RELEASE ROADMAP

As a busy parent, professional, and producer, it can be really challenging trying to find time for music. Not to mention that once you have finished a track, getting your music released and heard is a whole other set of tasks that requires even more time. Trying to do all the things is overwhelming without a plan!

I created this roadmap so that you can have a plan and ultimately make more music. By getting clear on music production tasks and all the other tasks after your track is finished, your time will be better spent and you'll have greater mental clarity... which leads to greater creativity.

All the tasks you need to complete can make things seem complicated, but they can be made simple by using a framework. I'm calling this framework the "Music Release Journey".

We'll start with an overview of the journey, and then you'll see detailed steps for various stages along the way.

Let's get started...

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The Music Release Journey

A typical music release has a lifecycle that goes something like this:

PRODUCE TRACKS

This is the fun part, but it's easy to get distracted by all the moving parts. Staying organized will help you manage your time better and will leave more room in your mind for creativity. But the journey is only really just beginning once a track is finished.

SUBMIT DEMOS

Manage demo submissions like a boss to avoid duplication. You'll know exactly when to follow up and when to move on. You'll spend less time on tracking demos and more time on making music.

MANAGE RELEASE BUSINESS

Set your legal and business affairs in order so that your work is protected and to increase opportunities to get paid – whether you are releasing with a label or on your own.

PROMOTE THE RELEASE

Reduce the stress of promoting your music by having a clear plan. The number of tasks can be less overwhelming by using checklists and by organizing your time with a promo calendar..

The journey ultimately leads to connecting with your existing audience and attracting others to your community. You probably got into this music thing for that purpose – to connect with others through music.

The journey applies to each release, so you may have multiple journeys happening all at once for different tracks and releases. Being organized and using systems is that much more important when you have multiple tracks/releases at various stages on the journey at the same time.

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How to Get the Most From This Roadmap

Each of the milestones includes suggestions for data to track, checklists, and other tips. Consider doing the following to get the most from this roadmap:

» Copy these checklists into a spreadsheet or into a work management application like SmartSuite.

» Make the checklists your own by customizing to fit your needs.

» Implement systems one milestone at a time.

» If you need help, let's work together. We can set up your system fairly quickly.

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MILESTONE 1: PRODUCE TRACKS

Milestone 1A: Produce Tracks

The checklists in this section are broken out into production phases. Breaking down work into micro-tasks helps you to see incremental progress being made. The practice improves productivity, and it helps you to focus when you only have a short time to work on music. Spending less mental energy on remembering tasks leaves more head space for the creative side of music.

Project Setup → Composing → Arranging → Tracking → Sound Design → Mixing → Mastering
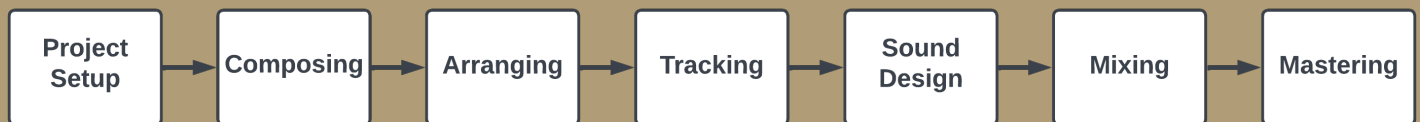
DATA NEEDED

- Collaborator contracts
- Collaborator contact information
- Milestones and Deadlines
- Recording session times and locations
- File locations
- Checklist progress

Click here if you'd like to work together to set up your system.

PROJECT SETUP

- Create a record/item for the project in your project database
- Create a project folder on your computer. Copy the folder name/ link to the worksheet
- Create subfolders: Bounces, DAW Project, Masters, Original Stems, and Premasters
- Create a new DAW project (ideally from a template) and save it in the DAW Project sub folder
- Create blank tracks and color code for different instrument sections and frequency ranges
- Journal any notes along the way in your task database or spreadsheet

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Milestone 1B: Produce Tracks

COMPOSING

- ☐ Choose a tempo
- ☐ Create a basic beat
- ☐ Write verse A chords
- ☐ Write verse B chords
- ☐ Write chorus chords
- ☐ Write bassline for each section
- ☐ Write melody and lyrics
- ☐ Scaffold bridge ideas
- ☐ Save all files

