out through the hole you left. That is the rule, and it works in every trade, because it is not about music. It is about following instructions.

The rule and the money

Before we start, let me say one more thing about the money, because this is where most people get confused.

The money is not the goal. The money is the result. The goal is the song, done right, from beginning to end. The money follows the song the way the smell follows the cooking. If you cook the rice right, the smell comes. If you do the steps right, the money comes.

People who chase the money first always lose it. They write a song to be rich, and the song has no feeling in it, and nobody listens. People who follow the steps first — who write a true song, play it well, record it clean, register it everywhere, and put it out with care — those people get paid, because the work is good and the work is complete.

So do not read this book thinking only about the money. Read it thinking about the steps. The money is the last chapter. The song is the first chapter. Do the first chapter right, and the last chapter takes care of itself. That is the Quantum Rule, and it is the last thing I will say before we begin. Now let us begin.

How to use this book

This book is meant to be used, not just read. Here is how to use it.

Read one chapter at a time, in order. Do not skip ahead to the money chapters before you have written the song. The order is the rule. Each chapter builds on the one before it, and each step needs the step before it.

After you read a chapter, do what it says before you read the next one. Read Chapter 1, then write a song. Read Chapter 2, then play it. Read Chapter 4, then record it. The book works when you work it. A chapter that is only read is a chapter that is wasted.

Keep your notebook next to you while you read. Write down the steps that apply to your song. Write down the dates you will do them. A plan that is written down is a plan that gets done. A plan that is only thought about is a wish.

Use the checklists in Appendix B for every song. Print them out if you can, or copy them into your notebook. Check each box as you finish it. A song is not finished until every box is checked.

Use the six-month plan in Appendix A as your calendar. It tells you what to do, week by week, for six months. Follow it, and at the end of six months you will have songs out, registrations done, stations pitched, and money coming in.

If a chapter confuses you, read it again. If it still confuses you, do the step anyway, as best you can, and come back to the chapter later. The steps will

make more sense once you have done them once. Understanding comes from doing, not from reading alone.

This book is yours. Write in it. Fold the corners. Mark the pages that matter to you. A clean book is a book that was never used. A worn book is a book that was followed. Make this book worn.

Now let us begin.

Chapter 1: Write the Song



A song starts with a feeling. Not with a rule. Not with a book. With a feeling inside you.

I write songs myself, and I write them from the emotional feeling, not from technique. The feeling comes first. Something happens to you, or you see something, or a person walks into your life and changes it, and there is a feeling sitting in your chest that has to come out. That feeling is the song. Everything else — the words, the melody, the chords — is just the way you carry the feeling out of your chest and into the world.

So step one is this: find the feeling. Sit down and ask yourself, what am I feeling right now? Are you happy? Are you hurt? Are you angry? Are you in

love? Are you watching somebody else's life and seeing the story in it? Name it. Say it out loud if you have to. "I am feeling this." That is the beginning of the song.

The hook

Every song needs a hook. The hook is the one line, or the one idea, that a person remembers after the song is finished. It is the line they walk away humming. It is the question the song asks that the listener wants answered.

My hook for one song was a question: how can you be in jail and be happy? That is a strange question. A woman whose emotions swing. The next man locked up, yet acting happy. And I am the dad, sitting cool and nice, watching. That one question carried the whole song. People hear the question and they want to know the answer, so they stay and listen.

Your hook can be a question like that. It can be a line that says the truth plainly. It can be a picture: a man standing at a tap, a woman walking away, a pot of rice on a low fire. Whatever it is, it must be true, and it must be yours. Do not borrow somebody else's hook. A borrowed hook has no feeling in it, and people can tell.

Write the hook down first. One line. Put it at the top of your page. Everything else in the song will point

back to that line.

The title of the song

The title is the name people will ask for. It should be the hook, or the feeling, or the picture that stays. A good title is short — one to five words. It is easy to say. It is easy to remember. And it tells the truth about the song.

Do not name the song after something that is not in it. If the song is about a low fire, call it "Low Fire". If it is about a woman who left, call it by her name, or by the road she walked down. The title should be a door into the song, not a puzzle.

Say the title out loud. Does it sound good? Does it feel like the song? Ask one person to hear the title and tell you what they think the song is about. If they guess close, the title is right. If they guess far away, change it.

Write the title at the top of your notebook page, above the hook, and keep it there. That is the name the world will know the song by. Make it a good name.

The words

Now write the words. Do not worry about making them fancy. Write the way you talk. If you say it one way in real life, write it that way. The best songs

sound like a person talking to you, not like a person showing off.

Write the verse first. The verse tells the story. Who is in it? Where are they? What happened? Give the listener the picture, one line at a time. Do not rush it. A verse is usually four to eight lines. Say what happened, and say it plain.

Then write the chorus. The chorus is the feeling, said straight. It is the part everybody sings along to. It repeats. Keep it short — four lines is enough. Say the hook again in the chorus, or say the feeling in its simplest form. The chorus is where the song opens its heart.

Then, if the song needs it, write a bridge. The bridge is a turn. It is where the song changes direction — the struggle, the crossing, the moment everything shifts. A bridge does not have to resolve everything. Some of the best bridges end unresolved, because life does not always resolve. Let the tension stay if the feeling says so. The pull toward freedom is enough.

A simple shape that works for almost any song is this: verse, chorus, verse, chorus, bridge, chorus. That is the shape. You can change it later, but start with this shape and finish a song. A finished song in a simple shape is worth more than ten half-finished songs in a clever shape.

The melody

The melody is the tune the words ride on. Hum it before you write it down. Walk around the room and hum the line. If you can hum it, you can play it. If you cannot hum it, it is too complicated. Make it simple enough to hum.

Sing the verse low and plain, like you are telling somebody a story. Sing the chorus higher and stronger, like you mean it. That rise is what makes the chorus feel like a chorus. You do not need a big range. You need a difference between the verse and the chorus that a listener can feel.

Record yourself humming on your phone. Do not be shy about it. The phone is your notebook. Hum the melody, speak the words, and save it. That recording is the seed of the song. You will come back to it when you sit at the instrument.

Write it down

Get a notebook, or a sheet of paper, and write the whole song down in order: hook at the top, verse one, chorus, verse two, chorus, bridge, chorus. Write the melody notes if you know them, or write down where the voice goes up and where it goes down. Write the date on it. That is your song, on paper, finished enough to carry to the instrument.

Do not wait until it is perfect. A song is never perfect

on paper. It gets finished when you play it, and it gets finished again when you record it. Right now, your job is only to have a whole song — beginning, middle, and end — with a feeling that is true.

That is step one. You have a song. Now we are going to play it.

Where songs come from

People ask me where songs come from. They come from life. That is the whole answer. They come from what you see, what you hear, what happens to you, and what happens to the people around you.

A song can come from the news. You hear a story on the radio, and it sits in your chest, and you have to sing it. A song can come from the street. You walk past two people arguing, and you hear one line, and that line is the hook. A song can come from your own house. You watch your wife cook, you watch your child sleep, you watch the rain on the roof, and the feeling comes.

Keep a notebook with you, or your phone, and write down the lines that come to you during the day. A line in the market. A line on the bus. A line while you are fixing a pipe. Write it down the moment it comes, because a line that is not written down is a line that is lost. I have lost good lines by telling myself I would remember them later. I did not remember them.

Write it down now.

At the end of the week, open the notebook and read the lines you caught. One of them will have a feeling in it that is still alive. That is your next song. The notebook is the field, and the lines are the seeds. You plant them, and the songs grow.

When the song will not come

Some days the song will not come. You sit down, you pick up the guitar, and nothing is there. The feeling is flat. The words will not move. That happens to everybody, including me. Here is what to do.

First, do not force it. A forced song sounds forced. Put the instrument down and go and do something else. Fix something. Cook something. Walk to the sea. The song is not gone. It is waiting for the feeling to come back, and the feeling comes back when you are living, not when you are staring at a blank page.

Second, go back to an old song. Take a song you wrote last year and play it. Change one line. Change one chord. Sometimes the new song is hiding inside the old one, and you only find it by playing the old one again.

Third, listen to somebody else's song. Not to copy it. To remember why you love music. Listen to a song that moved you when you were young. Listen to it all the way through. Then pick up your instrument. The

feeling will be awake again.

Fourth, write badly on purpose. Write the worst verse you can write, on purpose, and laugh at it. Then write a better one. The worst verse breaks the block, because it takes the pressure off. You are not trying to be perfect anymore. You are just writing. And once you are writing, the good lines start to come.

A song that will not come today will come tomorrow, or next week. Be patient with yourself. The feeling is not a tap you turn on. It is a tide. It comes in, and it goes out, and it comes in again. Your job is to be ready when it comes in, with your notebook open and your instrument near.

The notebook

Every songwriter needs a notebook. Not a fancy one. A plain one, that fits in your pocket or sits by your bed. This notebook is the most important tool you own, more important than the guitar, more important than the computer. Because the guitar can be replaced and the computer can be replaced, but a lost line cannot be replaced.

Write in it every day. Not a whole song every day. Just lines. A line you heard. A line you thought. A feeling in three words. A question. A picture. Date every page. When you look back in a month, you will

see the songs hiding in the lines, and you will wonder how you missed them the first time.

Keep the notebook by your bed, because songs come at night. Keep it in your pocket, because songs come on the street. Keep it in the kitchen, because songs come while the rice is cooking. A song does not wait for you to be ready. It comes when it comes, and the notebook is how you catch it.

Do not throw a notebook away when it is full. Keep it on a shelf. It is your library. It is the proof of every song you ever wrote, and it is the seed of every song you will write. One day, when you are looking for a song, you will open an old notebook and find a line you wrote years ago, and it will be the song you need today.

Chapter 2: Play It on the Instrument



You have the song on paper. Now you have to play it. The instrument is where the song becomes real. You can hear whether the words sit right, whether the melody breathes, whether the feeling is there.

I play the piano and I play the guitar. My uncle taught me to play the guitar. I went to school for the piano. I can play the piano, I can play the guitar, I can write a song, and I can sing a good song. If you play one instrument, that is enough. If you play two, that is a gift. Use the one that fits the song. A soft song might want the piano. A walking song might want the guitar. Let the feeling choose.

Sit down and play the melody

Take your song to the instrument and play the melody you hummed. Find the notes. Play it slow. Play it again. Does the melody fit the words? If a word feels squeezed, change the note. If a line feels empty, hold the note longer. The instrument will tell you what is wrong. Listen to it.

Play the whole song through, from the first line to the last, without stopping. Do it three times. The first time you will stumble. The second time you will find the shape. The third time you will know whether the song holds together. If it falls apart in the same place every time, that place needs work. Fix that place before you move on.

The rhythm

Every song has a pulse, a heartbeat. Find it. Tap your foot. Clap it. Is it slow and steady, like a man sitting cool and watching? Is it quick and light, like dancing? The rhythm is the body of the song. The words are the mind. They have to move together.

Keep the rhythm steady. A steady rhythm is what lets a listener trust the song. Even when the feeling swings — happy one minute, heavy the next — the rhythm stays steady underneath, like the dad sitting cool and nice while everything moves around him. That steadiness is what makes people stay with a song.

Play it for one person

Before you record anything, play the song for one person. Your wife, your friend, your child — one person you trust. Watch their face while you play. Do they lean in? Do they smile at the hook? Do they ask you to play it again? That is your test. If they ask you to play it again, the song is ready. If they look away, something is missing, and you will know where, because you will feel it too.

Do not play it for ten people at once. One person is enough. One honest face tells you more than ten polite ones.

What if you do not play an instrument

If you do not play an instrument yet, this is still your chapter, and here is the honest answer: learn one. Not all of it. Just enough to play your own songs. Three chords on the guitar will carry a hundred songs. A few chords on the piano will carry a hundred more. You do not need to be a concert player. You need to be able to sit down, play your song, and hear it back.

