

COMPLETE GUIDE TO THE MUSIC
BUSINESS IN **SOUTH AFRICA**

MUSIC DISTRIBUTION



MUSIC BUSINESS SERIES

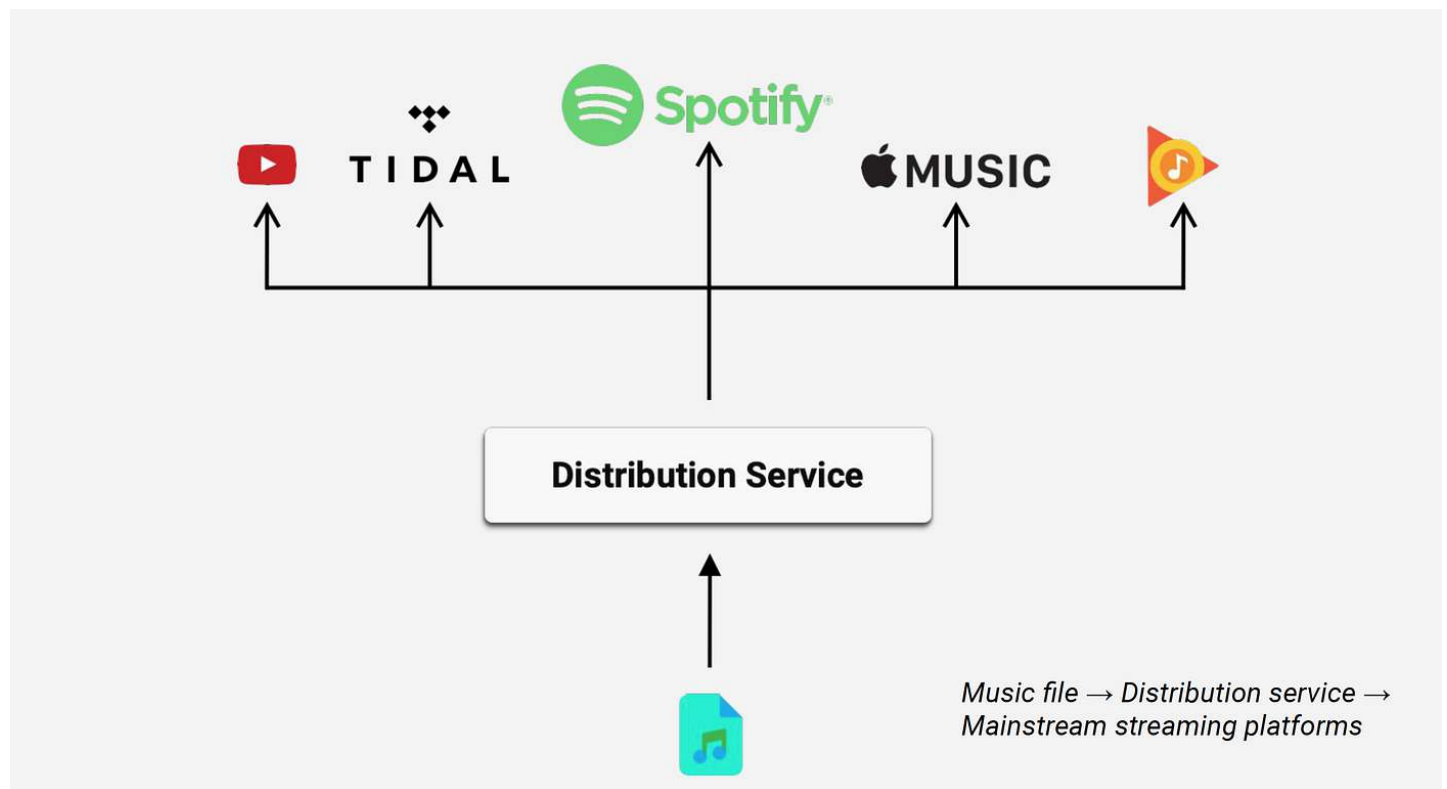
Table Of Contents

Section 1 – What Music Distribution Really Means	2
Section 2 – The South African Music Distribution Landscape	7
Why Global Platforms Still Matter for Local Artists	10
Section 3 – How Digital Distribution Works (Step-by-Step)	17
Section 4 – Distribution vs Ownership: Who Really Owns Your Music?	23
Section 5 – Getting Paid: How Money Flows Through Distribution	30
Section 6 – Distribution for Independent Artists (DIY Model)	37
Section 7 – YouTube, Content ID and Monetisation	42
Section 8 – WhatsApp, TikTok & Social Platforms as Distribution Channels	46
Section 9 – Distribution Deals with Record Labels	53
Section 10 – Release Checklist for South African Artists	56
Section 11 – Real South African Distribution Case Studies	60
Section 12 – The Future of Music Distribution	63

Section 1 — What Music Distribution Really Means

What Music Distribution Is (In Simple Terms)

Music distribution is the process of **moving your finished song** from your studio to the places where people can listen to it — and where you can earn money from it.



Think of distribution as the **delivery system** for your music. You may have recorded a brilliant track, mixed it perfectly, and mastered it professionally, but until it is distributed, it is invisible to the world.

In the past, distribution meant trucks, CDs, vinyl records, and music stores. Today, distribution means getting your music onto platforms like **Spotify**, **Apple Music**, and **YouTube Music** through a digital system.

Without distribution, your song is just a file on your computer.

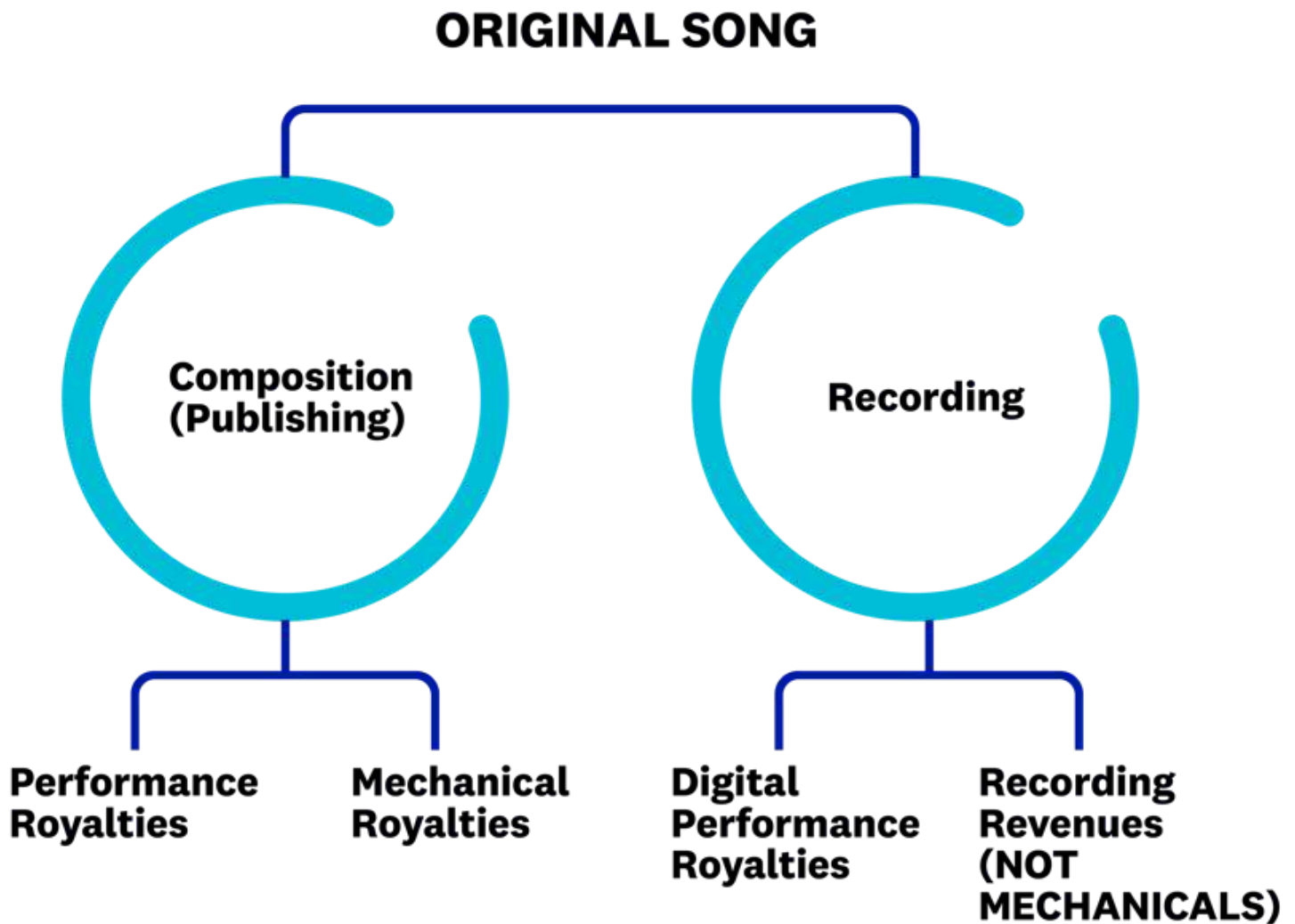
With distribution, your song becomes a **product in the global marketplace**.

The Difference Between Distribution, Publishing, and Licensing

Many artists confuse these three terms, and that confusion is where money gets lost.

- **Distribution** deals with the **sound recording** (the actual audio file people stream)
- **Publishing** deals with the **composition** (lyrics, melody, songwriting)
- **Licensing** deals with **permission to use** the music in TV, film, ads, and media