ARRANGING

- ☐ Save file as a new project with iteration number
- ☐ Map out a song structure
- ☐ Create accompaniment patterns
- ☐ Enrich drum patterns (include variations)
- ☐ Add essential transitional elements
- ☐ Minimal EQ and volume adjustments
- ☐ Save all files

TRACKING

- ☐ Save file as a new project with iteration number
- ☐ Ensure agreements are in place with collaborators (vocalists, session musicians, etc.)
- ☐ Bounce a mixdown of the project so far
- ☐ Sing and record a "scratch" version of the lyrics and melody to give a singer an idea of the song's direction
- ☐ Record first takes of the vocals and/or instruments
- ☐ Listen to reference tracks
- ☐ Suggest changes as needed to align with your artistic vision
- ☐ Iterate as needed - within reason
- ☐ File the final recordings in the "Original Stems" folder of your project.
- ☐ Pay collaborators per the agreement
- ☐ Save project files

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Milestone 1: Produce Tracks

PRODUCTION PROJECT BOARD

PROJECT RECORD VIEW

Milestone 1C: Produce Tracks

SOUND DESIGN

- Save file as a new project with iteration number
- Choose appropriate instruments
- Edit instrument sounds
- Apply dimensional effects
- Create "riffs" and add "fills"
- Add and/or enhance transitional elements
- Automate for movement
- Optionally add moderate saturation, distortion, soft clipping, etc.

MASTERING

- Remember: Mastering cannot "fix" poor mixes
- Request mastering services from the engineer
- Pay for the services (usually up front)
- Send final mixdown (premaster) to mastering engineer
- Listen to the mastered track and provide feedback
- Iterate as needed - within reason and within the limit per the agreement

MIXING

- Save file as a new project with iteration number
- Bounce software instruments to audio files
- Create groups and route instruments to the groups
- Create effects channels; send tracks to the channels
- Save as another new project with iteration number
- Cut low end on all instruments
- Cut any "noises", artifacts, etc.
- Adjust levels, panning, and EQ, and compression of individual tracks and then groups
- Add saturation, distortion, etc. to tracks and then groups
- Use tools (and your ears) to identify any issues and then correct the issues
- Bounce a mixdown and listen to it on several types of speakers
- List any problems you hear, and then correct the issues.
- Get feedback from a constructively critical third party
- Iterate on the "bounce and fix" cycle as needed.
- Bounce 2 final mixdowns: one each with -6db and -12db of headroom

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MILESTONE 2: SUBMIT DEMOS

Milestone 2A: Submit Demos

Submitting demos is often a waiting game. It's also about relationship building and following up with real people. The last thing you want is to lose track of who you submitted a demo to and when you sent it to them. You can avoid that stress by having a good system for tracking demo submissions.

DATA NEEDED

- Demo Title
- Tracks included
- Cover Art

(Each Demo Submission)

- Record label contact info
- Link sent to label
- Date submitted
- Expiration or Follow-up Date

FOR EACH SUBMISSION

- Choose a label and record its contact info
- Select a window begin date for submitting the demo
- Select a window end date for two weeks after the demo submission date.
- Upload audio file to Soundcloud for each new submission (make private).
- Copy the Soundcloud track/playlist link to the demo submission record
- On the scheduled submission date, submit the private link and track information (plus press kit) to the label
- Update the submission status to "Submitted"