If you cannot play yet, ask a friend who plays to sit with you and find the notes while you sing. That is a fair trade, and it is how most songs in this world got made. But put learning the instrument on your list, because the man who can play his own song does not have to wait for anybody.

When you can play the song from beginning to end, steady and true, you are ready for the next step: the chords.

Singing it like you mean it

You can play the song. Now you have to sing it. And singing is not about having the biggest voice. It is about meaning what you sing.

I can sing a good song. Not because my voice is the loudest in the room, but because I sing from the feeling. When I sing a line about being hurt, I remember being hurt. When I sing a line about joy, I remember joy. The voice follows the feeling. If the feeling is true, the voice will be true.

Here is how to sing your own song well. First, know the words by heart. If you are reading the words while you sing, your voice will sound like reading. Learn the words until you do not need the paper. Then the voice is free to feel.

Second, breathe. A singer breathes from the belly, not from the chest. Before a long line, take a breath down low, fill your belly, and then sing the line on that breath. If you run out of air in the middle of a line, you are breathing too shallow. Practice breathing: in through the nose, belly out, out slow through the mouth. Do that ten times before you sing. It warms the voice and steadies the body.

Third, sing it soft first. Do not start loud. Sing the song soft, almost like you are telling a secret, and find where the voice wants to go. Then sing it stronger. The soft version teaches you the feeling. The strong version carries it to the room.

Fourth, take care of your voice. Do not shout all day and then try to sing at night. Drink water. Rest the voice. If your throat hurts, stop. A voice is an instrument, and an instrument that is beaten will not play true. The best singers are the ones who protect the voice like a treasure, because it is one.

Fifth, record yourself singing and listen back. This is hard at first. Everybody hates the sound of their own voice on a recording. Do it anyway. Listen for the lines that are true and the lines that are not. The lines that are not true are the ones where you were thinking about the note instead of the feeling. Sing those lines again, thinking about the feeling, and they will come right.

Your voice is yours. Nobody else has it. Do not try to sound like the man on the radio. Sound like you, singing a song you wrote, from a feeling you lived. That is the voice people will remember.

Practise every day

Talent is not enough. Practice is what makes talent into skill. My uncle taught me the guitar, and I went

to school for the piano, but the lessons were only the beginning. The playing every day is what made me a player.

Practise every day, even if it is only twenty minutes. Twenty minutes a day, every day, is worth more than three hours on a Saturday and nothing for the rest of the week. The hands remember what they do every day. The voice remembers what it does every day. The fingers forget what they do once a week.

Here is a simple daily practice. First ten minutes: warm up. Play scales on the piano, or play chords on the guitar, slow and steady. Stretch the fingers. Wake up the hands. Second ten minutes: play a song you already know, beginning to end, without stopping. This is the maintenance — keeping the songs you have in your fingers and in your voice. If you have more time, spend it on the new song, the one you are writing now. Work on the hard part, the place where it falls apart. Play that place ten times. Then play the whole song.

Do not practise your mistakes. If you play a line wrong five times in a row, stop. Slow it down until you can play it right. Play it right three times slow, then speed it up a little. Speed comes from accuracy, not from rushing. A fast mistake is still a mistake.

Write down what you practised each day. One line in your notebook: the date, what you practised, what

got better. After a month, read the lines. You will see the growth, and the growth will keep you going.

Chapter 3: The Chord Progression

The chord progression is the road the song walks on. The melody is the person walking. The chords are the ground under their feet. If the ground is solid, the walk is easy. If the ground shifts, the walk feels strange. Both can be right, if you choose on purpose.

What a chord progression is

A chord is three or more notes played together. A progression is a set of chords played in order, over and over, under the song. Most songs you have ever heard use only three or four chords, in the same order, again and again. That is not a weakness. That is the strength. A simple road lets the listener walk without thinking, so they can listen to the feeling.

You do not need to know every chord in the world. You need to know the chords that carry your song. Start with the key the song is in. Play the first chord under the first line. Does it feel like home? That is your home chord. Now find the chord that feels like a question — the one that wants to move. And find the chord that feels like an answer — the one that brings you back home. Home, question, answer. That is a progression.

Build it under the song

Play your melody on the instrument, and under it, try the chords one at a time. When the melody goes up, does the chord need to lift with it? When the melody comes down, does the chord need to settle? Work line by line. Write down the chord for each line. Do not guess and move on. Play it and listen.

A simple pattern that works for many songs is this: home, then the chord a step away, then the chord that lifts, then back home. Four chords, in a circle. Play that circle under your verse. Play it under your chorus. If it fits both, you have your progression. If the chorus needs more lift, give the chorus one different chord — the one that opens the sky a little. That is enough. Do not add chords to show off. Add a chord only when the feeling asks for it.

Major and minor

A major chord sounds bright and open. A minor chord sounds heavy and deep. Your song will use both, because life uses both. When the feeling is joy, the major chord carries it. When the feeling is sorrow, the minor chord carries it. When the feeling swings — like a woman whose emotions swing — let the chords swing with her, major to minor and back. That swing is honest. People feel it because they have lived it.

Do not be afraid of the tension. A chord that does not resolve right away is not a mistake. It is a question

waiting for an answer. Sometimes the answer comes in the next line. Sometimes it comes in the bridge. Sometimes it never comes, and the song ends on the question, and that is the truth of the song. Let the chords tell the truth.

Write the progression down

Write the chords above the words, line by line, in your notebook. Now you have a complete map: words, melody, chords, rhythm. This is the song, ready to record. Play the whole thing through one more time, beginning to end, and if it holds together, you are done with this step. The road is built. Now we are going to record the walk.

Progressions worth knowing

You do not need to learn every progression in the world. But there are a few that every songwriter should know, because they carry thousands of songs and they will carry yours too. Learn these by heart, on your instrument, and you will always have a road to walk on.

The first is the four-chord road: home, then the chord that lifts, then the chord that opens, then the chord that brings you back. Play it in a circle, over and over. It fits verses and it fits choruses. It is the most-used road in popular music for a reason: it feels natural, like walking on flat ground. If your song

feels good on this road, keep it there. Do not change it to be clever.

The second is the three-chord road: home, question, answer. Three chords, in a circle. This is the road of blues, of reggae, of country, of most of the music that ordinary people sing. It is simple and it is strong. If your song is a story song — a song that tells what happened — this road will carry it.

The third is the road that goes down: start at home, then step down, chord by chord, until you reach the bottom, and then climb back up. This road feels like a descent, like going down into the feeling and coming back out. It fits songs about struggle, about hard times, about the walk through the valley. Use it when the song needs to go down before it can come up.

The fourth is the road that never resolves: two chords, back and forth, and it never quite comes home. This road feels like longing, like waiting, like a question that stays open. Use it for the bridge, when the song needs tension, or for a verse that is still searching. Then, when the chorus comes, give it the home chord, and the listener will feel the relief like a door opening.

Learn these four roads on your instrument. Play them every day for a week until your fingers know them without thinking. Then, when you write a song,

you will not have to search for chords. The chords will be waiting for you, and you will choose the road that fits the feeling. That is how a songwriter works: the feeling picks the road, and the fingers walk it.

The key that fits your voice

Every song lives in a key. A key is the home note the song is built around. If the key is too high, you will strain to reach the high notes, and your voice will sound tight. If the key is too low, you will mumble the low notes, and your voice will sound sleepy. The right key is the one where your voice feels free — where the high notes lift without straining and the low notes sit without mumbling.

Here is how to find it. Sing the chorus of your song. Now sing it one step higher. Does it feel better or worse? Sing it one step lower. Does it feel better or worse? Keep moving it up or down, one step at a time, until you find the place where the voice feels easy and strong. That is your key.

Once you find the key, play the chords in that key. If you move the song up two steps, move the chords up two steps with it. The road moves with the voice. Do not be afraid to change the key of a song you already wrote. A song that is in the wrong key is a song that is fighting its own singer. Move it, and the fight stops.

Write the key in your notebook, next to the chords. That way, when you come back to the song in a month, you will know exactly where it lives, and you will not have to search for it again.

Chapter 4: Record It in Sonar



Now we record. This is the chapter where the song stops living only in your head and in your notebook, and starts living in a file you can play for the world. We are going to record with Sonar, because Sonar is the new technology, and we do not have time to go around in circles.

What Sonar is

Sonar is a recording program for your computer. It is called a DAW, which means Digital Audio Workstation. That is just a fancy name for a studio inside your computer. You plug in a microphone or a guitar, you press record, and Sonar captures the sound. Then you can cut it, move it, fix it, add to it, and mix it until it sounds the way you want.

Sonar is made by BandLab. It used to be called Cakewalk by BandLab, and before that it was called SONAR. Now it is called Cakewalk Sonar. It is the same family, the same blood. It is a full professional recording program, and the free tier costs you nothing except a free BandLab account. You do not need to buy anything to start recording. The free tier gives you unlimited audio tracks and unlimited MIDI tracks, which means you can record as many instruments and voices as your song needs. It gives you Take Lanes, which let you record the same part many times and pick the best pieces. It gives you ProChannel, which is the mixing tools built into every track. It gives you AudioSnap, which helps you line up the timing. That is enough to make a real record.

Sonar runs on Windows. If you are on a Mac, BandLab makes a separate program called Cakewalk Next, which is the Mac side of the same family. This book teaches Sonar on Windows, because that is what we are using. If you are on a Mac, use Cakewalk Next and follow the same steps — the ideas are the same, only the buttons sit in different places.

Get Sonar on your computer

Step one: go to the Cakewalk website, cakewalk.com, and download Cakewalk Product

Center. That is the small program that installs Sonar for you. You will need a free BandLab account to activate it. Make the account with your own email, the same email you use for your music, and keep the password somewhere safe. Once Sonar is activated, it can work even when you are offline.

Step two: plug in your sound. You need a way to get sound into the computer. The simplest way is a USB audio interface — a small box that you plug your microphone or your guitar into, and that plugs into your computer with a USB cable. If you do not have one yet, get one. It is the one piece of equipment that makes the difference between a recording that sounds like a phone call and a recording that sounds like a record. A microphone plugs into the interface. A guitar plugs into the interface. Headphones plug into the interface so you can hear yourself while you record.

Step three: open Sonar and set up your project. When Sonar opens, start a new project. Give it the name of your song. Set the tempo — the speed of the song, in beats per minute. If your song is slow and steady, the tempo might be around 70 or 80. If it is a walking song, it might be around 100 or 110. If it is a dancing song, it might be 120 or more. Tap the tempo on the table while you sing the song, count the beats in a minute, and set that number. You can change it later, but set it now so the song has a pulse

to follow.

Choose your sample rate and bit depth when the project asks. If those words mean nothing to you yet, choose 44.1 kHz and 24-bit. That is the standard for music, and it is what your distributor will want later. Do not worry about the numbers now. Just pick them and move on. The important thing is to start recording.

Set up your tracks

A track is one lane for one sound. Your song will have several tracks: one for the guitar, one for the piano, one for your voice, and more if you add them. Each track is separate, so you can fix one without touching the others. That is the power of recording this way. In the old days, if one man made a mistake, everybody had to play the whole song again. Now you fix only the track that needs fixing.

Make your first track for the instrument you are going to record first. Usually that is the guitar or the piano — the instrument that carries the chords. Click to add an audio track. Name it "Guitar" or "Piano" so you can find it later. Set its input to the place your instrument is plugged into. Put on your headphones. Play a little. You should see the meter move and hear yourself in the headphones. If you hear nothing, check that the track is armed for recording and that the input is set right. Do not move on until you can

hear yourself.

Make a second track for your voice. Name it "Voice". Set its input to the microphone. Sing a little. You should see the meter move. Good.

Before you record, turn on the metronome — the click that keeps the time. Sonar has a metronome built in. Set it to the tempo you chose. The click will play in your headphones while you record, and it will keep you steady. At first the click feels strange. After one song, you will not want to record without it. The click is the heartbeat of the session.