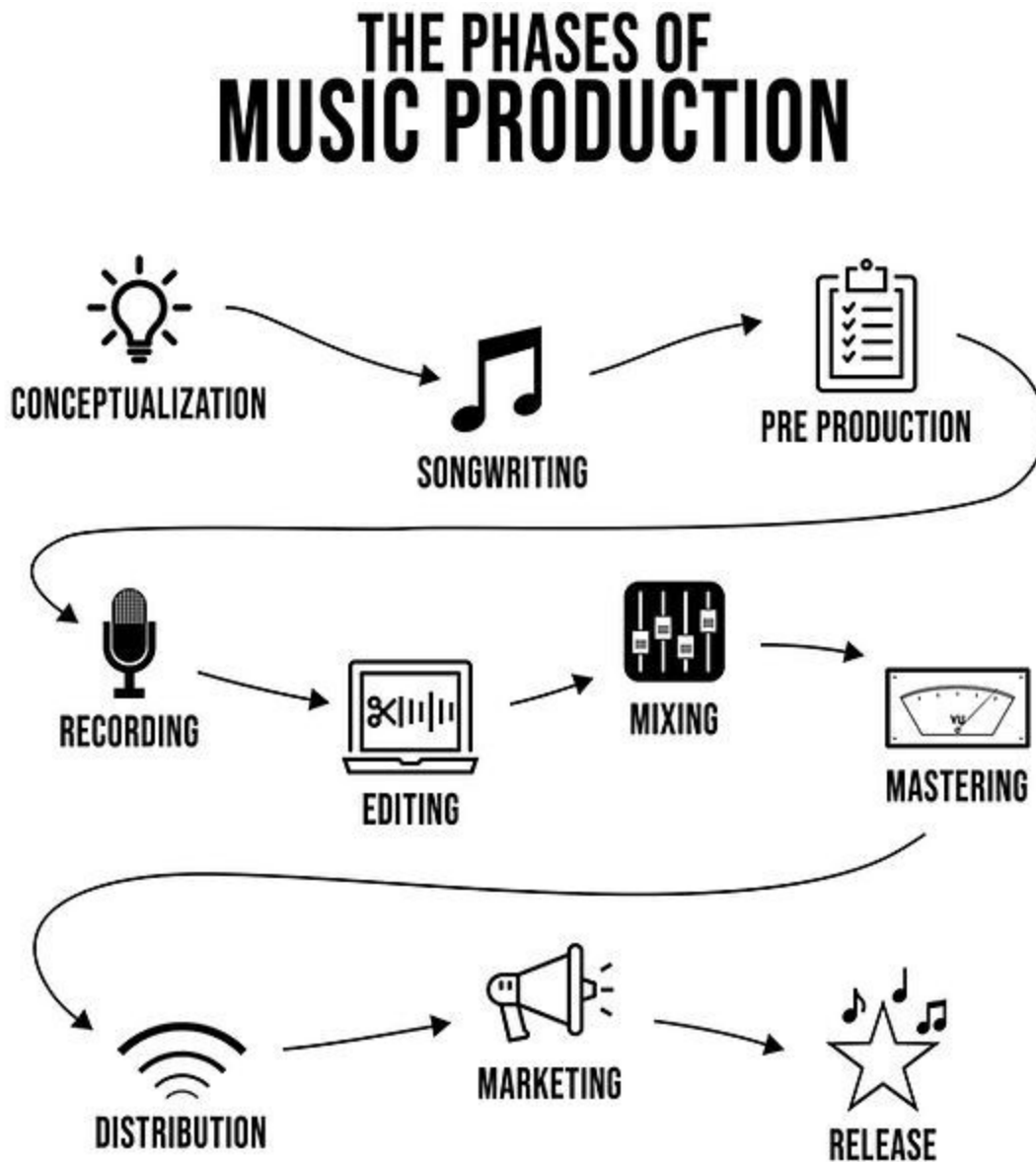
If you upload a song through a distributor, you are only distributing the **recording**, not the songwriting rights.



This is why an artist can have thousands of streams but still not collect publishing royalties – because distribution and publishing are two completely different systems.

Understanding this difference is the first step to understanding the music business properly.

The Journey of a Song: From Studio to Listener



Here is the real journey your song takes:

1. You record, mix, and master the track
2. You prepare artwork, metadata, and ISRC codes
3. You upload the song to a digital distributor
4. The distributor sends it to streaming platforms
5. Listeners stream the music
6. Money is tracked, reported, and later paid to you

At no point do you send music directly to streaming platforms yourself. They only accept music from approved distributors.

That distributor is the **bridge** between you and the platforms.

Physical vs Digital Distribution



Before the internet, music distribution was physical:

- CDs shipped to stores
- Vinyl pressed in factories
- Trucks delivering stock nationwide

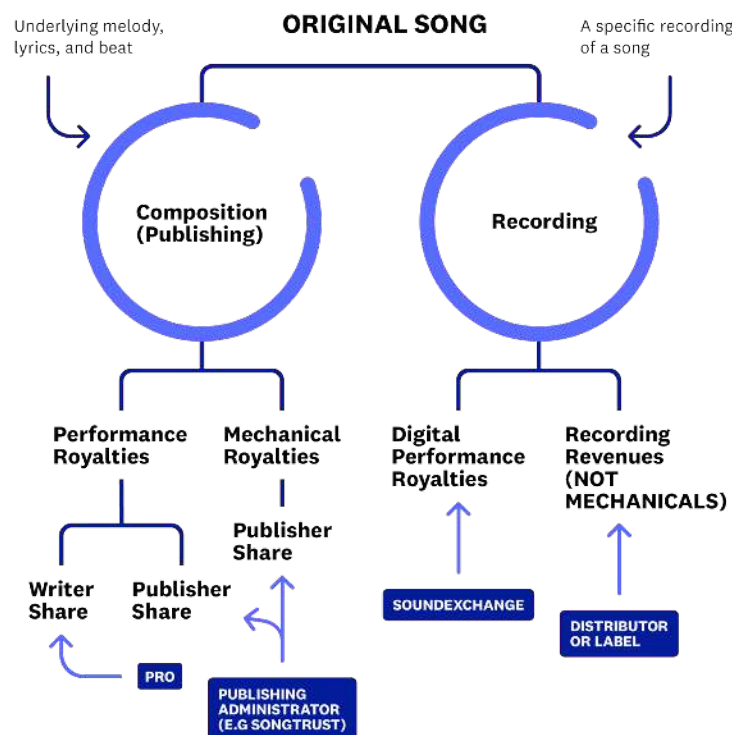
Today, distribution is digital:

- No printing
- No shipping
- No storage
- Instant global reach

A song uploaded today in Johannesburg can be streamed minutes later in New York, Lagos, or London.

Digital distribution removed the gatekeepers. But it also placed **responsibility** on the artist to understand the system.

Why Distribution Determines Whether You Get Paid or Not



Here is the uncomfortable truth:

Most South African artists are not broke because their music is bad.

They are broke because their distribution is wrong.

If your metadata is incorrect, if your ISRC is missing, if your distributor account is not set up properly, or if your release is not configured correctly, the platforms cannot track your streams accurately.

And if streams cannot be tracked, money cannot be paid.

Distribution is not just about getting music online.

It is about getting music online **in a way that allows you to be paid**.

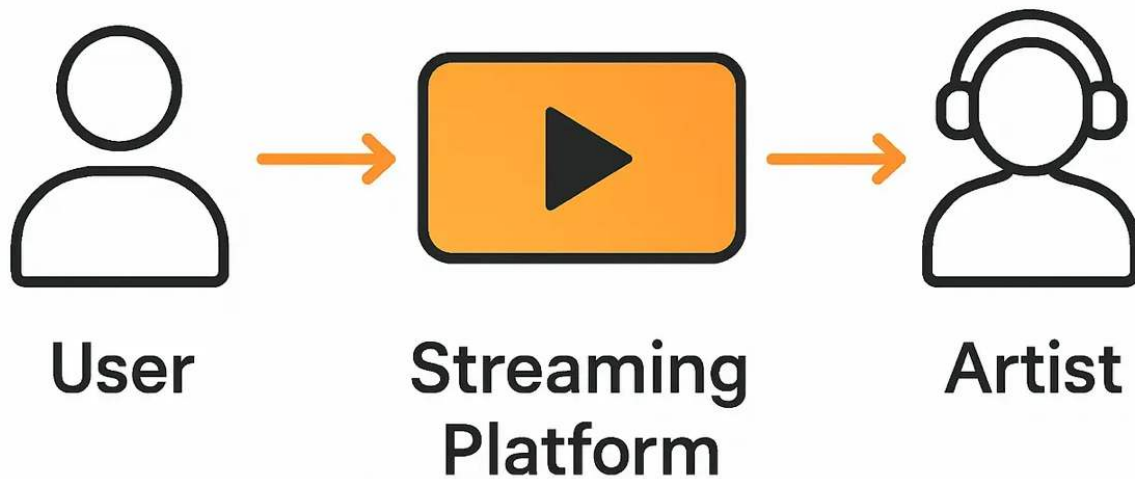
Section 2 — The South African Music Distribution Landscape

How Music Is Distributed in South Africa Today

In South Africa today, most music reaches listeners through **digital distribution**, not record stores.

Artists no longer need physical CDs in retail shops. Instead, they upload music through digital distributors who deliver the music to global streaming platforms where South African audiences already listen every day.

Ecosystem



Whether it's Amapiano, Gospel, Hip-hop, or Afro-pop, the path is the same:

Artist → Distributor → Streaming Platforms → Listeners → Revenue reports.

This system has made it possible for independent artists in small towns to reach a global audience without a record label.

The Role of Record Labels vs Independent Artists

Traditionally, record labels handled distribution for artists. They had the relationships, the infrastructure, and the budgets.

Today, independent artists can do the same job themselves using distributors like **TuneCore**, **DistroKid**, **CD Baby**, and **Ditto Music**.

The difference is:

- Labels distribute **and** market
- Independent artists must distribute **and** market themselves

Distribution is no longer a reason to sign a bad record deal.

Major Platforms Used by South African Artists



South African listeners mainly consume music on:

- Spotify
- Apple Music
- YouTube Music
- Deezer

If your music is not on these platforms, you are invisible to most of your audience.

Your distributor's job is to make sure your music reaches all of them at once.

Understanding Aggregators and Digital Distributors

An aggregator (digital distributor) is a company that has direct delivery agreements with streaming platforms.

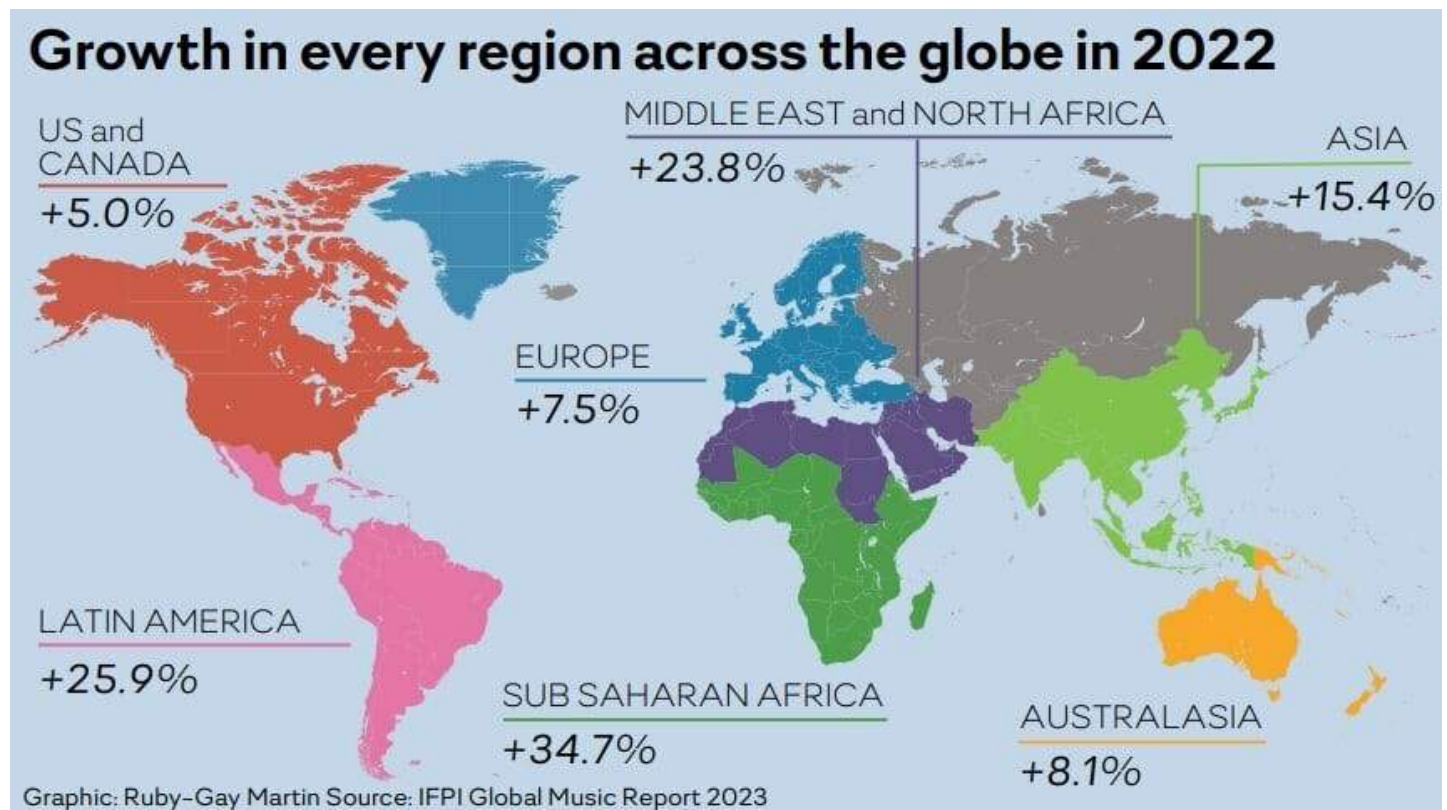
Streaming platforms do **not** accept music from artists directly. They only accept music from approved aggregators.