IF THE LABEL IS INTERESTED

- Discuss contract terms with the label.
- Save a blank copy of the contract to a "Contracts" folder
- Sign the contract and send to the label
- Save a signed copy of the contract to the demo folder
- Confirm contract was received by the label
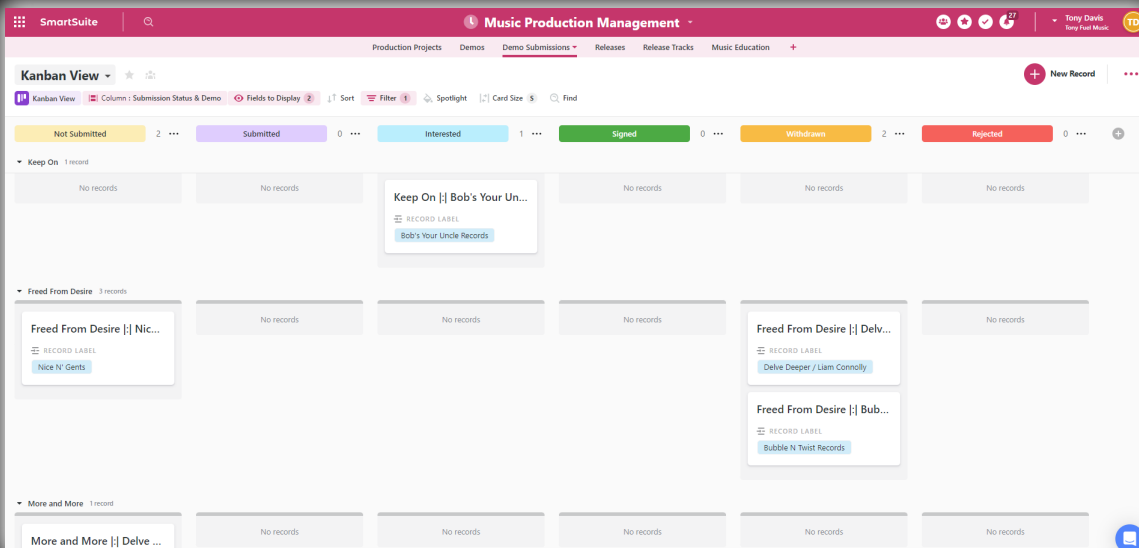- Transition to the "Music Release" stage

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Milestone 2: Submit Demos

DEMO RECORD VIEW
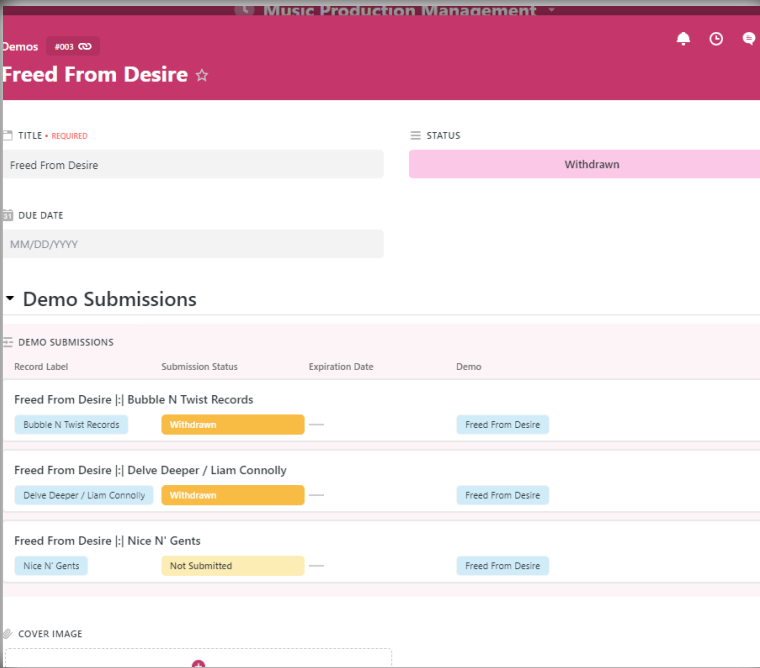
DEMO SUBMISSIONS BOARD

Milestone 2B: Submit Demos

FOLLOWING UP

If the follow up date arrives and you haven't heard from the label...

- Follow up with the label, make a note of when you followed up, and set another follow up date
- Follow up as many times as you ar comfortable

After you have followed up as many times are you are comfortable...

- Delete the Soundcloud track/playlist or reset the private link
- Start the demo submission process with another label

ACTION STEPS

- Customize the checklists to fit your workflow.
- Set up your Demo Tracking system in [SmartSuite](#) or another tool.

LABEL REJECTION

- Send a "thank you" note
- Don't blast them on social media
- Repeat the process with another label
- Consider taking control by self releasing

MINDSET MOMENT

Don't take it too hard when your demo is rejected, and don't be d-bag about it either. Rejection is a part of the business. There are all kinds of reasons why labels don't accept a demo. It often has nothing to do with the quality of your music. People who are successful are willing to fail fast and frequently.