Record the instrument first

Record the instrument before the voice. The instrument is the road. The voice walks on it. If the road is steady, the walk is easy.

Arm the instrument track for recording. That means telling Sonar, "This is the track I want to record on." Press record. Wait one bar of the click so you can feel the tempo. Then play the whole song, beginning to end, on the instrument. Do not stop if you make a small mistake. Play through it. You can fix a small mistake later. What you need right now is a full take — the whole song, in time, from start to finish.

When you finish, press stop and listen to what you recorded. Is it in time with the click? Does it feel steady? If it is close, keep it. If it falls apart, record it

again. Record it three times if you have to. Sonar will keep each try in a Take Lane under the track. A Take Lane is just a shelf where your tries sit, one under the other. You can listen to each one and pick the best parts. Maybe the first try had the best beginning and the third try had the best ending. You can take the best beginning from one and the best ending from the other, and put them together. That is called comping, and it is how professional records get made. You do not need one perfect performance. You need good pieces, and you put the good pieces together.

Record the voice

Now the voice. Arm the voice track. Put on the headphones so you can hear the instrument track playing back. Press record, wait for the click, and sing the song. Sing it the way you sang it when you wrote it — from the feeling, not from technique. Do not try to sound like somebody else. Sound like you.

Record the voice three times, the same way. Use the Take Lanes. Listen to each one. Pick the best lines from each. The line where your voice cracked a little might be the most honest line in the song — keep it if the feeling is true. The line where you sang it safe might be the one to replace. Choose with your ear and your heart, not with your fear.

If a word is wrong, do not record the whole song

again. Just record that one line again, on a new take, and put it in place. That is the beauty of this way of working. You fix only what needs fixing.

Add what the song needs

Once the instrument and the voice are down, ask the song what else it needs. Does it need a second guitar? A bass line? A little piano over the top? A harmony voice on the chorus? Add one thing at a time, on its own track. Record it the same way. Listen. If it makes the song better, keep it. If it makes the song busy, take it out. A song does not need everything. It needs what it needs.

Do not add ten instruments because you can. Add the ones the feeling asks for. A song with a guitar, a voice, and one more sound can move a whole room. A song with twenty sounds and no feeling moves nobody.

Save your work

Save the project. Save it again. Save it with the name of the song and the date. Keep a copy on a second drive or a USB stick. A song that is not saved is a song that can be lost, and a lost song is a wound that does not heal. Every time you finish a session, save, and then save a backup. That is a rule. Follow it the same way you follow the rest.

When the instrument and the voice are recorded, and the extra parts are in, and everything is saved, you have a recording. It is not finished yet. It is raw. The next chapter is where we make it sound like a record.

Your first session, hour by hour

If you have never sat down to record a whole song before, here is how your first session should go, hour by hour, so you do not get lost.

First hour: set up. Open Sonar. Start the project. Name it after the song. Set the tempo. Make the tracks and name them. Plug in the instrument and the microphone. Check that you can hear yourself in the headphones. Turn on the metronome. Play a little to warm up. Do not record anything serious in the first hour. This hour is for making sure everything works.

Second hour: record the instrument. Play the song through, beginning to end. Record it three times. Listen to each take. Pick the best parts and put them together. When the instrument track feels steady, stop. Do not keep recording it all day. It does not need to be perfect. It needs to be steady and true.

Third hour: record the voice. Sing the song through, beginning to end. Record it three times. Listen to each take. Pick the best lines. If one line is wrong,

record just that line again. When the voice sits on the instrument and the words are clear, stop.

Fourth hour: listen and save. Listen to the whole song, beginning to end, twice. Write down anything that needs fixing. Fix only what is on the list. Save the project. Save a backup. That is the session. Four hours, one song recorded. That is a good day's work.

Do not try to do everything in one sitting. A tired ear makes bad decisions. If the fourth hour comes and you are tired, stop, save, and come back tomorrow. The song will wait. It is not going anywhere.

When something goes wrong

Something will go wrong. It always does. Here is what to do when it does.

If you hear nothing in the headphones, check three things, in this order. First, is the track armed for recording? Second, is the input set to the place your microphone or guitar is plugged into? Third, is the volume up on your interface and in Sonar? Nine times out of ten, the problem is one of those three. Fix it and move on.

If the recording sounds distorted — harsh, crackling, broken — the input is too loud. Turn down the gain on your interface, the knob that controls how much sound comes in. Record it again. The meter should move, but it should not hit the top and stay there. If

it hits the top and turns red, it is too loud. Turn it down.

If the timing feels off, if you keep rushing or dragging, turn the metronome up a little louder in your headphones and play along with it for a few minutes before you record. Do not fight the click. Let it carry you. If the tempo is wrong for the song, change the tempo. A song that is too fast will always feel rushed. Slow it down by five beats and try again.

If Sonar crashes or the computer freezes, do not panic. Close the program, open it again, and Sonar will usually offer to recover your work. That is why you save often. Save after every good take. Save before you try anything new. Saving is the cheapest insurance in the world.

If you cannot fix it in ten minutes, stop and ask somebody. A friend who records, a video on the internet, the help pages for Sonar — there is an answer, and it is usually simple. Do not sit for three hours fighting one problem. Ask, fix it, and get back to the song. The song is the job. The problem is just a stone in the road. Step over it.

Chapter 5: Produce It

Producing is the step where the recording becomes a record. The recording you made in Sonar has all the parts. Producing is shaping those parts so they sit together, so the voice is clear, so the instrument is warm, so the whole thing sounds professional when a stranger hears it for the first time.

First, listen like a stranger

Before you touch anything, listen to the whole recording from beginning to end, with fresh ears, as if you have never heard the song before. Do not listen as the man who wrote it. Listen as a man hearing it on the radio for the first time. What do you notice? Is the voice loud enough? Is the guitar too loud? Does the chorus lift, or does it sit flat? Does anything hurt your ears? Write down what you hear. That list is your work for this chapter.

Balance the levels

The first job of producing is balance. Each track has a volume fader — a slider that makes it louder or softer. Start with the voice. The voice is the most important thing in the song, because the voice carries the words, and the words carry the feeling. Set the voice so it is clear and present, sitting on top of the music, not buried under it.

Now bring the instrument up under the voice until it supports it without covering it. The instrument should feel like the ground the voice walks on — solid, warm, always there, never in the way. If you have to strain to hear the words, the instrument is too loud. Turn it down. If the music feels thin, bring it up a little. Work slowly. Small moves. Listen after every move.

If you have extra tracks — a second guitar, a harmony — set them lower than the main voice and the main instrument. They are the colour around the picture, not the picture itself.

Pan the sound

Panning is where a sound sits between the left ear and the right ear. If everything sits in the middle, the song sounds narrow, like it is coming through one small door. If you spread things out a little, the song opens up, like a room with windows.

Keep the voice in the middle. Keep the main instrument near the middle. If you have a second guitar, move it a little to the left. If you have a harmony or a light piano, move it a little to the right. Not far — just enough to give the song space. Listen with headphones while you do this. You will hear the song open up.

Clean it up

Listen for noise. Is there a hum? A hiss? A click at the start? A breath that is too loud? Sonar has tools to help. A little EQ — which is just a way of turning up or down parts of the sound — can take the mud out of a voice or the harshness out of a guitar. Do not overdo it. Small moves. If you cut too much, the sound gets thin and lifeless. The rule is: take away only what hurts, and leave everything else alone.

Use ProChannel on each track. ProChannel is the strip of tools built into every track in Sonar — EQ, compression, and more. Compression is a tool that evens out the loud and soft parts, so a loud word does not jump out and a soft word does not disappear. Use it gently on the voice. A little compression makes the voice steady and professional. Too much makes it flat and tired. Start small, listen, and stop when it sounds right.

The mix

When the balance is good and the sound is clean, you are mixing. A mix is the whole song, all the tracks together, sounding like one thing. Listen to the mix on three things: your headphones, a small speaker, and if you can, a car stereo. A good mix sounds good everywhere. If it only sounds good on your headphones, it is not finished. If it sounds good on the small speaker and in the car, it is ready.

Take a break before you call the mix finished. Walk

away for an hour, or sleep on it, and listen again the next day with fresh ears. You will hear things you missed. Fix those, and then stop. A mix is finished when you can listen to it all the way through without reaching for a knob. That is the test.

Export the master

When the mix is right, export it. In Sonar, this is called exporting or bouncing the mix. Export it as a WAV file first — that is the full-quality master, the best version of your song. Save it with the song name and the word "master". Then export an MP3 from that WAV for sending around and for listening on your phone. Keep the WAV safe. The WAV is the record. The MP3 is the copy you hand out.

Listen to the exported file all the way through, from beginning to end, to make sure nothing went wrong in the export. If it sounds right, you have a finished song. A produced song. A record.

What a producer does

You might be wondering: what is a producer, really? Am I the producer of my own song? Yes. You are. And here is what that means.

A producer is the person who decides what the finished song sounds like. Not the person who plays the most notes. Not the person with the most

expensive equipment. The person who decides. When you choose which take to keep, you are producing. When you choose to leave a part out, you are producing. When you decide the voice should be louder and the guitar softer, you are producing. Every choice you made in this chapter was a producer's choice.

A good producer does three things. First, he serves the song, not himself. He does not add a sound because he can. He adds it because the song needs it. Second, he knows when to stop. A song is finished when it sounds right, not when every idea has been used. Third, he trusts his ear. If it sounds good, it is good. If it does not, no amount of explaining will make it good.

You are the producer of your own songs, because nobody knows the feeling of the song better than the man who wrote it. Trust that. If you ever work with another producer, remember that they are there to help you hear the song, not to replace your feeling with theirs. The feeling is yours. The producer serves the feeling.

One more thing a producer does: he keeps the session calm. Recording can be stressful. The red light comes on, and suddenly the hands shake and the voice tightens. A good producer keeps the room easy. He says, "That was good, let's do it once more." He does not shout. He does not rush. If you are

producing yourself, be that person for yourself. Be patient. Take a break. Drink some water. Come back and do it again. The song will wait for you to be ready.

You wrote it. You played it. You recorded it. You produced it. Now the song has to go out into the world and earn its money. The next chapters are about that — registering it, putting it out, advertising it, getting it played, and getting the money in your pocket.

Learn by listening

The best school for producing is listening. Not reading about it. Listening to records, with your full attention, and asking yourself what you hear.

Pick a record you love. A song that sounds perfect to you. Listen to it on good headphones, with your eyes closed. What do you hear first? The voice, or the instrument? Is the voice loud or soft? Is the instrument close or far? How many sounds are there? Can you count them? Is there a sound you did not notice before, hiding in the back?

Listen to it again, and this time listen only to the bass — the low sound underneath everything. What is it doing? Is it playing the same notes as the chords, or is it walking its own road? Listen again, and listen only to the drums, or the rhythm. What is

the pulse? Is it steady, or does it push and pull?

Now listen to your own mix the same way. With your eyes closed. What do you hear first? Is it what you want them to hear first? If the voice is what matters, is the voice what comes out first? If something is hiding that should be heard, bring it up. If something is loud that should be quiet, turn it down.

Do this with one record a week. Pick a different record each week. A reggae record. A soul record. A gospel record. A country record. Listen like a student. Write down one thing you learned from each record — one trick, one sound, one idea — and try it in your next mix. That is how a producer learns. Not from a book. From listening, and then doing.

Chapter 6: Register It — BMI, SoundExchange, and the MLC

You have a finished song. It sounds like a record. Now you have to do the part nobody taught you — the part that gets you paid. You have to register it.

This is the chapter that changes everything. This is the chapter I wish somebody had sat me down and taught me forty years ago. Because here is the truth: a song earns money in more than one place, and if you only collect from one place, you leave the rest on the table. I know, because that is what I did. CD Baby sent me a little check here and there — twenty dollars, forty dollars, four dollars. The highest they ever sent me was sixty-seven dollars. That is not nothing, but it is not the money. The money is in the places I had not registered.