This is why you must use a distributor. They:

- Deliver your music
- Track your streams
- Collect your money
- Send you reports

Without them, there is no way into the system.

Why Global Platforms Still Matter for Local Artists



Even if your fanbase is in South Africa, your music must still be on global platforms.

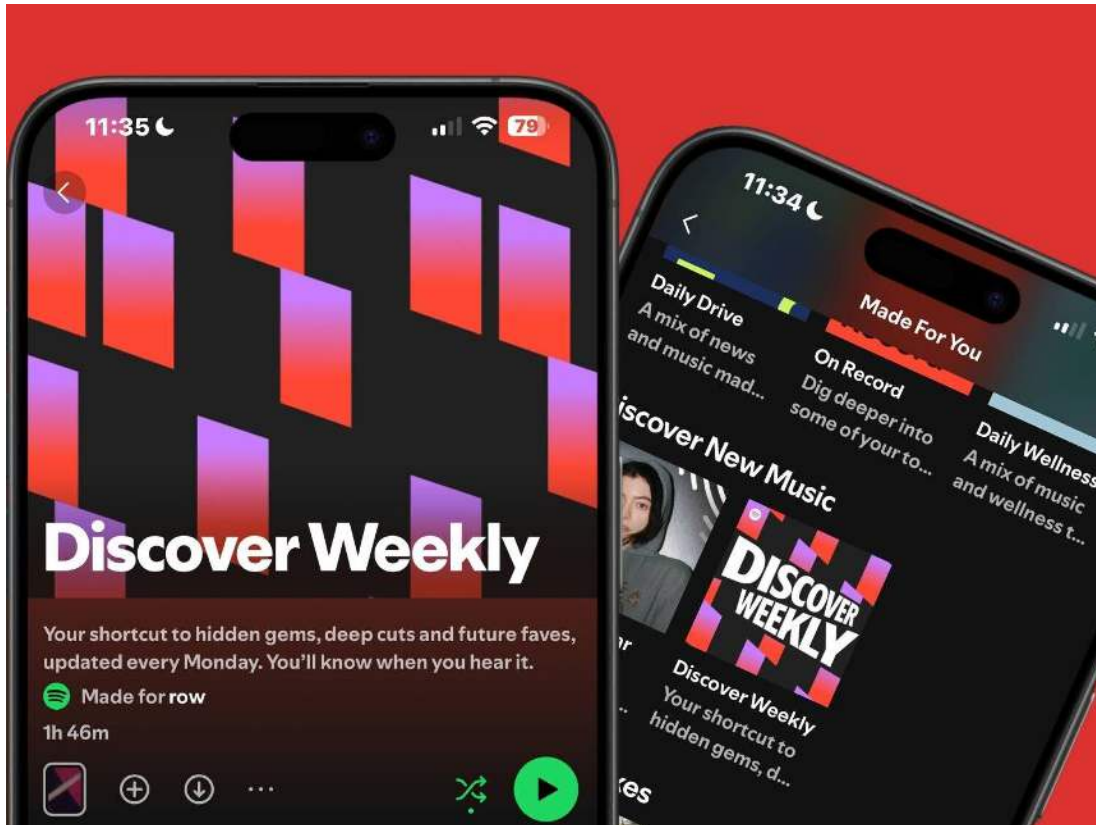
Why?

Because:

- The South African diaspora listens abroad
- Playlists are global
- Viral songs travel internationally
- Revenue from outside SA is often stronger

Amapiano is a perfect example — a local sound that became a global streaming phenomenon because it was properly distributed worldwide.

Spotify



Website: <https://www.spotify.com>

Artist dashboard: <https://artists.spotify.com>

Spotify is the most influential streaming platform for **music discovery** in South Africa and globally. Many listeners don't search for artists by name — they listen through playlists like *Discover Weekly*, *Release Radar*, and editorial genre playlists.

Why Spotify matters for artists:

- Powerful algorithm that recommends your music to new listeners
- Playlist culture drives massive streams
- Detailed analytics via Spotify for Artists
- Pre-save campaigns and playlist pitching before release

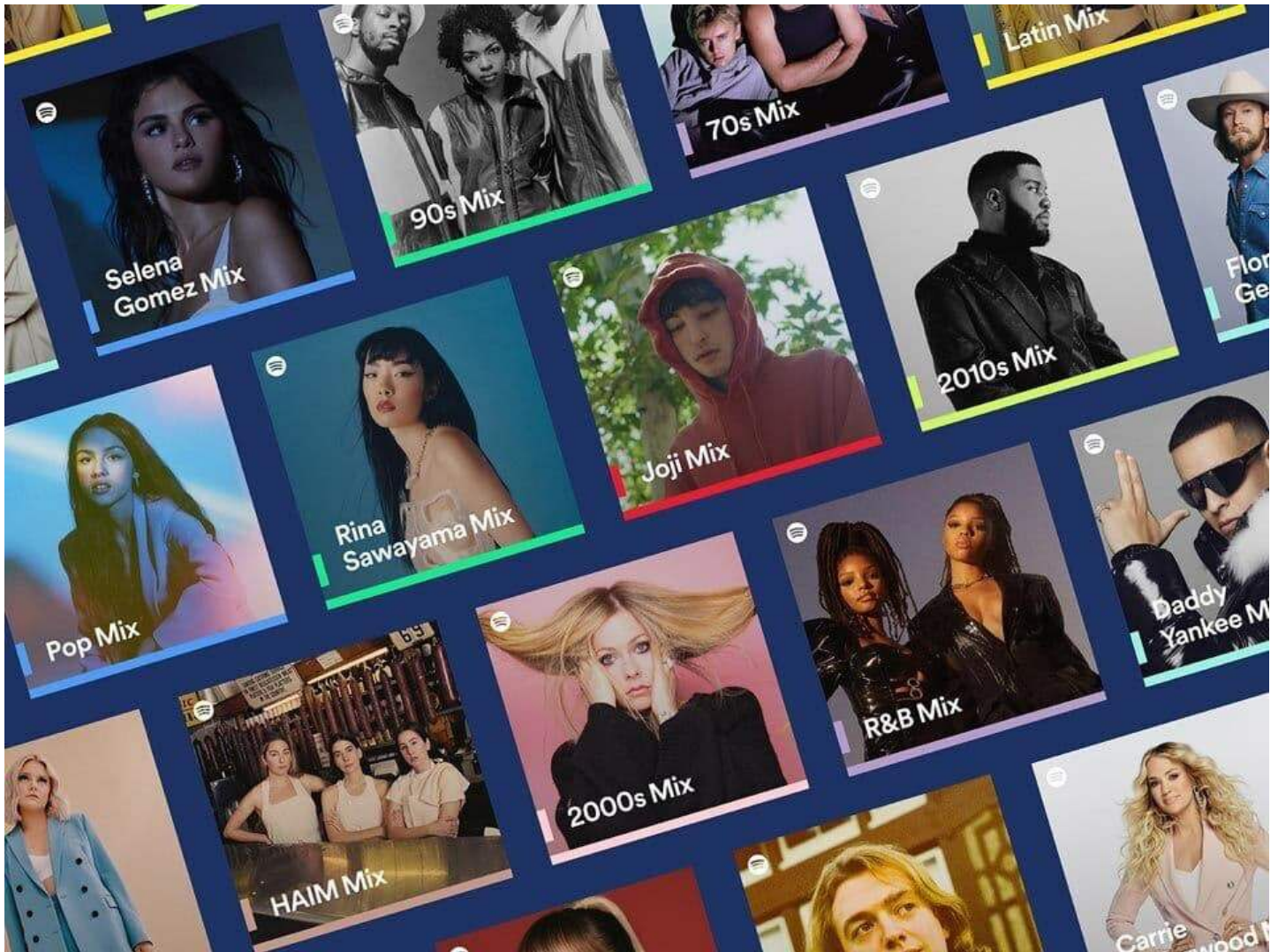
Critical habit for artists:

After distribution, you must claim your profile on *Spotify for Artists*. This is where you:

- Pitch unreleased songs to editorial playlists
- Update your bio, images, and links
- Track where your listeners are located
- See which songs are performing best

Spotify is where unknown artists often become known because of the algorithm.

Apple Music



Website: <https://music.apple.com>

Artist dashboard: <https://artists.apple.com>

Apple Music has a very strong paying subscriber base in South Africa. Unlike Spotify's free tier, most Apple Music users are **paid subscribers**, which often means **higher per-stream payouts**.

Why Apple Music matters for artists:

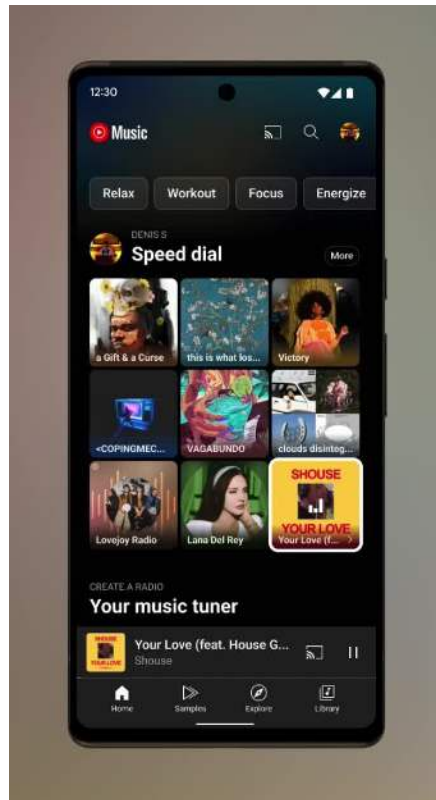
- Strong revenue per stream
- Editorial playlists curated by humans
- Integration with iPhones, iPads, and CarPlay
- Apple Music Radio exposure

Through *Apple Music for Artists*, you can:

- Monitor Shazam data (what people are identifying)
- Track listener locations
- Customise your artist profile
- Monitor trends after release

Apple Music is less about algorithms and more about **editorial credibility and paying listeners**.

YouTube Music



Website: <https://music.youtube.com>

YouTube Studio: <https://studio.youtube.com>

YouTube Music is connected to the main YouTube platform, which is extremely popular in South Africa due to low data costs and wide accessibility.