Your music still matters and there is an audience for it.

Click here if you'd like to work together to set up your system.

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MILESTONE 3: MANAGE RELEASE BUSINESS

Milestone 3: Manage Release Business

Set your legal and business affairs in order so that your work is protected and to increase opportunities to get paid – whether you are releasing with a label or on your own.

CHECKLIST

- Set up folders: Contracts and Legal, Masters, Artwork
- Move your signed contract to the appropriate folder for the release
- Collect and file audio masters
- Confirm release and promo dates with the label
- Collect artwork and any promo assets from the label
- If the label is able to share links on the music platforms with you, collect those
- Register works with performing rights organizations (e.g., BMI, ASCAP, SOCAN, PRS)
- Set a reminder for requesting sales statements

DATA NEEDED

- Global Release Date
- Traxsource Promo Date
- Collaborator contact Info, press kits
- Label contact information
- Release links on music platforms
- Artwork
- Promotional links

ACTION STEPS

- Customize the checklists to fit your workflow.
- Set up your Music Release Admin system in **SmartSuite** or another tool.

Click here if you'd like to work together to set up your system.

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MILESTONE 4: PROMOTE THE RELEASE

Milestone 4A: Release Promotion

Promoting the release is really about connecting with as many people as you can through your music. You might even think of it as "offering" or "sharing" your music rather than promoting. Your community is out there, and your new release is meant to bring your community a moment of joy in this life. If your audience doesn't know about your music, they won't hear it. They'll miss out on your good music.

DATA NEEDED

- ☐ Content pieces (outputs)
- ☐ Creative assets (inputs)
- ☐ Content formats
- ☐ Publish platforms
- ☐ Publish dates
- ☐ Calls to action
- ☐ Free download links
- ☐ Collaborators' contact info
- ☐ Checklist progress

PLANNING

- ☐ Plan promotion efforts
- ☐ Activities 1 month before release
- ☐ Activities 2 weeks before release
- ☐ Activities 1 week before release
- ☐ Release day activities
- ☐ Release week Activities
- ☐ One week or later after release
- ☐ Plan a release event (virtual or in person)
- ☐ Make a list of media outlets, music blogs, playlist curators to reach out to
- ☐ Make a list of platforms to create playlists on

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Milestone 4B: Release Promotion

CONTENT CREATION

- ☐ Wrote description of the release
- ☐ Write a press release
- ☐ Create Fanlink, Linktree, Smartlink
- ☐ Web page / blog post (on your website)
- ☐ Text: Collaborator bios
- ☐ Text: A Message to Your Email List
- ☐ Image: Social media profile
- ☐ Image: Social media banner
- ☐ Image or video: Playlist presave suggestion
- ☐ Video: 1-minute clip of audio with cover image
- ☐ Video: Behind the scenes of "How I Made This Track" (Tutorial)
- ☐ Video: Your inspiration for the songs
- ☐ Video: Lyrics
- ☐ Video: "Interviews" with Collaborators
- ☐ Video and images: Release event footage

People buy and stream your music because of the way it makes them feel. Your audience is looking for ways to connect with you, so the content you share needs to reflect your desire to connect with them. Be authentic.

ACTION STEPS

- ☐ Customize the checklists to fit your workflow.
- ☐ Set up your Release Promotion system in **SmartSuite** or another tool.

EXECUTING

- ☐ Follow the plan
- ☐ Publish content per the schedule
- ☐ Host the release party
- ☐ Create the playlists
- ☐ Give yourself grace
- ☐ Celebrate!

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WHAT'S NEXT?

WHAT'S NEXT?

The next step is to repeat the release process and make more music. Make small adjustments to the process with each iteration.

If you haven't already... implement these checklists into SmartSuite, ClickUp, or spreadsheets to bring clarity to managing your systems.

I know all of this can seem overwhelming, but I have you covered.

I offer a coaching service where we can work together to implement these systems. Using free tools, we can get your systems up and running in just a few hours.

I'd love to see you get more mental clarity and make more music. Your music matters.

Click here if you'd like to work together to set up your system.

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