So listen close. This chapter is the map to the money.

A song is two things, not one

First, you have to understand something that most musicians never learn: one song is two separate things, and each one earns its own money.

The first thing is the composition. That is the song itself — the melody, the chords, the words. It is the thing you wrote in your notebook in Chapter 1. It lives even if nobody ever records it. It is yours because you wrote it.

The second thing is the recording. That is the master — the actual sound file you made in Sonar in Chapters 4 and 5. It is the specific performance, the specific voices and instruments, captured in that file. It is yours because you recorded it.

These two things earn money in different places, from different organisations, and none of them talk to each other. Registering in one place does not register you in the others. You have to go to each one yourself. That is the work, and it is not hard work. It is just work that has to be done.

Here are the four streams of money one song can earn, and who collects each one:

One, the master royalty. When somebody streams or downloads your recording on Spotify or Apple Music, the platform pays for the recording. That money comes through your distributor — CD Baby, in our case — and the distributor passes it to you. That is the money I was getting in those little checks.

Two, the performance royalty. Every time your composition is played in public — on the radio, on television, in a bar, on a stream — the songwriter earns a performance royalty. That money is collected by a performing rights organisation. In the United States, that is BMI or ASCAP. We are using BMI.

Three, the mechanical royalty. Every time your composition is streamed or downloaded, the song

itself earns a mechanical royalty, separate from the performance royalty. One stream earns both. That money is collected by the MLC, the Mechanical Licensing Collective, in the United States.

Four, the digital performance royalty. When your recording is played on non-interactive digital radio — that means the listener does not choose the song, the station chooses it — like SiriusXM, Pandora in radio mode, or internet radio, the recording earns a digital performance royalty. That money is collected by SoundExchange.

Four streams. One song. If you only collect the first one, you are collecting one quarter of what the song earns. That is why the checks were small. The money was not small. My collection was small.

Step one: BMI

BMI stands for Broadcast Music, Inc. It is a performing rights organisation, a PRO. Its job is to collect performance royalties for songwriters when their compositions are played in public. When your song plays on the radio, on television, in a venue, or on a stream, BMI is the organisation that collects that money for you in the United States.

Go to bmi.com and join as a songwriter. Joining as a songwriter costs nothing. You will make an account, give your name and your information, and you will

have a songwriter account with BMI. Then, for every song you write, you register the work with BMI. That means you tell BMI: this song exists, I wrote it, here is the title, here are the writers. You do that for every song, one by one. It takes a few minutes per song. Do not skip a song. An unregistered song earns nothing.

Now, here is the part that matters: BMI pays a song in two shares, the writer's share and the publisher's share. Each share is half of the performance royalty. If you only register as a songwriter, you only get the writer's share. The publisher's share sits there waiting for a publisher to claim it. If you are your own publisher — and you are, because you wrote the song and you own it — then you should also register as a publisher with BMI, so you collect both shares. The writer's share and the publisher's share, together, are the whole performance royalty. That is the difference between half the money and all of the money.

Register your songs as soon as they are finished. Do not wait until the song is famous. BMI pays out every quarter — in February, May, August, and November — and it pays on the plays that were reported. If your song was played and it was not registered, that money does not come to you. Register first, then release. That is the order.

One more thing about BMI: joining BMI and

registering your songs does not register your copyright. Copyright is a different thing, a different office. BMI collects money. The copyright office records ownership. Both matter, but they are not the same job. Do the BMI job in this chapter. Do the copyright job too — go to the copyright office website and register the song — because the copyright is your proof that the song is yours. But do not confuse the two. Registering with BMI does not copyright your song, and copyrighting your song does not collect your royalties.

Step two: SoundExchange

SoundExchange collects digital performance royalties for the sound recording — the master, not the composition. When your recording plays on a non-interactive digital service, SoundExchange is the one that collects that money.

Non-interactive means the listener does not pick the song. The station picks it. That includes SiriusXM satellite radio. That includes Pandora when it is in radio mode. That includes internet radio stations. That includes cable music channels. Every time one of those services plays your recording, a digital performance royalty is earned, and SoundExchange collects it.

Joining SoundExchange costs nothing. Go to soundexchange.com, make an account as a recording

artist and as a rights owner if you own your masters — and you do, because you recorded them yourself in Sonar. Register your recordings with SoundExchange, one by one, with the title and the artist name, the same way you registered the compositions with BMI.

SoundExchange pays the featured artist and the master owner. If you are both — you sang it and you own the recording — then both parts come to you. SoundExchange pays monthly once your balance reaches their minimum. Check their current minimum on their website when you join, because it can change. The point is: this is real money, and it is the money that comes from radio play, including internet radio, which is exactly the subject of Chapter 9.

Here is what most independent artists miss: your distributor does not collect SoundExchange money. CD Baby does not collect it. BMI does not collect it. Only SoundExchange collects it. If you are not registered with SoundExchange, the money your recording earns on digital radio goes unclaimed. Register.

Step three: the MLC

The MLC is the Mechanical Licensing Collective. It collects mechanical royalties for the composition in the United States, from interactive streaming and

downloads — that means services where the listener chooses the song, like Spotify, Apple Music, Amazon Music, and YouTube Music. Every time somebody streams your song on one of those services, the composition earns a mechanical royalty, and the MLC collects it.

The MLC was created under the Music Modernization Act, a law that set up one organisation to collect these royalties for all songwriters in the United States. Before the MLC, this money was scattered and hard to collect. Now there is one place to go. Joining the MLC costs nothing. Go to themlc.com, make an account, and register your songs — the same songs you registered with BMI, the same titles, the same writers.

Here is the key fact: one stream earns two separate royalties on the composition. One is the performance royalty, collected by BMI. The other is the mechanical royalty, collected by the MLC. If you are only registered with BMI, you are collecting half of what your composition earns on streaming. The other half is sitting with the MLC, waiting for you to claim it. Register with both.

The MLC does not collect radio royalties. It does not collect live performance royalties. It does not collect anything on the recording side. It collects one thing: United States digital mechanical royalties on the composition. That is its job, and it is a job worth

doing, because streaming is where most people hear music now, and every stream counts.

The MLC matches recordings to compositions using the information in the recording — the metadata, the title, the writers, the codes. That is why you must be careful to register the same information everywhere, spelled the same way, with the same titles and the same names. If the information does not match, the money can sit unclaimed. Take the time to get it right.

Your registration checklist

When you finish this chapter, you should have done all of this, for every song:

First, you joined BMI as a songwriter, and you registered as a publisher too, so you collect both shares. You registered every song with BMI.

Second, you joined SoundExchange as an artist and as a rights owner, and you registered every recording with SoundExchange.

Third, you joined the MLC and you registered every song with the MLC.

Fourth, you wrote down, in one place, every account, every username, every song, and every registration. Keep that list safe. This is your money map. When a check comes, you will know where it came from. When a check does not come, you will know where to

look.

Do this for one song first, all the way through, so you learn the steps. Then do it for the next song, and the next. After three songs, you will know the steps by heart. After ten songs, it will be a habit, and you will never again leave money on the table.

This is the Quantum Rule in action. Follow the instructions. Register everywhere. Collect everything. The money is not hiding. It is waiting in four places, and now you know all four.

Follow one song's money

Let me show you how this works with one song, from the day it comes out to the day the money arrives, so you can see the whole road in one picture.

Say you release a song called "Low Fire" on the first day of the month. You registered it with BMI, with SoundExchange, and with the MLC before you released it. You put it out with CD Baby. That is the setup, and it is done before the song is heard by anybody.

In the first week, people stream it on Spotify. Every stream earns two things on the composition: a performance royalty and a mechanical royalty. The performance royalty goes to BMI. The mechanical royalty goes to the MLC. And every stream earns the master royalty, which goes to CD Baby. So one

stream, three payments, from three places. That is how one song earns three times from the same listen.

In the second week, an internet radio station plays the song. That play earns a performance royalty, which goes to BMI, because the composition was played in public. And it earns a digital performance royalty, which goes to SoundExchange, because the recording was played on a non-interactive digital service. So one radio play, two more payments, from two places.

In the third week, a bar in Belize plays the song on their sound system. That is a public performance of the composition, and it earns a performance royalty through BMI, if the bar reports it. Not every bar reports every song, and this is where the money gets slow. But the plays that are reported do get paid, and that is why registering matters: a registered song can be paid for a play. An unregistered song cannot.

At the end of the month, the streaming service sends its reports to CD Baby, to BMI, and to the MLC. CD Baby pays you the master royalty, usually within a month or two. The MLC pays you the mechanical royalty about two to three months after the streams. BMI pays you the performance royalty in the next quarterly payment — February, May, August, or November, whichever comes next. SoundExchange

pays you the digital performance royalty monthly, once your balance reaches their minimum.

So the money from one song does not arrive on one day. It arrives in waves, over months, from four places. The first wave is the distributor. The second is SoundExchange. The third is the MLC. The fourth is BMI. If you only watch one place, you will think the song earned nothing. If you watch all four, you will see the whole picture. That is why you keep a money map, and why you check every account.

Now multiply that one song by ten songs, and then by twenty, and then by fifty. Every song earns in four places. Every month brings waves from songs you released months ago. That is the catalogue, and that is how the money grows.

The two copyrights, once more

Because this confuses everybody, let me say it once more, plainly.

You own two things when you make a song. You own the composition — the words, the melody, the chords. And you own the recording — the master, the sound file. These are two separate copyrights, and they are protected separately.

The composition is protected from the moment you write it down. The recording is protected from the moment you record it. Writing it down and recording

it are the acts that create the rights. Registering the copyright with the government office is the act that records your ownership and gives you the strongest legal protection if somebody steals it.

Registering with BMI does not register your copyright. Registering with the MLC does not register your copyright. Registering with SoundExchange does not register your copyright. Registering with CD Baby does not register your copyright. Those organisations collect money. The copyright office records ownership. Do both jobs. Register the copyright, and register with the collectors. They are different jobs, and both matter.

If you write a song with another person, decide the split before you release it. Who wrote what? Half and half? Sixty and forty? Write it down, both of you, and sign it. A split that is agreed before the money comes is a friendship. A split that is argued after the money comes is a fight. Decide it early, write it down, and move on.

If somebody uses your song without permission

Your song is your property. If somebody uses it without your permission — if a station plays it and never reports it, if a person puts it in a video and never asks, if a company uses it in an advertisement and never pays — that is not a compliment. That is

theft, and you have the right to stop it.

Here is what to do, step by step, and in order. First, keep your proof. Your notebook with the date. Your registration with the copyright office. Your registration with BMI and the MLC. Your original recording file, with the date on it. That proof is your evidence that the song is yours. Keep it safe. Do not lose it.

Second, write to the person who used it. A short, polite letter. "This is my song. I wrote it on this date. I own it. You used it without my permission. Please stop, or please pay me for the use." Give them a way to fix it — a payment, or a removal. Most people, when they get a polite letter with proof, will fix it. They did not know, or they forgot, or they thought nobody would notice. A letter tells them somebody noticed.

Third, if they do not fix it, get help. A music lawyer, or a legal aid office, or your PRO — BMI has people who help songwriters with these problems. You do not have to fight alone. There are people whose job is to protect songs. Ask them.

Do not let fear stop you from protecting your work. Your song is worth protecting. You made it. It is yours. And the day you stand up for one song, every other song you make is safer, because people learn that your songs are not free for the taking.

Chapter 7: Distribution — CD Baby and the Rest

Your song is written, played, recorded, produced, and registered. Now it has to go out into the world where people can hear it. That is distribution. Distribution is the road that carries your song from your computer to the ears of strangers — onto Spotify, Apple Music, Amazon Music, YouTube Music, and all the rest.