This is where distribution becomes powerful because your music can earn from:

- Streams on YouTube Music
- Regular YouTube video plays
- User-generated content using your song (via Content ID)

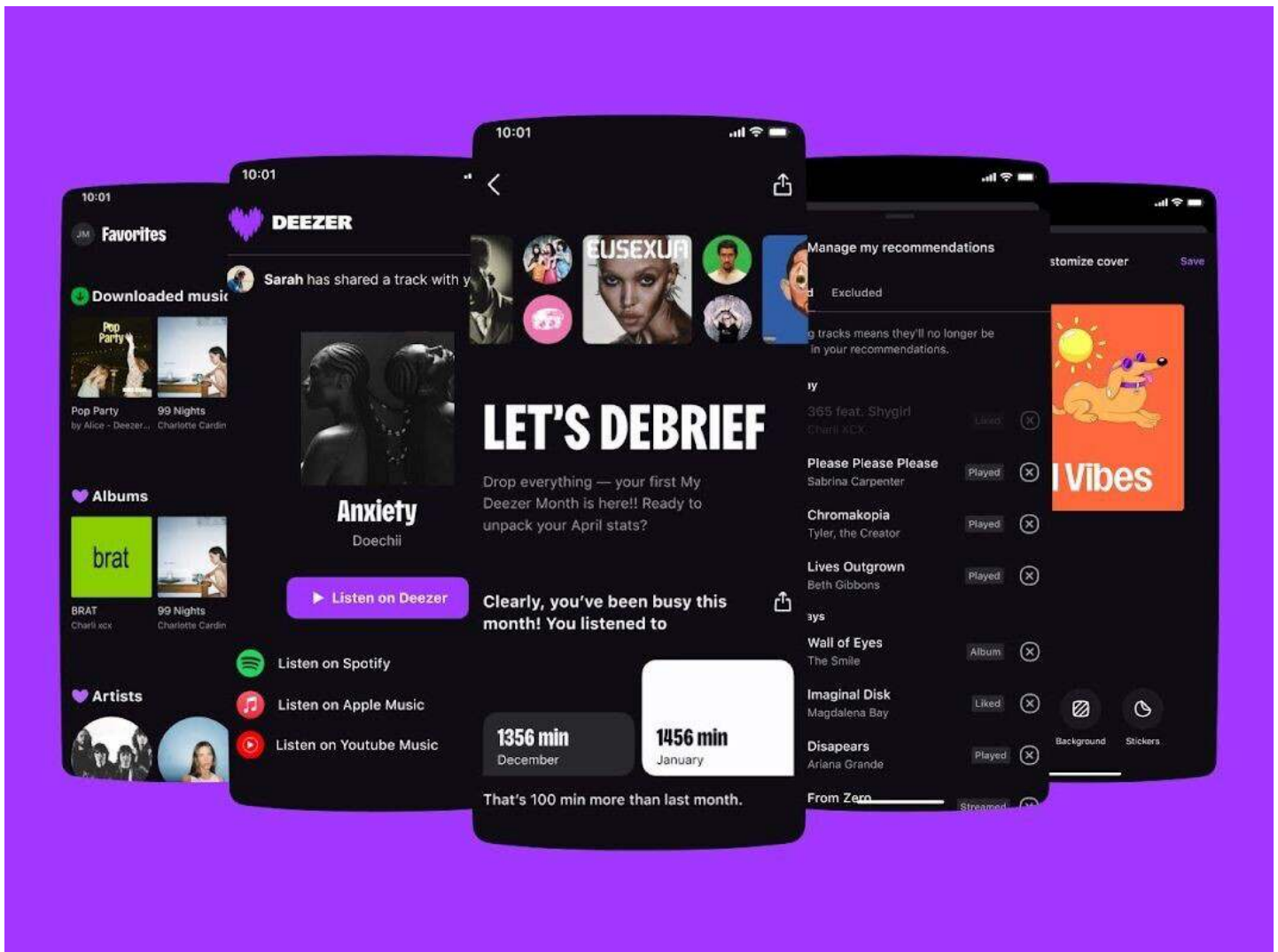
Why YouTube Music matters for artists:

Guide to Music Distribution in South Africa

- Monetisation through Content ID
- Your song can earn money even when others use it
- Massive audience reach in SA
- Official Artist Channel can combine your music and videos

Artists often ignore YouTube, yet it can be one of the **biggest revenue sources** when set up correctly through distribution.

Deezer



Website: <https://www.deezer.com>

Creator dashboard: <https://creators.deezer.com>

Deezer has a strong footprint across Africa, Europe, and parts of the Middle East. It is particularly important for African genres because Deezer actively promotes Afro-centric playlists.

Why Deezer matters for South African artists:

- Strong African and Afro-diaspora audience
- Editorial support for African genres
- Good discovery for Amapiano, Afro-pop, Gospel
- Detailed data for artists via Deezer for Creators

Many artists underestimate Deezer, but it is a powerful gateway into **African and European listeners**.

Section 3 — How Digital Distribution Works (Step-by-Step)

What You Must Prepare Before Uploading



Before you even open your distributor dashboard, four things must be ready:

1. **Final WAV file** (properly mastered)
2. **Artwork** (3000 × 3000 px, square, high quality)
3. **Metadata** (song title, artist name, contributors, genre)
4. **ISRC code** (unique identity of the recording)

Most distribution problems begin **here**. If this information is wrong, platforms cannot track your song properly, and payments can be delayed or lost.

This is why distribution starts **before** the upload.

Uploading to a Digital Distributor

The screenshot shows the 'likemusic' dashboard. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'Dashboard', 'Upload', 'Master Royalties', 'Author Royalties', and 'Payments'. The main content area has two large cards: 'Outstanding owed' showing '\$11,297.45' and 'Total payout' showing '\$50.897,35'. Below these, there's a section for 'Recent sales' and 'Payouts' with tables of data.

Outstanding owed: \$11,297.45 (View sales)

Total payout: \$50.897,35 (View payouts)

Payouts occur between the 1st and 3rd of each month. Update your PayPal email in settings.

This is where you can find your monthly earnings with Prisma Music. Stats are published a month and 20 days after the close of the month, i.e. you will get the statistics from January on March 20th. Your earnings will accrue until you reach the \$05 threshold, and then you will be paid in full over PayPal, unless you close your account.

Recent sales					Payouts				
Song	Genre	Plays	Earnings	Status	Date	Amount	Status	Method	Invoice
Nevermind Single	Pop	38051	\$533.00	Active	03 May 2024	\$533.00	Paid	PayPal	Download
Young Right Now Single	Pop, Rock	17614	\$654.00	Active	03 Apr 2024	\$533.00	Paid	PayPal	Download
Never Go Back Some Days	Pop	31416	\$303.00	Active	03 Feb 2024	\$533.00	Paid	PayPal	Download
Leftovers Some Days	Pop	96194	\$899.00	Active	03 Jan 2024	\$533.00	Paid	PayPal	Download
Never Go Back - Robin Schultz Remix									

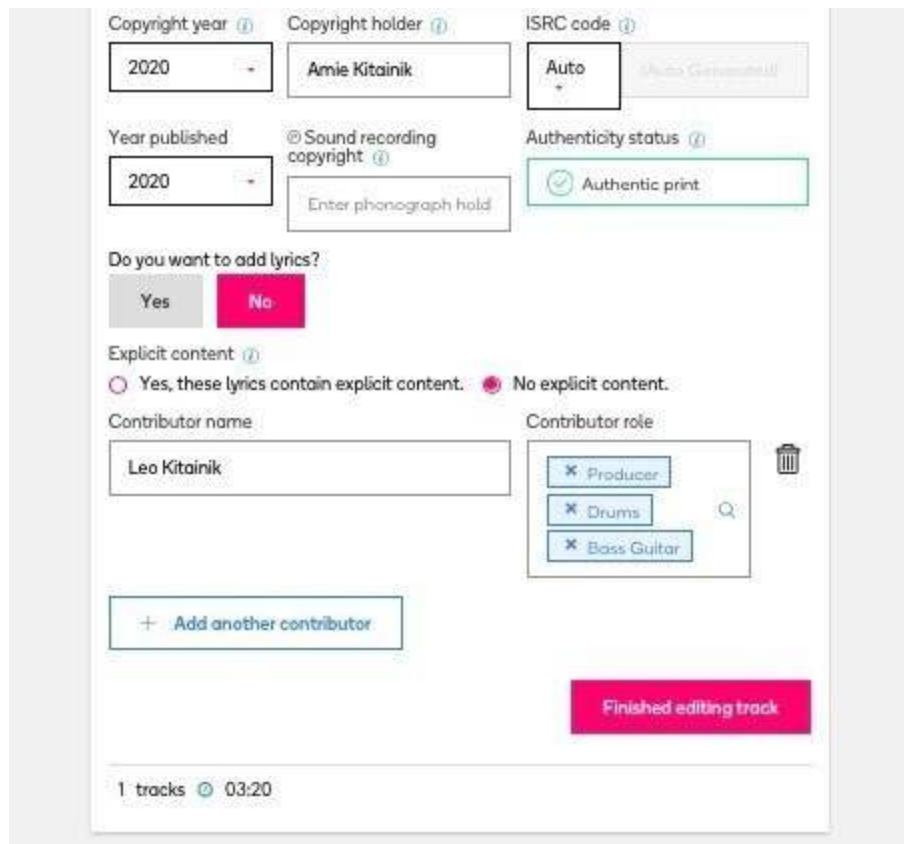
When you upload to a distributor (like TuneCore, DistroKid, CD Baby, Ditto), you are not uploading to streaming platforms. You are uploading to a **system that feeds** those platforms.

During upload, you will:

- Enter metadata
- Upload artwork
- Upload WAV file
- Select release date
- Select territories (worldwide or specific countries)
- Choose stores/platforms

The distributor then converts your upload into a format accepted by all platforms.

What Metadata Really Does



The screenshot shows a metadata entry form for a music distributor. The form includes the following fields and options:

- Copyright year:** A dropdown menu set to 2020.
- Copyright holder:** A text box containing "Amie Kitainik".
- ISRC code:** A dropdown menu set to "Auto".
- Year published:** A dropdown menu set to 2020.
- © Sound recording copyright:** A text box with the placeholder "Enter phonograph hold".
- Authenticity status:** A checkbox labeled "Authentic print" which is checked.
- Do you want to add lyrics?:** Two buttons, "Yes" and "No", with "No" being the selected option.
- Explicit content:** Two radio buttons, "Yes, these lyrics contain explicit content." and "No explicit content.", with "No explicit content." being the selected option.
- Contributor name:** A text box containing "Leo Kitainik".
- Contributor role:** A list of roles with checkboxes: "Producer", "Drums", and "Bass Guitar". All three are checked.
- + Add another contributor:** A button to add more contributors.
- Finished editing track:** A red button to complete the track editing.
- Summary:** At the bottom, it shows "1 tracks" and a duration of "03:20".

Metadata is the **identity card** of your song.

It tells platforms:

- Who the artist is
- Who contributed
- What the song is called
- Which genre it belongs to
- Who should be paid

If your name is spelled differently across releases, platforms may create multiple artist profiles. Streams then split across profiles, and tracking becomes messy.

Metadata accuracy is directly linked to **royalty accuracy**.

ISRC Codes and Why They Matter



An ISRC (International Standard Recording Code) is a unique code assigned to each recording.

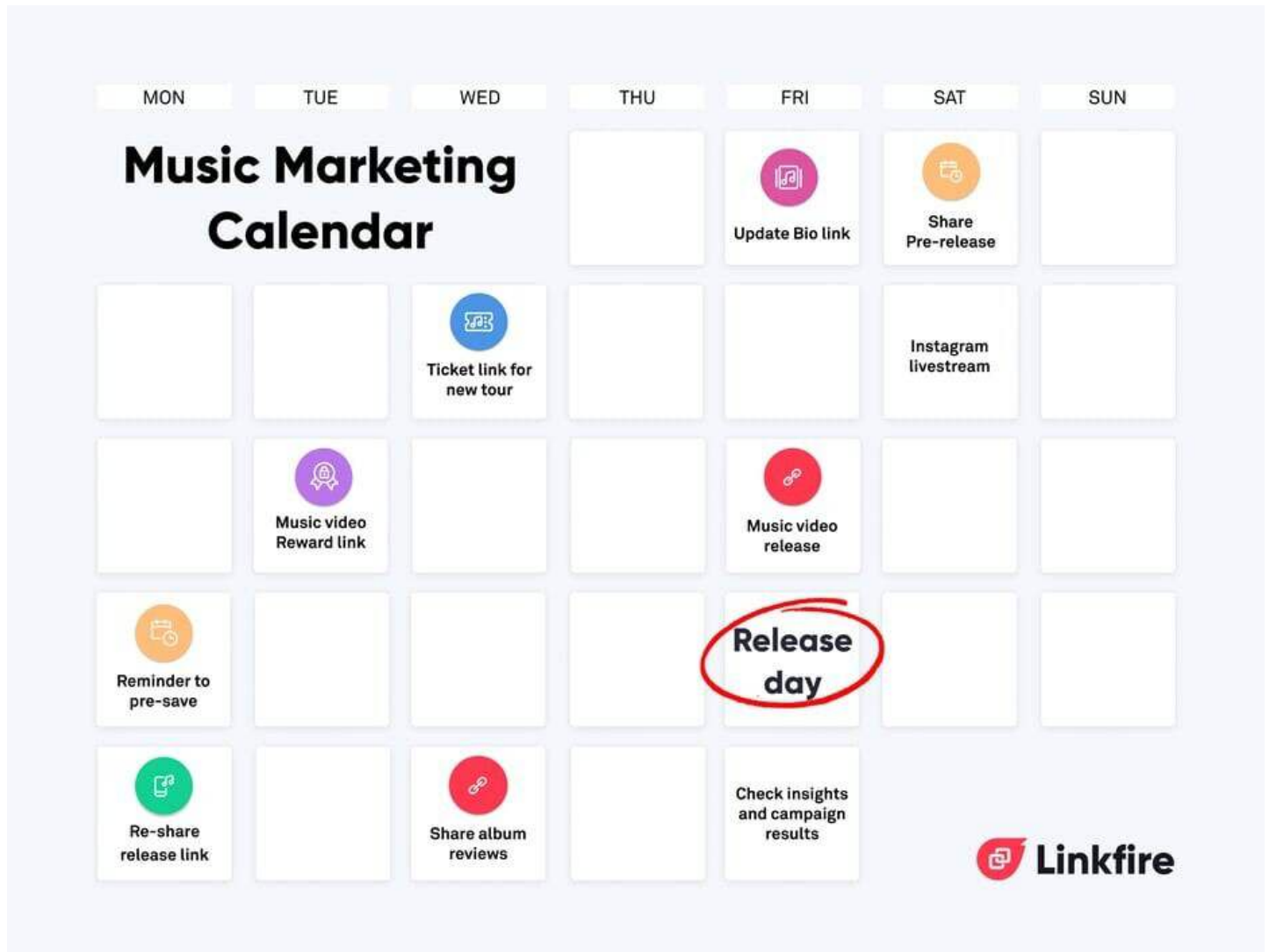
Think of it like a barcode for your song.

Even if the song title changes or appears on different platforms, the ISRC stays the same. That is how systems track streams and payments globally.

Without an ISRC, a song has no permanent identity in the digital world.

Most distributors generate this for you automatically – but you must understand its importance.

Release Dates, Territories, and Pricing



You choose:

- When the song goes live
- Where in the world it becomes available
- Whether it is available for streaming, download, or both

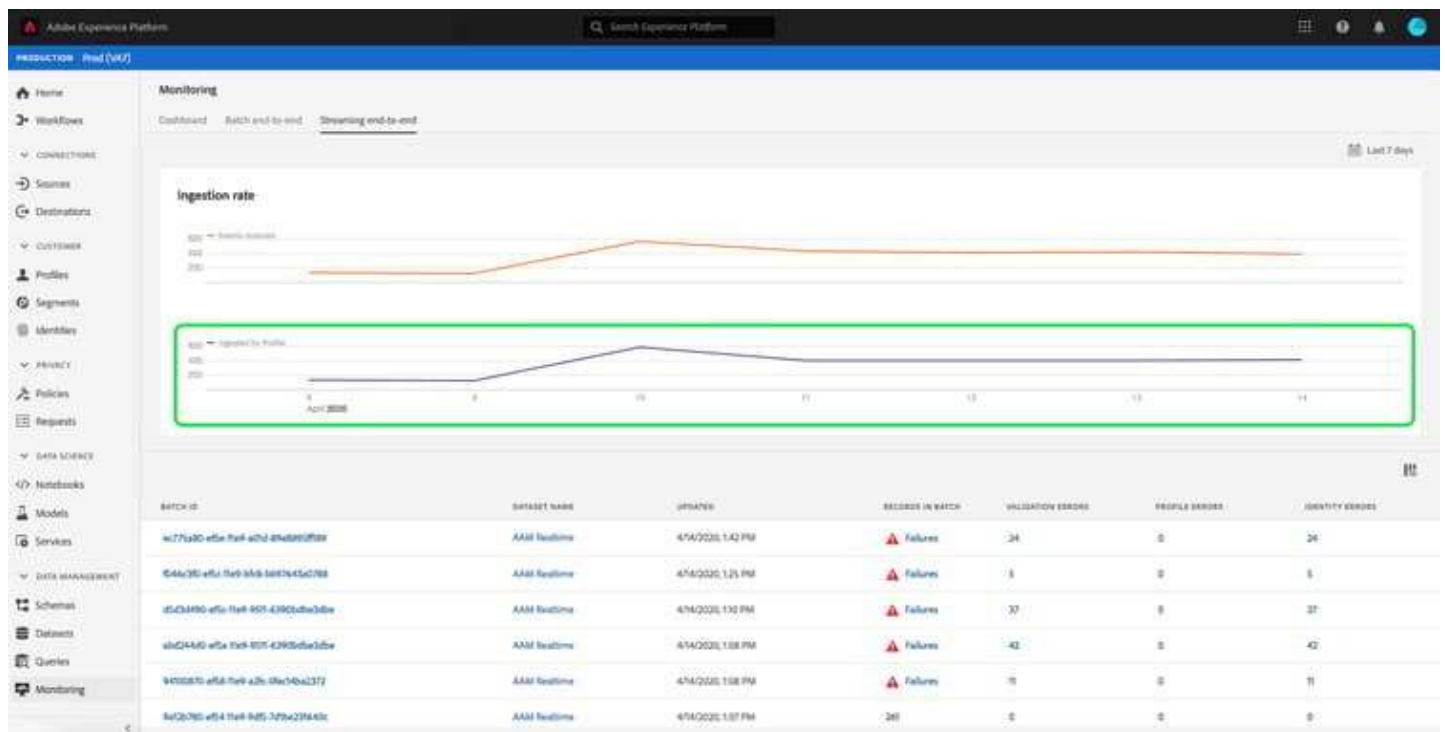
Setting a future release date allows time for:

- Playlist pitching
- Pre-save campaigns
- Marketing preparation

Uploading today and choosing “release today” removes all promotional advantage.

Distribution is linked to **planning**, not speed.

What Happens After You Click Submit



After submission:

1. Distributor checks your files and metadata
2. Platforms review for quality and policy compliance
3. Your music is ingested into their systems
4. It appears on release date automatically

This process can take several days. That is why last-minute uploads are risky.

Common Mistakes Artists Make During Distribution



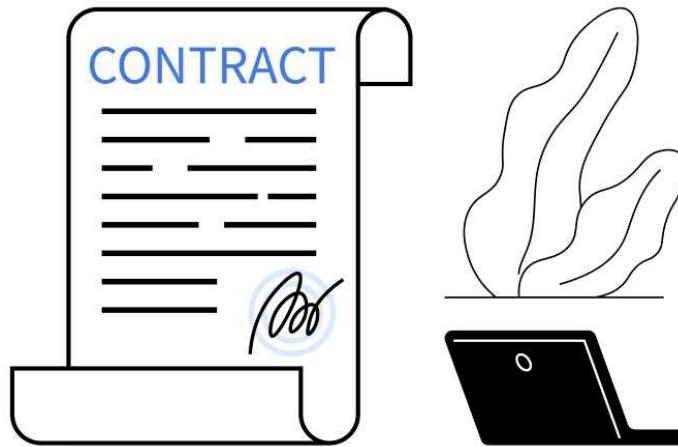
Typical mistakes:

- Low-quality artwork (rejected)
- Misspelled artist name
- Wrong release date
- No ISRC understanding
- Rushing the upload
- Ignoring metadata fields

These small errors create big financial problems later.

Section 4 — Distribution vs Ownership: Who Really Owns Your Music?

What Happens Legally When You Use a Distributor



When you upload music through a distributor, you do **not** transfer ownership of your song.

What you give the distributor is a **license** — permission to deliver your music to platforms and collect money on your behalf.

This license is usually:

Non-exclusive

- **Revocable** (you can remove your music)
- Limited to **distribution purposes only**

You still own the master recording. But you must understand the exact wording in the agreement you click “I Agree” to.

What Rights You Keep vs What Rights You Grant

Deal Type	Master Ownership	Artist Revenue Share
Distribution	Artist	Approximately 80%
Record	Record Label	As low as 20%

You keep:

- Ownership of the master recording
- The right to remove your music
- The right to use your music elsewhere
- Publishing and songwriting rights

You grant:

- Permission to distribute the music
- Permission to collect streaming income
- Permission to display artwork and metadata on platforms

Understanding this difference prevents fear and confusion.

Distributor Agreements Explained in Simple English

Most distributor agreements include clauses about:

- Their percentage or annual fee
- Payment thresholds (you must earn a minimum before payout)
- Content rules and copyright compliance
- Takedown procedures
- How long they keep your music live after cancellation

These are not dangerous clauses — but artists never read them.

A 10-minute read can save you years of confusion.

Red Flags in Distribution Contracts

CLIENT RED FLAGS				
B	I	N	G	O
Lack of trust	Free	Controlling	Sabotaging you	Bad communication
Irresponsible	Immature	Deep, extreme insecurity	Family & Friends dislike this person	Lack of compromise
Act "too perfect" at the beginning	Wants to change you	Isolates you from doing your personal life plans	Lying	Ghosting



Be careful if you see:

- Exclusive rights over your music
- Ownership claims over your masters
- Long lock-in periods
- Hidden fees for takedowns or withdrawals
- Clauses that prevent you from using other distributors

These are signs you are not dealing with a simple distributor, but something closer to a label deal.

How Artists Accidentally Sign Away Their Catalogues

Prominent Artist & label services companies

Owned by Major Labels	Independently Owned
 The Orchard	 DITT+O
	
	
	
	
	
	

Note: Many of these artist & label services companies also offer their own (separate) distribution services.