What a distributor does

A distributor is the company that delivers your recording to the streaming services and the download stores. You cannot upload a song to Spotify yourself. Spotify does not take songs from individual artists. It takes them from distributors. The distributor is the bridge. You give the distributor your song, your cover art, your song title, your name, and the date you want it out. The distributor sends it to all the stores. When people stream it, the stores pay the distributor, and the distributor pays you.

That is the distributor's job, and it is only one job. A distributor collects the master royalty — the money for the recording — from streaming and downloads. It does not collect your performance royalties. It does not collect your mechanical royalties. It does not collect your SoundExchange money. Those are

the jobs you did in Chapter 6. The distributor does one thing, and it does it well, but you must not think it does everything. It does not.

CD Baby

I use CD Baby. CD Baby is a distributor, and it is the one I started with. You upload your song to CD Baby, you give them the cover art and the details, and they put it on the streaming services. When people stream it, CD Baby collects the streaming money and sends it to you. That is how those little checks came — twenty dollars, forty dollars, four dollars. The highest they ever sent me was sixty-seven dollars. Those checks were real money, and they proved the road works. The road is open. The problem was never the road. The problem was that I was only collecting from one place, and the song was earning in four.

CD Baby also offers publishing help — a service that handles some of the publishing side for you, for a share. If you take that, read the terms carefully and understand what share you are giving and what they are doing for it. You have already done the publishing registrations yourself in Chapter 6 — BMI, the MLC — so you do not need to pay somebody else to do what you have already done. Keep your publishing in your own hands unless you have a clear reason to give it away.

When you use CD Baby, or any distributor, check the current price on their own website before you pay. Prices change. Do not take a price from this book or from any old video as the price today. Go to their site, read the price, and then decide. The steps do not change. The prices do.

The other distributors

CD Baby is not the only distributor. There are others, and you should know their names so you can choose with your eyes open. DistroKid, TuneCore, and UnitedMasters are the other well-known names. They all do the same core job: deliver your music to the streaming services and collect the master royalty. They differ in how they charge — some charge per year, some charge per release, some take a percentage — and in the extra tools they offer. Compare them on their own websites, with current prices, before you choose. Pick the one that fits your pocket and your plan. If you already have your music with CD Baby, you do not need to move it. Stay where you are and add the other registrations around it. Moving distributors is a job for later, if you ever need it.

The rule is: one distributor per song. Do not put the same song with two distributors at the same time. That creates a mess — the stores get the same song twice, the money gets split and confused, and you

spend your time fixing a problem you created. One song, one distributor. That is the rule.

How to release a song properly

A release is not just an upload. A release is a plan. Here is the plan, step by step.

First, finish the song and register it — BMI, SoundExchange, the MLC — before you release it. Registration comes before release. That is the order. If you release first and register later, the early plays earn money that has nowhere to go.

Second, make the cover art. Every release needs a cover picture — a square image that shows on the streaming services. It should have the song title and your name, and it should look like the music sounds. If the song is warm and golden, the cover should be warm and golden. Make one cover per song, or one cover for the whole album if you are releasing an album. Do not reuse a blurry photo. The cover is the first thing a stranger sees. Make it count.

Third, pick a release date at least three weeks from today. Do not release tomorrow. Give yourself time. Give the distributor time to deliver the song to the stores. And give yourself time to tell people about it before it comes out. A song that appears with no warning gets no listeners. A song that people are waiting for gets listeners on the first day.

Fourth, upload the song to your distributor. Upload the WAV file — the full-quality master you exported in Chapter 5, not the MP3. Give the song its exact title, spelled the same way you registered it with BMI and the MLC. Give your artist name, spelled the same way everywhere. Give the release date. Give the cover art. Check every spelling twice. The information you put here is the information the stores and the royalty organisations use to match the money to you. A misspelled title is a lost check.

Fifth, pitch the song to the streaming services. Spotify lets you pitch an unreleased song to their editors through Spotify for Artists, and you should do that for every release. It costs nothing. It is a form where you describe the song — the genre, the mood, the story, the instruments — and you ask the editors to consider it for a playlist. Most pitches do not get picked. That is normal. Pitch anyway. Every pitch is a chance, and a chance costs you nothing but a few minutes.

Sixth, tell people. The day the song comes out, tell everybody. Post it. Send it to your friends. Play it on your own radio station. The distributor puts the song in the stores, but you bring the people to the song. Nobody else will do that for you.

Singles, albums, and the order of work

Release singles, one song at a time, especially at the

start. A single is one song, released on its own. An album is many songs released together. A single is easier to promote, easier to pitch, and easier for a stranger to try. If a stranger likes one song, they will come back for the next one. If you release ten songs at once and nobody hears them, you have spent ten songs to get the same silence.

Release one song. Promote it. Learn what worked. Then release the next one. That is the rhythm. One song at a time, steady, like the rice. Each song teaches you something, and each song adds to the pile. After ten singles, you have ten songs earning, ten songs registered, ten songs out in the world. That pile is your catalogue, and a catalogue is what pays you month after month, year after year.

Your catalogue is your pension

Let me tell you what a catalogue is, because this is the word that matters most in the second half of your music life.

A catalogue is all of your songs, together, earning at the same time. One song earns a little. Ten songs earn ten times a little. Fifty songs earn fifty times a little. And the songs do not stop earning when you stop working. A song you released two years ago still earns when somebody streams it today. A song you released five years ago still earns when a station plays it tonight.

That is why the catalogue is your pension. A pension is money that comes to you after you stop working, because of the work you did before. Your catalogue is the same thing. The songs you release now will pay you in five years, in ten years, in twenty years, as long as they are out there and registered and earning. Every song you add is another brick in the house. You are not building for one payday. You are building a house that pays you rent, month after month, for the rest of your life.

So do not think of a song as a single event. Think of it as a brick. One brick is not a house. Ten bricks are not a house. But a hundred bricks, laid one at a time, steady, is a house. And a house is where you live.

Keep a list of every release: the song title, the distributor, the release date, the streaming links. Keep the WAV masters safe. Keep the cover art safe. This is your business now, and a business keeps its records.

Release day

Release day is the day the song comes out. Here is how to run it, so the day does not pass quietly.

In the morning, check that the song is live on the streaming services. Open Spotify, search for it. Open Apple Music, search for it. If it is there, good. If it is not there, check with your distributor — sometimes a

release takes a few extra hours to appear. Do not panic in the morning. Check again in the afternoon.

At midday, post the song. Post it on your Facebook, on your Instagram, on your YouTube. Post the link, the cover, and the story of the song, in two lines. Tag the people who helped you make it. Ask them to share it. One post at midday, when people are on their phones, is worth more than three posts at midnight.

In the afternoon, play it on Keepsie Radio. Talk about it on the air. Tell the story. Play it twice if you want — once in the afternoon and once in the evening, so the listeners who missed it the first time catch it the second time.

In the evening, send a message to your friends and your family. Not a mass message to a hundred people. A few personal messages, to the people who will really listen. "My new song is out today. I would love for you to hear it." That is it. Personal messages get heard. Mass messages get ignored.

Before you go to sleep, write down what happened on release day. How many people listened? Who shared it? Which station played it? What did people say? That is the record of the day, and it is the first page of the song's life. Tomorrow, you go back to work on the next song. But tonight, you know the song is out in the world, and that is worth a moment.

Chapter 8: Advertising and Promotion

Distribution puts the song in the stores. Advertising brings the people to the song. A song in a store that nobody visits earns nothing. You have to tell people the song exists, and you have to tell them in a way that makes them want to hear it.

This chapter is about advertising and promotion — how to get the word out, with the money you have, in a way that works.

Start with the story

People do not share a song. They share a story. When you advertise your music, do not just say, "Here is my new song." Tell them the story of the song. What is it about? What feeling made you write it? What question does it ask? When I tell people about a song, I tell them the question: how can you be in jail and be happy? That question makes people stop and listen. Your song has a question or a story like that. Find it, and lead with it.

Tell the story in your own voice, the way you talk. Do not sound like an advertisement. Sound like a man telling his friend about a song he made. That is the voice people trust.

The free promotion you already own

Before you spend one dollar, use the promotion you already own.

First, your own radio station. You have Keepsie Radio. Your songs already play there all day in the rotation. That is free advertising to listeners in forty countries. When you release a new song, put it in the rotation on your own station first. Talk about it on the air. Tell the story. Your listeners are your first audience, and they are already listening.

Second, your social media. Your Facebook page, your personal profile, your YouTube channel — these are your noticeboards, and they cost you nothing. Post the song. Post the story. Post a short video of you playing it. Post it more than once, on different days, at different times, because not everybody sees the first post. Do not be shy about posting your own work. If you do not tell people, nobody will tell them for you.

Third, your podcast. You have a podcast with dozens of episodes, and people listen to it. Talk about the song on the podcast. Play a piece of it. Tell the story behind it. The people who listen to your words will want to hear your music.

Fourth, your books. You have books, and the books carry your name. Put the song in the book's world. Mention it. A reader who trusts your book will trust your song.

These four things — your station, your social media, your podcast, your books — are your own channels. They are free, they are yours, and nobody can take them away. Use them every time you release a song.

Paid advertising: spend small, spend smart

When you are ready to spend money on advertising, spend small and spend smart. Do not throw a large amount at one advertisement and hope. Start with a small amount, test it, see what it brings, and then decide whether to spend more.

The rule for paid advertising is: advertise where the people who would like your music already are. If your music is reggae and Caribbean soul, advertise to people who listen to reggae and Caribbean soul. Do not advertise to everybody. Everybody is not your audience. Your audience is the people who already love the kind of music you make.

Facebook and Instagram let you advertise to a specific audience — by interest, by place, by age. You can run an advertisement for a few dollars a day, to people in Belize and to Belizeans living abroad, who like reggae, dancehall, and Caribbean music. Start small. A few dollars a day for a week. Watch what happens. How many people heard the song? How many clicked? How many followed you? If the numbers are good, spend a little more. If the

numbers are bad, change the picture or the words and try again. Advertising is a test, not a prayer. You test, you learn, you adjust.

Do not pay for promises. If somebody promises you a million streams for a fixed price, be careful. Real advertising brings real listeners, one by one, and the numbers grow steady. Anything that promises a flood overnight is selling you a dream, not a result. Spend on the platforms themselves, where you can see the numbers, not on a stranger who promises you the world.

The press kit

Make a press kit. A press kit is a small package that tells a stranger who you are and what your music is, in one place. It has four things: a short story about you, a photo of you, the song, and the links where people can hear it. Keep it simple. One page about you, one good photo, the song file, and the links.

When you write to a radio station, a blogger, or a playlist maker, send the press kit. Do not send a long email with no music in it. Do not send a song with no story. Send the story and the song together. A music director gets a hundred emails a day. The one with a clear story and a good song gets opened. The one with nothing but "please listen" gets deleted.

Keep going

Promotion is not a one-day job. It is a habit. Every week, do something to promote the music. Post a video. Send the song to one new station. Talk about it on the air. Tell one new person. Small actions, every week, add up. A song that is promoted for one day is forgotten in two. A song that is promoted every week, a little at a time, stays alive.

Write down what you do each week to promote the music. Keep a list. That list is your proof that you are working the plan, and it is the record you will look back on when the money starts coming and you want to know what worked.

Advertising is not begging. It is telling. You made something good. You are telling people it exists. That is the whole job.

Video: show them the song

A song you can see is a song people remember. A short video of you playing the song — on your porch, in your studio, by the sea — will do more than a hundred words about it. People watch video. They share video. A video is the advertisement that carries itself.

You do not need a film crew. You need a phone, good light, and a clean sound. Set the phone on a table or a stand, facing you, with the light on your face and not behind you. Play the song. Sing it. One take,

beginning to end. Do not worry about making it perfect. A video that is honest beats a video that is polished and empty.