This happens when artists confuse:

- A **distribution deal** with
- A **record label deal**

Some companies present themselves as distributors but include clauses that transfer partial ownership of masters in exchange for “promotion” or “support”.

Artists desperate for exposure sign without reading – and lose control of their catalogue for years.

Distribution Deals vs Record Label Deals

Aspect	Distribution Deal	Record Deal
Master Ownership	Artists retain	Labels often claim
Revenue Share	Approximately 80% for artists	Approximately 20% for artists
Creative Flexibility	High	Limited
Strategic Control	Personalised marketing strategies	Label-determined strategies

A true distributor:

- Does not own your music
- Does not market your music
- Only delivers and reports

A record label:

- May own part of your masters
- Markets and promotes
- Invests money into you
- Takes a larger share of revenue

Knowing this difference stops artists from signing label contracts thinking they are simple distribution agreements.

Section 5 — Getting Paid: How Money Flows Through Distribution

How Streaming Money Is Generated

STREAMING PAYOUTS		
RANK	PLATFORM	PAYOUT PER STREAM
01	NAPSTER	\$0.01900
02	TIDAL	\$0.01250
03	APPLE MUSIC	\$0.00735
04	GOOGLE PLAY	\$0.00676
05	DEEZER	\$0.00640
06	SPOTIFY	\$0.00437
07	AMAZON	\$0.00402
08	PANDORA	\$0.00133
09	YOUTUBE	\$0.00069

SOURCE: DIGITAL MUSIC NEWS

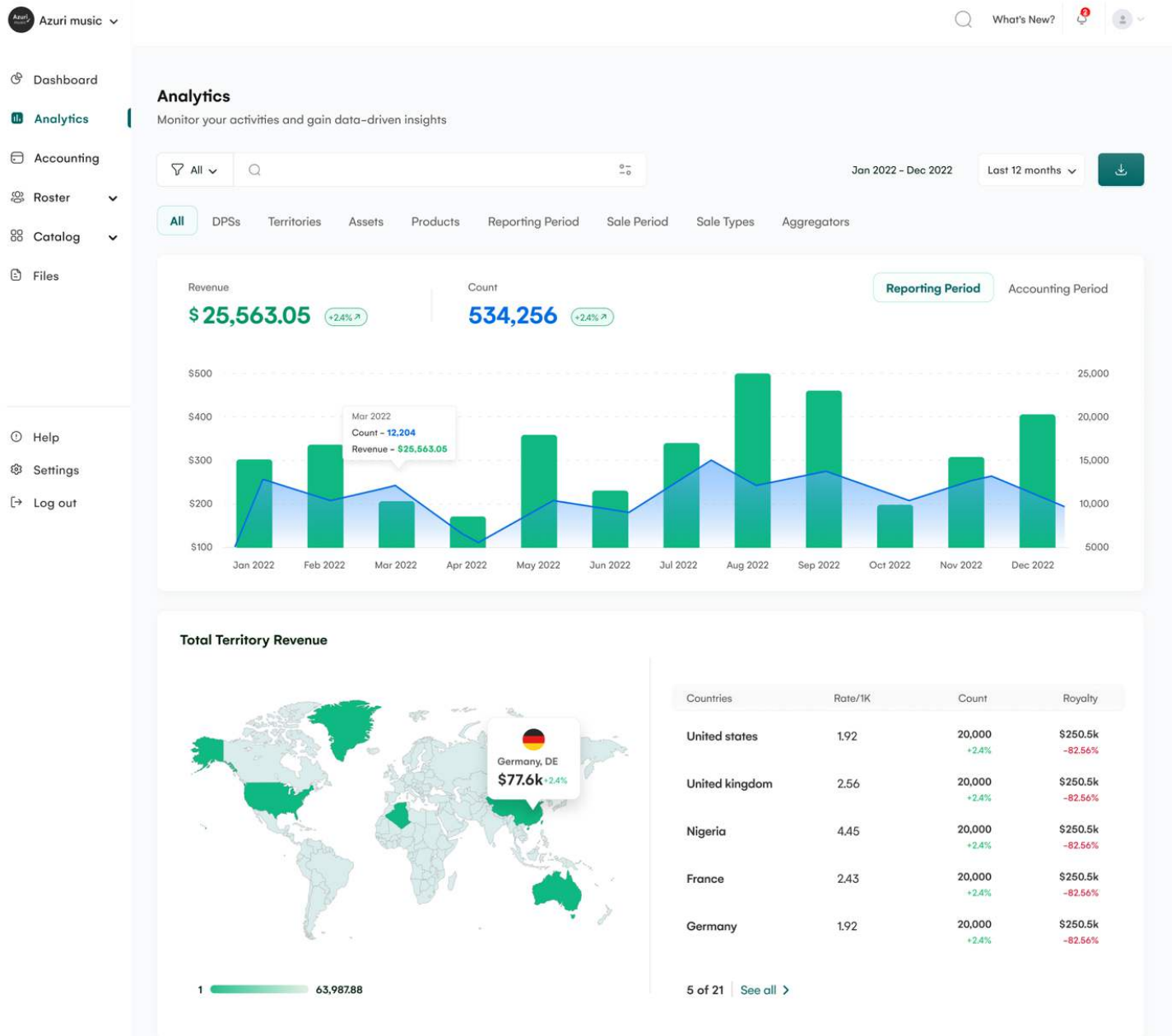
Every time someone streams your song, money enters a **revenue pool** created from:

- Subscriptions (paid users)
- Advertising (free users)

Platforms do not pay “per stream” in a fixed way. Instead, they divide the total pool based on how many streams your song received relative to all streams on the platform.

This is why more streams = bigger share of the pool.

The Role of the Streaming Platform

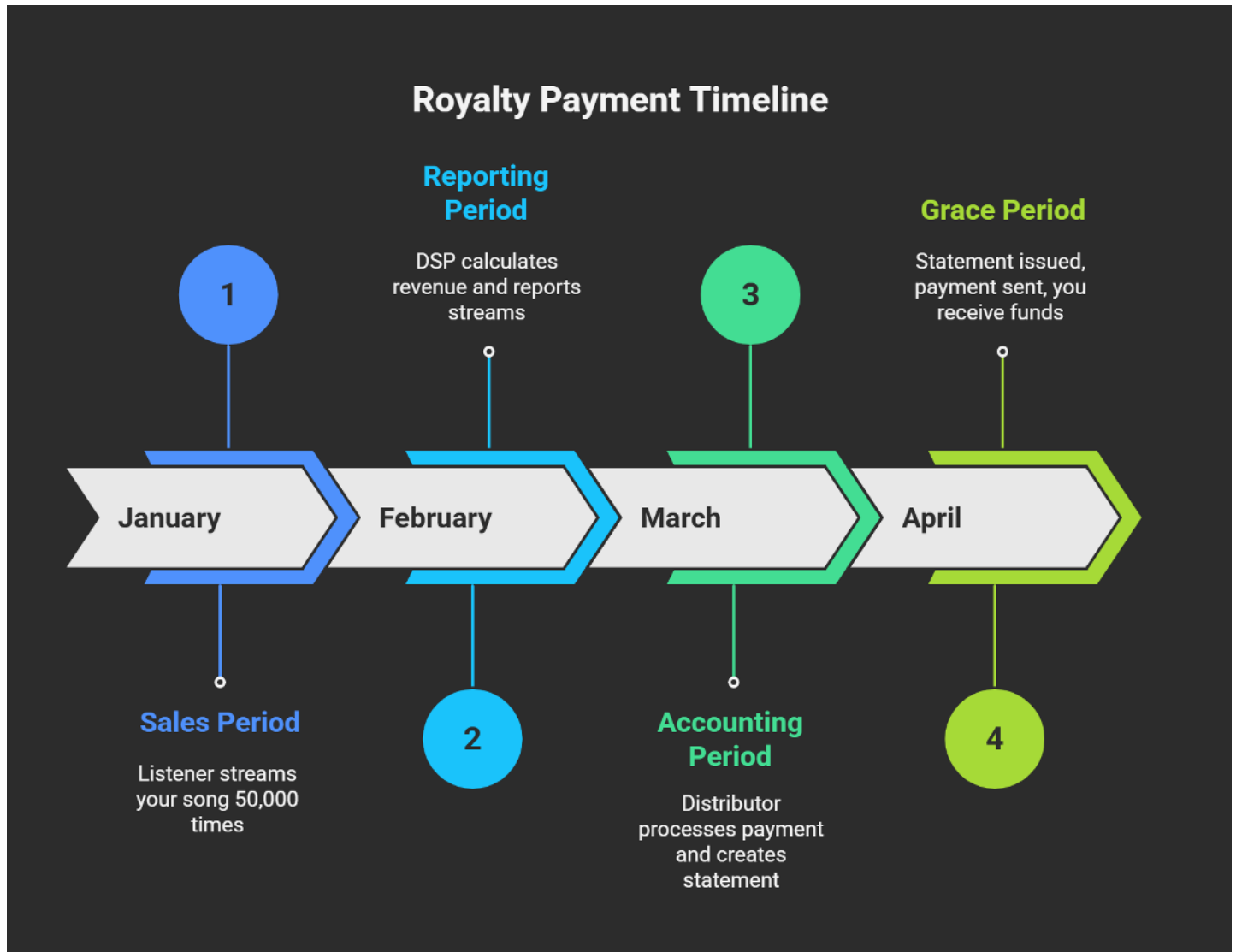


Platforms like **Spotify** and **Apple Music** track:

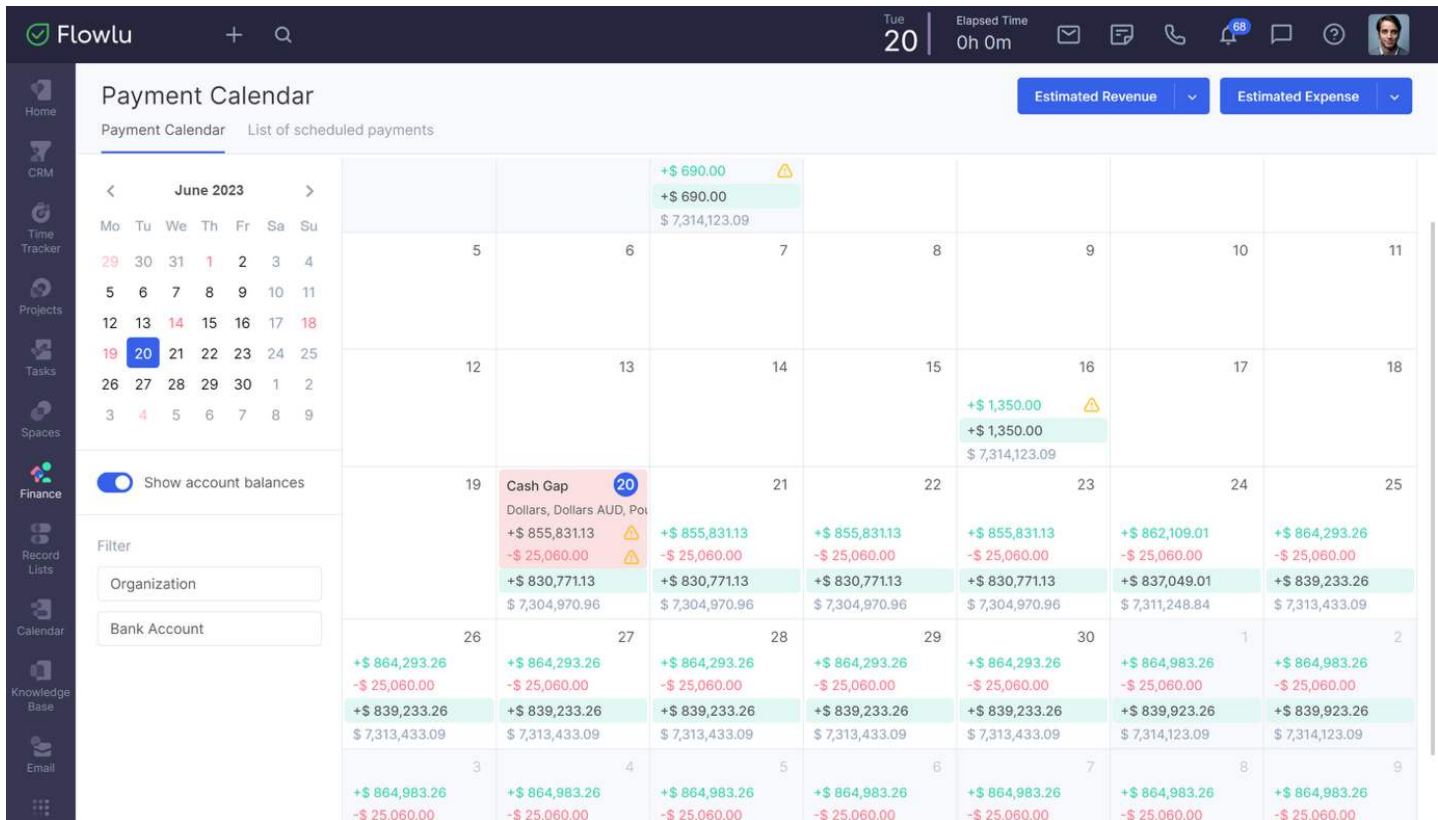
- How many times your song was played
- In which country
- By which type of user (free vs paid)