Make three kinds of video. First, the full song: you playing and singing the whole thing, so people can hear it. Second, the short piece: thirty seconds of the best part — the hook, the chorus — for social media, where people scroll fast and you have to catch them in the first three seconds. Third, the story: you talking to the camera for one minute, telling the story of the song, the way you would tell a friend. The story video is the one that makes people care about the song video.

Post the videos on your YouTube channel, on your Facebook, on your Instagram. YouTube is where Belize watches the news, and it is where people go to hear music. Put the song there. Put the story there. Put yourself there. A person who sees your face and hears your voice will remember you longer than a person who only sees a name.

When you post a video, put the link to hear the full song in the words under it. The video is the invitation. The link is the door. Make the door easy to find.

One video a week is enough. A video of a song, a video of a story, a video of you in the studio — small, steady, every week. That is the habit, and the habit

is the promotion.

Working with other artists

You do not have to do everything alone. Working with another artist — a singer on your song, a player on your track, a writer on your words — can make the song better and can carry it further, because now two audiences hear it instead of one.

Here is how to do it right. First, choose the person for the song, not for the name. The right voice for the chorus is the voice that fits the feeling, whether that person is famous or not. A famous voice that does not fit the song will hurt it. An unknown voice that fits it will lift it.

Second, agree the split before you record. Who owns what share of the song? Who owns what share of the recording? Write it down, both of you, and sign it, the same way you would with a co-writer. Do this before the recording, not after. After the song is out and earning, the conversation is harder. Before, it is easy.

Third, agree who does what. Who sings which part? Who plays what? Who mixes it? Who releases it? Write it down. A clear agreement is a kindness. It stops the misunderstandings that break friendships.

Fourth, promote it together. When the song comes out, both of you post it. Both of you tell your people.

Two voices telling the same story reach twice as many ears. That is the whole point of working together.

Fifth, say thank you. When the song does well, thank the person who helped you make it. When it does not do well, do not blame them. You made the song together, and you carry it together. That is how a partnership lasts.

A collaboration is a strategy, not an accident. Choose the right person, agree the terms, do the work, promote it together. That is the step, and it works the same way as all the others.

Chapter 9: Getting It Broadcast Around the World

Now we come to the question that brought this book into being. How do you get your music played on internet radio and on all the stations around the world, the way Bob Marley's songs play on every reggae radio? A new artist comes out, he is nineteen years old, and his song is playing on every station in the world. Why are you still here forty years later?

I asked that question myself, and I am going to answer it honestly, because this book explains without mistakes, and the honest answer is the only one worth having.

Why Bob Marley plays everywhere

Bob Marley plays on every reggae station because he is catalog. Catalog means the songs that stations keep and play forever, the songs that define the sound. When a reggae station turns on in the morning, Bob Marley is already in the rotation, and he will still be there at night. That is not a new song breaking in. That is a legend who earned his place over a lifetime and never left it. You cannot copy that in a week. You build toward it over years, one song at a time, until your songs are the ones a station cannot imagine leaving out.

Do not measure your first song against a legend's

whole life. Measure it against the step in front of you. The step in front of you is getting your song played on one station. Then another. Then another. That is how a catalogue is built.

Why the nineteen-year-old is everywhere

Now the nineteen-year-old. His song is playing on every station in the world. How?

Here is the honest answer: somebody is working it. A song does not walk itself to every station. Somebody carries it there.

Usually, that somebody is a team. A label. A distributor with a radio department. A plugger — a person whose whole job is to take a song to radio stations and persuade the music directors to play it. Or the song caught fire on the internet — a video, a dance, a moment — and the stations came to the song because their listeners were already asking for it.

Sometimes it is one of those things. Sometimes it is all of them at once. But it is never nothing. There is always a strategy behind it. Remember: there is no luck. There is strategy. The nineteen-year-old's song is everywhere because a strategy put it there.

That is good news for you. Because a strategy can be learned, and a strategy can be followed. You do not need a big label to have a strategy. You need the

steps, and you need to follow them. That is what this chapter gives you.

The way in for an independent artist

You are an independent artist. You do not have a big label. You have something else: your own songs, your own station, your own voice, and this book. Here is the way in.

First, understand the difference between delivery and airplay. Delivery is getting your song to the station's door. Airplay is the station opening the door and playing it. Many services will deliver your song to a thousand stations. That is delivery. It is useful, but it is not airplay. The station still has to choose your song. The music director still has to hear it and say yes. Never confuse the two. If somebody sells you delivery and calls it airplay, you are being sold a dream.

Second, understand who decides. At every station, big or small, there is a person who decides what gets played. Sometimes it is called the music director. Sometimes it is the program director. Sometimes it is just the owner with a playlist. That person is your audience. You are not pitching to a building. You are pitching to a person. So your job is to give that person a reason to say yes: a good song, a clear story, and an easy way to play it.

Third, know the kinds of stations. There are commercial stations, big and hard to reach, with tight playlists and long waiting lists. There are community stations, college stations, and internet stations, and these are your open doors. Internet radio stations, especially, take direct submissions from independent artists. Many of them are run by people who love music and are looking for new songs. They do not have a big label telling them what to play. They play what they like. That is your way in. Start with internet radio and community radio. Build your airplay there. The bigger stations will notice later.

How to pitch to a station, step by step

Here is the pitching process, step by step. Follow it the same way every time.

Step one: find the station. Search for internet radio stations that play your kind of music. If you make reggae, search for reggae internet radio. If you make soul, search for soul internet radio. Make a list. Write down the station name, the website, and the email for submissions or for the music director. Do not guess the email. Find it on their website. If they have a submissions page, use it. If they have an email, use that.

Step two: listen to the station first. Before you send anything, listen to the station for an hour. What do

they play? Does your song fit next to those songs? If it does, you have a real pitch. If it does not, do not send it. Sending a song to the wrong station wastes their time and yours. Send the right song to the right station.

Step three: send the press kit you made in Chapter 8. One email, short and polite. Who you are, in two lines. What the song is, in two lines. The story of the song, in two lines. The song file, or a private streaming link. Your contact information. That is it. Do not write a long essay. A music director reads a hundred emails a day. Yours must be read in thirty seconds.

Step four: follow up once. If you hear nothing in two weeks, send one short follow-up. "Hello, I sent you my song two weeks ago. I wanted to check if you had a chance to hear it. Thank you." That is it. One follow-up. Do not send five emails. Do not beg. One polite follow-up shows you are professional. Five shows you are desperate.

Step five: keep a list. Write down every station you pitched, the date, and what happened. Played it? Did not answer? Said no? Said send more? That list is your radio map. Over months, it grows, and you will see which stations play your music and which ones need a different song. Send your next song to the stations that played the last one first. They already know you. That is how a relationship is built.

Step six: repeat, every release. Every time you release a song, pitch it to the stations on your list, and add ten new stations to the list. This is the work. It is not glamorous. It is sending emails, keeping a list, and following up. But it is the work that gets a song from your computer to a speaker in another country.

Playlist pitching

Radio is one road. Playlists are another. A playlist is a list of songs on a streaming service that people press play on. Some playlists are made by the streaming service's editors. Some are made by regular people. Some are made by companies. Getting on a playlist can put your song in front of thousands of listeners overnight.

Pitch your song to Spotify's editors through Spotify for Artists before the song comes out. You learned this in Chapter 7. Do it every time. Describe the song honestly — the genre, the mood, the story. Do not oversell it. Editors read a thousand pitches. The honest one stands out.

Also pitch to independent playlist makers — the people who run playlists on Spotify and Apple Music for fun or for business. Find them the same way you find stations: search for playlists in your genre, find who runs them, and send them a short, polite message with the song. Some will say no. Some will

add it. Each add is a new door.

Use your own station

You have a station. Use it. Keepsie Radio plays your songs all day in the rotation, to listeners in forty countries. That is not a small thing. That is your own broadcast, and it costs you nothing.

When you release a new song, play it on your own station first. Talk about it on the air. Tell the story. Then, when you pitch to other stations, you can tell them honestly: this song is already playing on Keepsie Radio in Belize, to listeners around the world. That is not bragging. That is proof. A station that hears a song is already on the air somewhere is more likely to try it.

And here is the other side of the coin: other artists need airplay too, and you have a station with listeners. As your station grows, other artists will want their songs played on Keepsie Radio. That is a door that opens both ways, and one day it may be a business of its own. But that is for later. For now, your station is your first stage.

The long answer to the forty-year question

So why are you still here forty years later, while a nineteen-year-old is on every station? Here is the long answer, and it is the truth.

You spent forty years learning to make the music. Your uncle taught you the guitar. You went to school for the piano. You learned to write and to sing. That was the first forty years, and it was not wasted. It was the foundation.

What you were never taught was the second half: how to produce the song to get paid for it, how to register it, how to distribute it, how to advertise it, how to pitch it to stations, how to collect the money. Nobody sat you down and gave you those steps. That is the gap. And that gap is exactly what this book fills.

The nineteen-year-old did not wait forty years to learn the second half. Somebody handed him the steps, or he had a team that did the steps for him. You are handing yourself the steps right now, in this book. The moment you follow them, the forty years of music behind you becomes your strength, not your burden. You have forty years of songs, of feeling, of truth, and now you have the steps to carry them to the world.

Start with one station. Pitch one song. Follow up once. Then do it again. That is how the world starts to hear you.

A sample pitch email

Here is what a good pitch email looks like. It is short.

It is polite. It has the song and the story, and nothing extra. You can use this shape for every station you pitch to. Just change the names and the song.

Subject: New song for your station — "Low Fire" by Nimrod Elbert Lauriano

Hello,

My name is Nimrod Elbert Lauriano. I am a singer and songwriter from Belize. I have a new song called "Low Fire". It is a reggae song about keeping a steady fire under a pot that is cooking slow — about patience, and about love that does not rush.

I have attached the song, and you can also hear it here: [your streaming link].

I run a radio station in Belize called Keepsie Radio, and this song is already playing there. I would be glad if you would consider it for your station.

Thank you for listening.

Nimrod Elbert Lauriano [your email] [your phone number]

That is the whole email. Notice what it does. It says who you are, in one line. It says what the song is, in two lines. It tells the story, in one line. It gives the song. It gives the proof that the song is already on the air. It says thank you. And it stops.

Do not write a long email. Do not tell your life story. Do not attach ten songs. One song, one story, one

email. The music director can read it in thirty seconds and press play. That is the goal.

If the station has a submissions form on their website instead of an email, use the form. Fill it in the same way: short, polite, song and story. The form is the same job as the email, only in boxes.

Building the relationship

A station that plays your song once is a station that might play your next song. That is a relationship, and you build it the same way you build any relationship: by being reliable, by saying thank you, and by not being a burden.

When a station plays your song, thank them. A short message: "Thank you for playing my song. I appreciate it." That is it. Do not ask for more the same day. Just say thank you. A music director remembers the artist who said thank you.

When you release your next song, send it to that station first, before the new stations. Say, "You played my last song, and I wanted you to hear the new one first." That is a real thing to say, and it is true. The station that played you before is the station most likely to play you again.

If a station says no, do not argue. Say thank you and move on. A no today is not a no forever. It might be that your song did not fit their sound this time. Send

them a different song next time, one that fits better. The door is not closed. It is just not open for this song.

Keep a list of every station, every person, and every result. Write down the name of the music director if you learn it. Next time you write, use their name. A person who is called by their name listens longer. That is true in music, and it is true everywhere else.

Over a year, this list becomes your radio family — the stations that play you, the people who answer your emails, the doors that open. Treat them well. They are the reason the world hears you.

Chapter 10: Getting the Money in Your Pocket

This is the chapter where the money comes home. You wrote the song. You played it. You recorded it. You produced it. You registered it. You distributed it. You advertised it. You got it broadcast. Now you have to collect the money and put it in your pocket.

This chapter is about the money itself — where it comes from, how it arrives, how to read it, what to do when it is small, and how it grows.

Where the money comes from

One song earns money in four places. You learned them in Chapter 6. Let me say them again, because this is the chapter where they pay.