They then generate monthly royalty reports and send the money **to your distributor**, not directly to you.

The Role of Your Distributor in Payments



Guide to Music Distribution in South Africa



Your distributor receives:

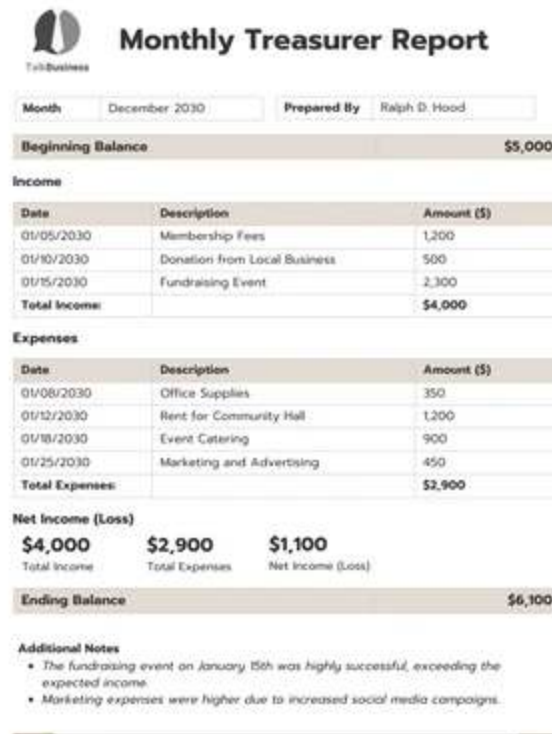
- Reports from all platforms
- Payments from all platforms

They then:

- Combine the data
- Deduct their fee (if applicable)
- Show earnings on your dashboard
- Pay you once you reach the payout threshold

This is why you log into your distributor account to see money — not Spotify or Apple Music.

Payment Timelines (Why Money Is Delayed)



The image shows a 'Monthly Treasurer Report' for 'TelBusiness'. It includes a header with the company logo and name, followed by a form for 'Month' (December 2030) and 'Prepared By' (Ralph D. Hood). The report details a 'Beginning Balance' of \$5,000, followed by an 'Income' section with a table listing three transactions: Membership Fees (\$1,200), Donation from Local Business (\$500), and Fundraising Event (\$2,300), totaling \$4,000. An 'Expenses' section follows with a table listing five transactions: Office Supplies (\$350), Rent for Community Hall (\$1,200), Event Catering (\$900), and Marketing and Advertising (\$450), totaling \$2,900. A summary section shows 'Net Income (Loss)' with 'Total Income' at \$4,000, 'Total Expenses' at \$2,900, and 'Net Income (Loss)' at \$1,100. The 'Ending Balance' is \$6,100. Finally, 'Additional Notes' mention the success of the fundraising event and higher marketing expenses.

Monthly Treasurer Report		
TelBusiness		
Month	December 2030	Prepared By Ralph D. Hood
Beginning Balance		\$5,000
Income		
Date	Description	Amount (\$)
01/05/2030	Membership Fees	1,200
01/10/2030	Donation from Local Business	500
01/15/2030	Fundraising Event	2,300
Total Income:		\$4,000
Expenses		
Date	Description	Amount (\$)
01/08/2030	Office Supplies	350
01/12/2030	Rent for Community Hall	1,200
01/18/2030	Event Catering	900
01/25/2030	Marketing and Advertising	450
Total Expenses:		\$2,900
Net Income (Loss)		
\$4,000	\$2,900	\$1,100
Total Income	Total Expenses	Net Income (Loss)
Ending Balance		\$6,100
Additional Notes		
• The fundraising event on January 15th was highly successful, exceeding the expected income.		
• Marketing expenses were higher due to increased social media campaigns.		

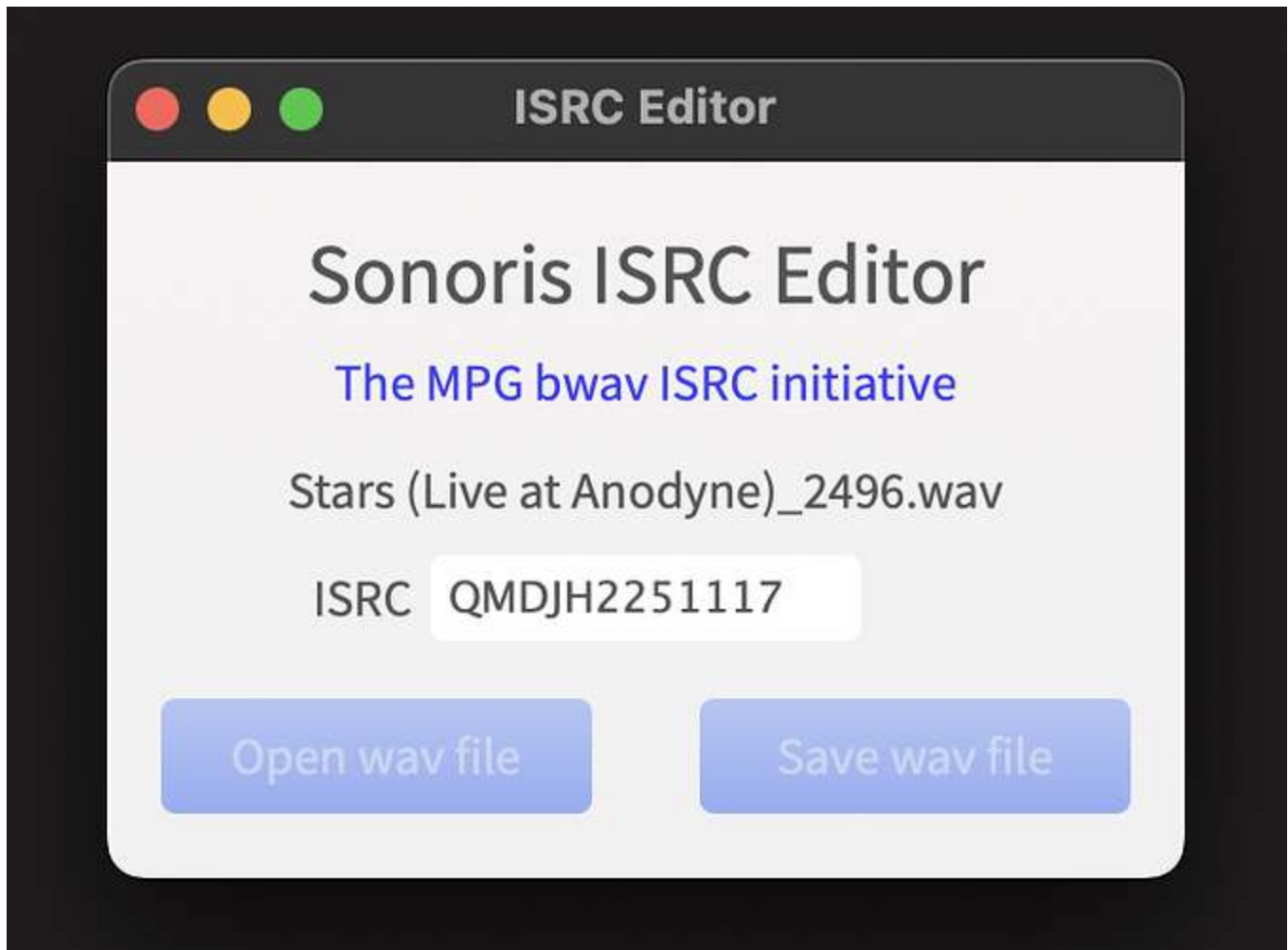
Streaming money is delayed.

Typical cycle:

- January streams → Reported in February
- Paid to distributor in March
- Visible to you in April

This 2–3 month delay is normal and confuses many artists who expect instant payment.