First, the distributor — CD Baby — pays you the master royalty from streaming and downloads. This is the money that comes when people stream your song on Spotify or Apple Music. It arrives in your distributor account, and you withdraw it to your bank or your payment account. This is the money I knew first. The little checks. Twenty dollars. Forty dollars. Four dollars. The highest was sixty-seven dollars. That money was real, and it proved the system works. But it was only one stream out of four.

Second, BMI pays you the performance royalty for the composition. This is the money that comes when

your song is played on the radio, on television, in a venue, or on a stream. BMI pays every quarter — in February, May, August, and November. You will not get a check every week from BMI. You will get a payment four times a year, and it will cover all the plays that were reported in that period. The first BMI payment for a new artist is often small. Do not be discouraged by a small first payment. A small first payment means the system found you. The payments grow as the plays grow.

Third, the MLC pays you the mechanical royalty for the composition from interactive streaming and downloads in the United States. This money comes about two to three months after the streams happen, because the MLC has to collect the reports from the services, match them to your songs, and then pay. When you see an MLC payment, it is for streams that happened a few months ago. That delay is normal. It is not a mistake. It is how the system works.

Fourth, SoundExchange pays you the digital performance royalty for the recording from non-interactive digital radio — SiriusXM, Pandora in radio mode, internet radio, cable music. This money comes monthly, once your balance reaches their minimum. This is the money that grows when your song gets played on internet radio, which is exactly what Chapter 9 was about. Every internet radio play is a SoundExchange play. That is why the radio work

and the money work are the same work.

Four places. Four payments. Four streams of money from one song. When you are registered in all four places, the song earns from all four. When you are registered in only one, it earns from one. That is the whole secret of this chapter: register everywhere, and collect everything.

How the money arrives

The money does not arrive in an envelope. It arrives in accounts. Each organisation has an online account where your money sits, and you withdraw it to your bank.

Set up your payment information in every account as soon as you join. Give them your bank details, or your PayPal, whichever they accept and whichever you trust. Do not leave the payment information blank. Money that cannot be sent to you sits there, and after a time, some organisations will hold it or return it. Fill in the payment details on the day you join. That is a rule.

Each organisation has its own minimum before it will send you a payment. A minimum is the smallest amount they will pay out at one time. If your balance is below the minimum, the money stays in your account and adds up until it reaches the minimum, and then it is sent. Check the minimum on each

organisation's website when you join. It is different for each one, and it can change. The point is not the number. The point is: do not panic when a small balance does not arrive yet. It is not lost. It is waiting.

How to read a royalty statement

Every organisation sends you a statement — a report that says what you earned, where it came from, and how much. Learning to read a statement is part of getting paid.

A statement has four things you need to look at. First, the song title. Is it your song? Is the title spelled right? Second, the source. Where did the play happen — which service, which station, which country? Third, the number of plays. How many times was the song played? Fourth, the amount. How much did those plays earn?

Read the statement line by line, slowly. If a line does not make sense, write it down and ask. If a song you released is missing from the statement, check whether it is registered. If a play count looks wrong, check whether the title was spelled the same way everywhere. Most problems with royalty money are spelling problems — a title spelled one way with BMI and another way with the distributor, so the money cannot find its home. Keep the spellings the same everywhere, and the money will find you.

Keep every statement. Save them in a folder, on your computer and on a backup. They are your records. They are the proof of what you earned. And when you look back after a year, they are the map of how your music is growing.

What to do when the money is small

The money will be small at first. I will not lie to you about that. The first checks are small. Mine were twenty dollars, forty dollars, four dollars. The highest was sixty-seven dollars. That is the truth of starting.

Here is what you do when the money is small: you do not stop. You keep going. You release the next song. You register it. You pitch it. You promote it. You add it to the pile.

The reason is simple. One song earns a little. Ten songs earn ten times a little. A hundred songs earn a hundred times a little. And the songs do not stop earning when you stop working. A song you released two years ago still earns when somebody streams it today. A song you released five years ago still earns when a station plays it tonight. The money from a catalogue is money that keeps coming, month after month, from work you already did.

That is the difference between a job and a catalogue. A job pays you once for the hours you worked. A

catalogue pays you again and again for the songs you already made. The first year is slow, because the catalogue is small. The fifth year is different, because the catalogue is big. The tenth year is different again. You are building something that pays you while you sleep, but only if you keep adding to it.

So when the check is four dollars, do not throw the plan away. Cash the four dollars. Smile at it. And then release the next song. The four dollars is proof that the road works. The road does not care whether the first car on it is big or small. It carries whatever you put on it.

How the money grows

The money grows in three ways.

First, more songs. Every new song is a new earner. Release steadily, one song at a time, and the catalogue grows. This is the most important way. Never stop releasing.

Second, more plays. Every play is a payment. Promotion, radio pitching, and playlists all bring more plays. The work in Chapters 8 and 9 is the work that grows the plays. A song that is played a thousand times earns more than a song that is played ten times. That is simple, and it is true.

Third, more places. Every registration is a new stream of money. BMI, SoundExchange, the MLC,

the distributor — four places. If you add a new country, a new service, a new use for the song — a film, an advertisement, a cover by another artist — that is another place. The more places the song earns, the more the money adds up.

Do not chase one big payment. Build the pile. A pile of small payments, from many songs, in many places, month after month, is a living. That is the goal. Not one rich day. A living, every month, from your own songs.

Keep the money clean

When the money starts coming, keep it clean. Open a separate bank account, or a separate section in your records, just for music money. Put the music money in, and pay the music costs out of it. Do not mix it with the plumbing money, or the household money, or any other money. A business that mixes its money cannot tell whether it is growing.

Write down every payment that comes in: the date, the organisation, the song, the amount. Write down every cost that goes out: the distributor fee, the advertising, the equipment. At the end of each month, look at the two lists. Is the money coming in more than the money going out? If it is, you are growing. If it is not, look at where the money is going and cut what is not working. This is not hard. It is just writing things down. But writing things

down is the difference between a man who hopes he is getting paid and a man who knows he is getting paid.

Pay your taxes on the music money. I am not a tax man, and this book is not tax advice. But I will say this plainly: when you earn money, the government will want its share, and it is better to set a little aside every time a payment comes in than to be surprised at the end of the year. Ask a tax person in Belize how music income is treated, and follow what they say. That is part of the plan too.

The pocket

The goal of this book is the pocket. The money in your pocket. Not in a report. Not in an account you never check. In your pocket.

To get it there, you have to do the last step, which is the simplest and the one most people forget: withdraw it. When your distributor balance reaches the minimum, withdraw it. When your SoundExchange balance is ready, withdraw it. When your BMI payment arrives, move it to your bank. Do not leave the money sitting in the accounts. A payment sitting in an account is not in your pocket. Move it. That is the last instruction, and it is the one that matters most.

You wrote the song. You played it. You recorded it.

You produced it. You registered it. You put it out. You advertised it. You got it broadcast. And now the money comes. Follow the instructions, collect every stream, keep the records, and the money will be in your pocket.

That is the Quantum Rule, and it works.

Your first year of statements

Let me tell you what the first year of royalty statements looks like, so you are not surprised and you do not quit too early.

The first three months, the statements are small and confusing. A few dollars from the distributor. Nothing from BMI yet, because BMI pays quarterly and your song has not been in a full quarter. Nothing from the MLC yet, because the MLC pays two to three months after the streams. Maybe a little from SoundExchange, if a station played you. You will look at the numbers and think, is this all? That is the normal feeling. Every artist feels it. Do not stop.

Months four to six, the picture starts to fill in. The BMI payment arrives, and it covers the plays from the first quarter. The MLC payment arrives, and it covers the streams from months ago. The distributor payment arrives, and it covers the newest streams. Now you can see all four places paying. The total is still small, but it is coming from four places, and you

can see which place pays the most for your music. Write it down. That is your map.

Months seven to twelve, the catalogue is bigger, and the statements are longer. You have more songs out. The older songs are still earning. The newer songs are starting to earn. A station that played you in month two is still playing you in month eight, and SoundExchange is still paying for it. A playlist that added you in month five is still bringing streams in month ten. The money is not one payment. It is a pile of small payments, from many songs, in many places, arriving month after month.

At the end of the first year, add up everything. The distributor, BMI, SoundExchange, the MLC. Look at the total. Then divide it by the number of songs you released. That is what one song earns you in its first year. Now imagine that number multiplied by the songs you will release in the second year, and the third. That is the growth. It is slow at first, and then it is steady, and then it is a living.

Do not compare your first year to somebody else's tenth year. Compare your first year to your first month. If the money grew, the plan is working. Keep going.

When the money is late

Sometimes the money is late. You expected a

payment, and it did not come. Do not panic. Work the list, in order, before you worry.

First, check the dates. BMI pays quarterly — February, May, August, November. If you are waiting in March for a BMI payment, it is not late. It is not due yet. The MLC pays about two to three months after the streams. If the streams were last month, the money is not late. It is still on its way. SoundExchange pays monthly, once your balance reaches their minimum. If your balance is below the minimum, the money is not late. It is waiting to add up.

Second, check your payment information. Is your bank information filled in? Is it correct? Did you change banks and forget to update it? Money that cannot be sent sits in the account. Check this first, because it is the simplest fix.

Third, check your registrations. Is the song registered with the organisation you are waiting on? Is the title spelled the same way? Is your name spelled the same way? If the song is not registered, or the information does not match, the money cannot find you. Register it, fix the spelling, and the next payment will include it.

Fourth, check your statements. Is the money on the statement, but not in your bank? Then it may be on its way, or it may be below the minimum. Is the

money not on the statement at all? Then the plays may not have been reported yet, or the song may not have been played in that period. Statements lag behind real life by weeks or months. That is normal.

Fifth, if you have checked all four and the money is still missing, write to the organisation. A short, polite message: "My song is called this. It was released on this date. It is registered. I expected a payment and I did not receive it. Can you help me find it?" Give them the facts. They have people whose job is to answer that question. Be patient. It can take a few weeks to get an answer. But ask. The money is yours, and asking is part of collecting it.

Most of the time, the money is not lost. It is just slow. The system moves at its own speed, and the speed is slower than you want. That is the nature of it. The money comes. It comes late sometimes. It comes. Keep releasing, keep registering, and keep checking, and it will come.

Chapter 11: The Quantum Rule, Again — Follow the Instructions

We are at the end of the book. Let me bring it back to where we started, because the end is the beginning, and the rule is the same.

The Quantum Rule says: if you follow the rule, you are going to achieve your goal. It does not matter who you are. It does not matter if you are short or fat or big or slim. If you follow the instructions exactly, you get the result. That is the rule.

You have the instructions now. They are in this book, chapter by chapter, step by step. Write the song. Play it on the instrument. Build the chord progression. Record it in Sonar. Produce it. Register it with BMI, SoundExchange, and the MLC. Distribute it with CD Baby. Advertise it. Get it broadcast around the world. Get the money in your pocket.

That is the whole road. It is not a mystery. It is not a secret. It is a list of steps, and you have the list.

The rule, repeated

They say if you follow a rich man, and he tells you exactly what to do, and you do it, you are going to get rich. If you follow exactly what he said, you get rich. That is what I have learned.

If a plumber teaches you plumbing, and he knows the trade good, and he teaches you, and you follow the instructions, you are going to be good. This repeats itself over and over.

If my wife teaches me to cook rice, and she tells me how much water, a little salt, a little fat, keep the heat low, test the water with your finger, and I follow it, the rice cooks good. And now I am the rice cooker every Sunday.

If this book teaches you to make music and get paid, and you follow every instruction, you are going to get paid. This is the same rule. It does not change. It repeats itself over and over.

No luck. Only strategy.

There is no luck. Luck is the biggest bullshit you ever heard in the world. Anything is strategy. Even if you walk and pick up something, that is not luck. You just found something. That is all it is.

Do not wait for luck. Do not pray for luck. Do not blame luck. Follow the strategy. The strategy is in this book. It is the steps, in order, one after the other. Do the steps, and the result comes. That is not a promise from the sky. That is a rule that works the same way every time, like the rice.

Your six months

I said at the start that within six months, I want to get paid. That is the goal. Six months from the day you finish this book, you should be able to look at your accounts and see money coming in from more than one place — from the distributor, from BMI, from SoundExchange, from the MLC — because you registered everywhere, and you released songs, and you pitched them, and you promoted them.

Six months is not a long time. It is enough time to release six songs, one a month, or twelve songs, one every two weeks. It is enough time to register every one of them. It is enough time to pitch every one of them to stations and playlists. It is enough time for the first payments to arrive and for you to see, with your own eyes, that the system works.

Do not wait six months to start. Start today. Write one song this week. Play it. Record it. That is the first step, and it is the only step you need to take today. Tomorrow, take the next one.

The last word

This book is written for me, and it is written for you. It is written for the man who can play the piano and the guitar, who can write a song and sing a good song, and who was never taught how to produce the song to get paid for it. That was my problem. It does not have to be yours.

I wrote it so that nobody has to wait forty years to learn what I learned. The steps are here. The rule is here. The rice is here.

Read it. Follow every instruction. And then get paid.

That is all. Now go and cook your rice.

A letter to you, the reader

If you have read this far, you are the person this book was written for. You are the one who can make the music and was never taught how to get paid for it. I know you, because I was you.

I want you to know something. The forty years were not wasted. The years you spent learning the guitar, learning the piano, writing songs that nobody heard, singing songs that nobody paid for — those years were the foundation. A house is not built in a day, and the foundation is the part nobody sees. Your foundation is deep, and it is strong, and it is yours.

Now you have the rest of the house. The steps are in this book. They are not hard. They are just steps. Write, play, record, produce, register, distribute, advertise, broadcast, collect. Do them in order. Check the boxes. Do not skip one.

There will be days when the money is small and you wonder if it is worth it. It is worth it. There will be days when a station says no and you wonder if you should stop. Do not stop. There will be days when

the song will not come and you wonder if you have lost it. You have not lost it. It is waiting.

Keep going. One song at a time. One step at a time. One Sunday at a time, like the rice.

I will see you on the radio.

— Nimrod Elbert Lauriano

Appendix A: Your Six-Month Plan

This is the plan for the next six months. It turns the book into a calendar. Follow it week by week, and at the end of six months you will have songs out, registrations done, stations pitched, and money coming in from more than one place.

The plan is built on one song every two weeks. That is twelve songs in six months. If you can do one song a week, do that, and you will have twenty-four. But one song every two weeks is the minimum. Do not do less than that. The catalogue grows by the song, and the song is the unit of the plan.

Month one: the foundation

Week one: set up your accounts. Join BMI as a songwriter and as a publisher. Join SoundExchange as an artist and as a rights owner. Join the MLC. Fill in your payment information in every account on the day you join. Write down every username and password in a safe place. This is the foundation. Do not release anything until the foundation is done.

Week one, also: download Sonar and install it. Make your free BandLab account. Set up your audio interface and your microphone. Open Sonar, start a test project, record thirty seconds of guitar and thirty seconds of voice, and listen to it back. Make

sure the sound goes in and comes out. Fix any problem now, while the pressure is low.

Week two: write your first song for the plan. Find the feeling. Write the hook. Write the verse and the chorus. Write it down in your notebook. Play it on the instrument. Play it for one person. When it holds together, move on.

Week three: record the song in Sonar. Instrument first, then voice. Use the Take Lanes. Pick the best parts. Add only what the song needs. Save the project, and save a backup.

Week four: produce the song. Balance the levels. Clean it up. Mix it. Listen on headphones, on a small speaker, and in the car. Export the WAV master. Register the song with BMI, SoundExchange, and the MLC. Upload it to CD Baby with the cover art, and pick a release date three weeks from today. Pitch it to Spotify for Artists. This is the first song through the whole road, from writing to release. It is the slowest one, because you are learning the steps. The next ones will be faster.

By the end of month one, you have: four accounts set up, one song recorded and produced, one song registered in all four places, and one song on its way to release. That is the foundation, and it is done.

Month two: the rhythm

Week five: write the second song. Same steps. Feeling, hook, verse, chorus. Play it. Play it for one person.

Week six: record and produce the second song. Register it with BMI, SoundExchange, and the MLC. Upload it to CD Baby. Pick a release date.

Week seven: your first song comes out. Tell everybody. Post it. Play it on Keepsie Radio. Talk about it on the air. Send it to your podcast listeners. This is the first release day, and it matters. Celebrate it, and then get back to work.

Week seven, also: pitch the first song to ten internet radio stations. Use the pitching steps from Chapter 9. Listen to each station first. Send the press kit. Write down every station, the date, and what happened.

Week eight: write the third song. Record it. Produce it. Register it. Upload it. You are in the rhythm now. Write, record, produce, register, release. That is the loop, and you are inside it.

By the end of month two, you have: three songs through the road, one song released, ten stations pitched, and a rhythm that you can repeat.

Month three: the pile grows

Week nine: pitch the first song to ten more stations, and pitch the second song to the stations that played

the first one. Follow up once with the stations that did not answer the first pitch. Keep the list.

Week ten: release the second song. Tell everybody. Play it on Keepsie Radio. Pitch it to ten new stations.

Week eleven: write and record the fourth song. Register it. Upload it. Keep the loop going.

Week twelve: check your accounts. Look at your distributor account. Look at BMI. Look at SoundExchange. Look at the MLC. Is there money? How much? Where did it come from? Write it down. This is your first real look at the money, and it is the moment you see whether the road works. Even if the amount is small, it is proof. The road works.

By the end of month three, you have: four songs through the road, two songs released, twenty or more stations pitched, and your first look at the money.

Month four: the promotion habit

Week thirteen: start a small paid advertisement for your best song so far — the one that got the most plays or the best reaction. A few dollars a day, for one week, to people who like your kind of music. Watch the numbers. Write them down.

Week fourteen: release the third song. Tell everybody. Play it on Keepsie Radio. Pitch it to the stations on your list, and add ten new stations.

Week fifteen: write and record the fifth song. Register it. Upload it. Keep the loop going.

Week sixteen: pitch your best song to five playlists. Use Spotify for Artists for the editors, and send a short message to independent playlist makers. Write down every playlist you pitched and what happened.

By the end of month four, you have: five songs through the road, three songs released, a paid advertisement tested, playlists pitched, and a promotion habit that you do every week.

Month five: the catalogue

Week seventeen: release the fourth song. Tell everybody. Play it on Keepsie Radio. Pitch it.

Week eighteen: write and record the sixth song. Register it. Upload it. Keep the loop going.

Week nineteen: go back to the stations that played your songs and send them your newest song first. They already know you. Thank the ones that played you. A thank-you is a bridge to the next play.

Week twenty: check your accounts again. Compare this month to month three. Is the money more? Where is it coming from? Which song earns the most? Which place pays the most? Write it down. This is your second look at the money, and it should be bigger than the first, because the catalogue is bigger.

By the end of month five, you have: six songs through the road, four songs released, a catalogue that is earning, and a clear picture of where the money comes from.

Month six: the payday

Week twenty-one: release the fifth song. Tell everybody. Play it on Keepsie Radio. Pitch it.

Week twenty-two: write and record the seventh song, and the eighth if you can. Register them. Upload them. The loop is fast now. You know the steps by heart.

Week twenty-three: run a second paid advertisement, bigger than the first, for the song that performed best. You know what works now, because you tested it in month four. Spend on what works.

Week twenty-four: check all your accounts. Add up the money from the distributor, from BMI, from SoundExchange, and from the MLC. Look at the total. Look at where it came from. Look at how it grew from month three to month six. Write it down. This is the payday. It may not be a fortune yet. But it is money from more than one place, from songs you made yourself, and it is growing.

By the end of month six, you have: seven or eight songs through the road, five or six songs released, a

catalogue that earns every month, stations that know your name, playlists that carry your songs, and money coming in from four places.

After six months

After six months, you do not stop. You keep the loop going. One song every two weeks. Register it. Release it. Pitch it. Promote it. Check the money every month. Watch the catalogue grow.

In a year, you will have twenty or more songs earning. In two years, forty or more. The money grows with the catalogue, and the catalogue grows with the loop. That is the plan, and it is the Quantum Rule: follow the steps, and the result comes.

Appendix B: Checklists for Every Song

Do not trust your memory. Use these checklists. Print them out, or copy them into your notebook, and check each box for every song. A song is not finished until every box is checked.

The song checklist

Write the song. Find the feeling. Write the hook. Write the verse and the chorus. Write the bridge if the song needs it. Write the whole song down in your notebook, with the date. Play it on the instrument, beginning to end, three times. Play it for one person. Build the chord progression and write the chords above the words.

The recording checklist

Set the tempo in Sonar. Make a track for the instrument and a track for the voice. Check that you can hear yourself in the headphones. Turn on the metronome. Record the instrument, beginning to end. Record it three times and use the Take Lanes. Record the voice, beginning to end. Record it three times and use the Take Lanes. Add only what the song needs, one track at a time. Save the project. Save a backup.

The production checklist

Listen to the whole recording like a stranger. Write down what needs fixing. Balance the levels, voice first. Pan the extra sounds a little left and right. Clean up any noise. Use compression gently on the voice. Listen on headphones, on a small speaker, and in the car. Take a break and listen again the next day. Export the WAV master. Listen to the exported file all the way through. Save the WAV with the song name and the word master. Export an MP3 for sending around.

The registration checklist

Join BMI as a songwriter and as a publisher, if you have not already. Register the song with BMI. Join SoundExchange as an artist and as a rights owner, if you have not already. Register the recording with SoundExchange. Join the MLC, if you have not already. Register the song with the MLC. Check that the song title and your name are spelled the same way in every place. Write down every registration in your money map.

The release checklist

Make the cover art, square, with the song title and your name. Pick a release date at least three weeks from today. Upload the WAV file to CD Baby. Check every spelling twice. Pitch the song to Spotify for

Artists. Tell people the release date. On release day, post it, play it on Keepsie Radio, and tell everybody.

The promotion checklist

Send the press kit to ten internet radio stations. Listen to each station first. Follow up once after two weeks. Pitch the song to five playlists. Run a small paid advertisement and write down the numbers. Post about the song on your social media, more than once, on different days. Talk about it on your podcast. Write down everything you did to promote it.

The money checklist

Fill in your payment information in every account. Check your distributor account every month. Check BMI every quarter. Check SoundExchange every month. Check the MLC every month. Read every statement, line by line. Write down every payment: the date, the organisation, the song, the amount. Write down every cost. Withdraw the money to your bank. Keep the statements safe. Set a little aside for tax.

The rule, one last time

Follow the instructions. Check the boxes. Do not skip a step. The song is not finished when you write it. It is finished when every box is checked and the money

is in your pocket. That is the Quantum Rule, and it works.

Your money map

Keep one page in your notebook that is your money map. It is the page you will look at every month. Write it like this.

At the top, write your name and the date. Then make four lines, one for each place the money comes from: CD Baby, BMI, SoundExchange, the MLC. Under each one, write your username, and whether your payment information is filled in. Put a check mark next to each one that is complete. If one is not complete, that is your job for the week.

Under those four lines, make a list of your songs. For each song, write the title, the date it was released, and a check mark for each registration: BMI, SoundExchange, MLC. If a song is missing a check mark, that is your job for the day.

At the bottom of the page, write the money. Every month, write the date and the amount that came in from each place. Add them up. Write the total. That total is the truth of your music business, and it is the number that will grow if you follow this book.

Keep this page up to date. It is one page, and it is the whole business, in one place. When somebody asks you how your music is doing, you do not have to

guess. You open the notebook, you look at the page, and you know.