Why Artists See Streams but No Money

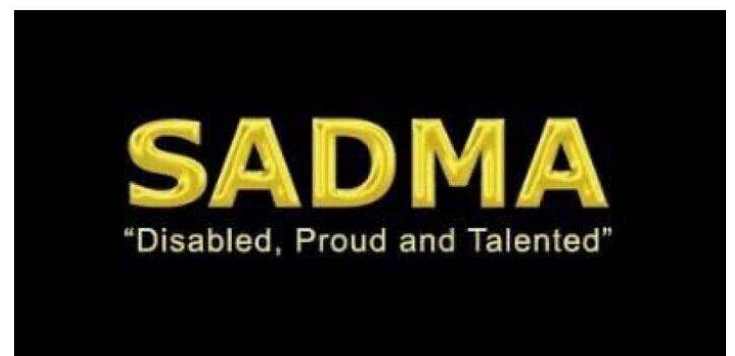


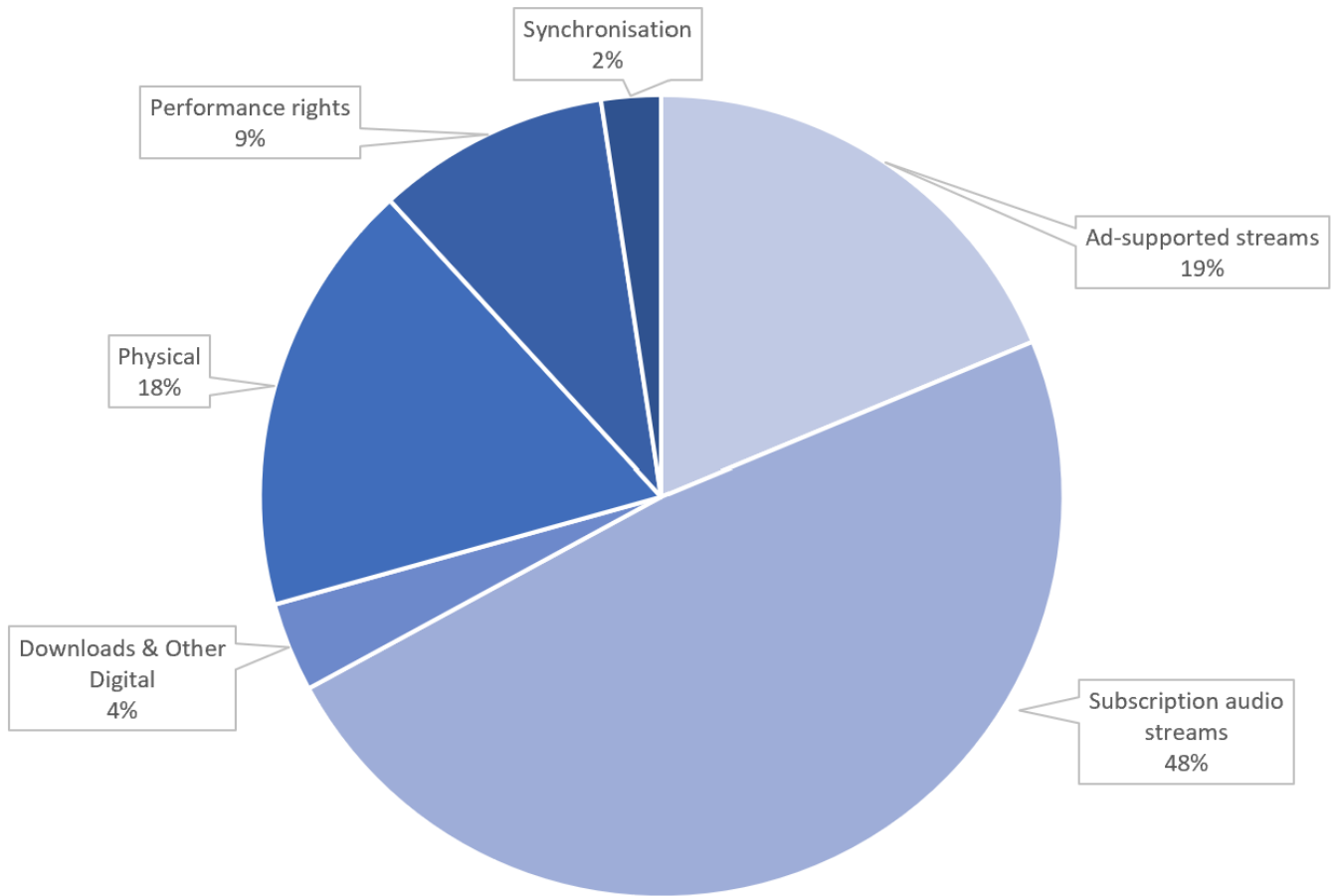
Common reasons:

- Wrong metadata
- Multiple artist profiles splitting streams
- Missing or incorrect ISRC
- Not reaching payout threshold yet
- Looking too early before reports arrive

It is rarely because platforms are "not paying". It is usually a setup problem.

How Distribution Connects to Other Royalties





Distribution only pays you for the **sound recording** streams.

You still need to be registered with:

- SAMRO (songwriting/performance)
- CAPASSO (mechanicals)
- SAMPRA (needle-time)

Without these, you leave money on the table that distribution does not cover.

Section 6 — Distribution for Independent Artists (DIY Model)

Releasing Music Without a Record Label

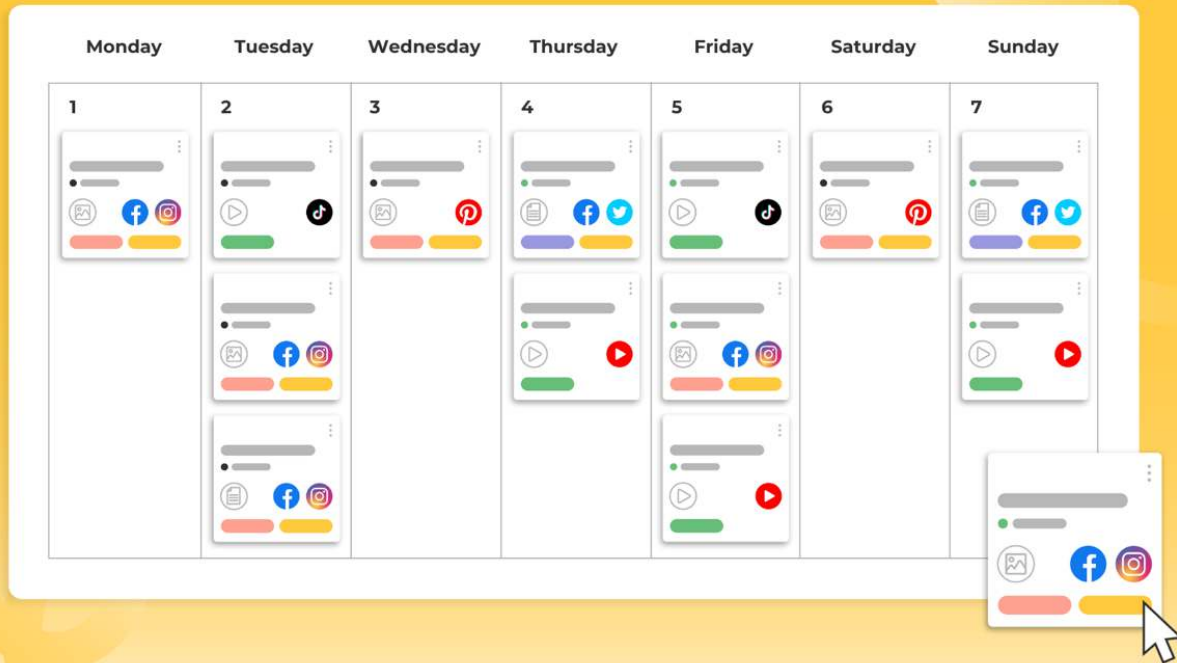


Today, an independent artist can handle recording, branding, distribution, and marketing from a laptop.

Digital distributors have removed the label's historical advantage of access. What remains is the artist's responsibility to plan and execute releases properly.

Being independent no longer means being invisible. It means being **in control**.

Building Your Own Release Strategy



 Song Release Checklist
☐ Pitch your release for playlist consideration
☐ Add a Canvas to your track
☐ Consider a Marquee to reach more listeners
☐ Update your Artist Pick
☐ Share your new music on social media



A professional release has three phases:

Before release

- Teasers
- Pre-save links
- Playlist pitching

Release week

- Social media push
- Visual content
- Fan engagement

After release

- Continued promotion
- Performance tracking
- Playlist follow-ups

Distribution must be aligned with this strategy, not done randomly.

Single vs EP vs Album Release Approaches

Independent artists benefit more from releasing **singles consistently** than dropping albums with no buildup.

Why?

Because every single release is a new opportunity for:

- Playlist placement
- Algorithm discovery
- Audience growth

Albums work best after audience attention has been built through singles.

Pre-Saves, Playlist Pitching, and Discovery

Music

Releases Songs Playlists **Upcoming**

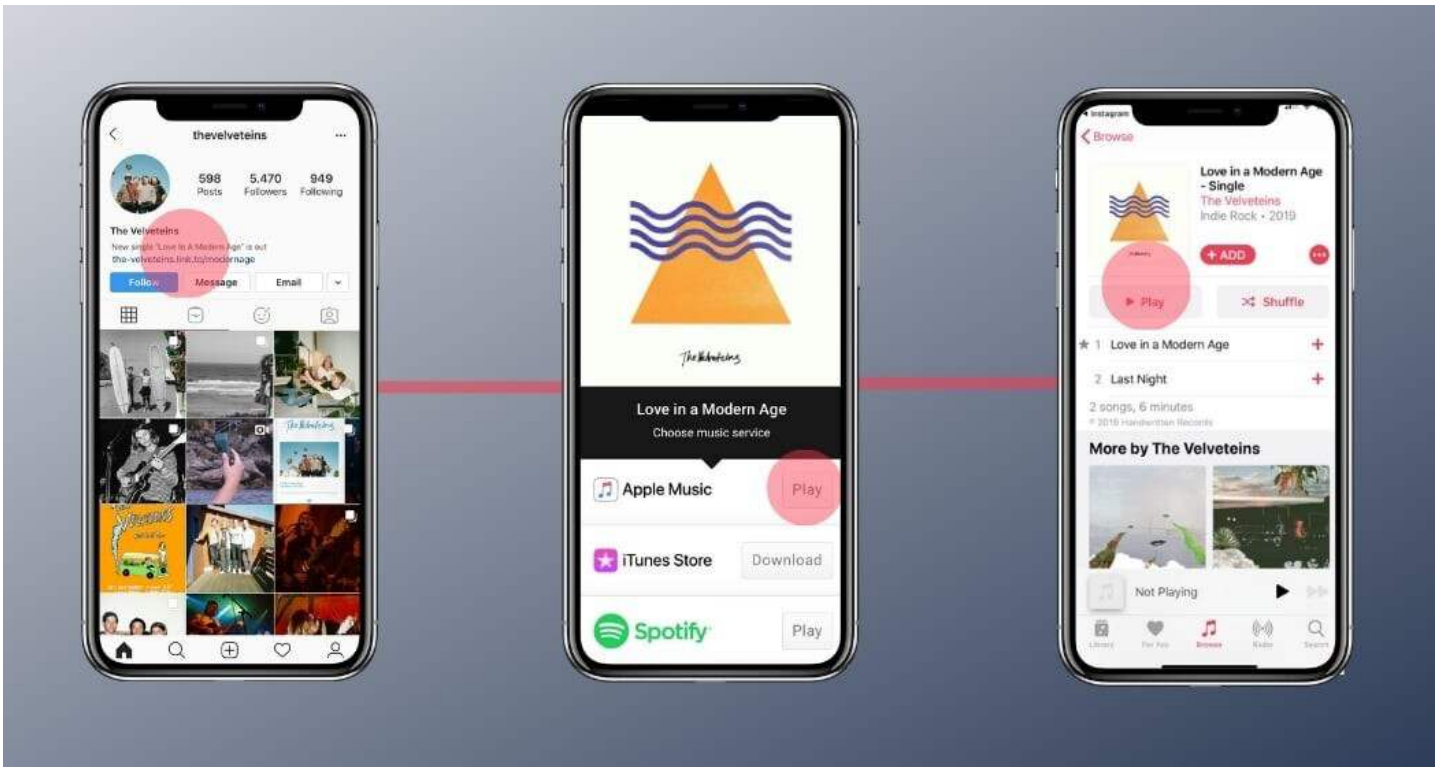
Releases	Playlist Pitch	Videos & Visuals	Release Date
 Funk Tambor - EP Copy URI	Pitch a song to our editors and pin it to your This Is playlist, if you're eligible for one Pitch a song	Enhance your release Manage	Mar 21, 2025 ...
 Kookaburra Copy URI	Pitch a song to our editors and pin it to your This Is playlist, if you're eligible for one Pitch a song	Enhance your release Manage	Apr 11, 2025 ...

Pre-saves tell platforms that listeners are waiting for your song. This increases the chance of algorithmic support on release day.

Through Spotify for Artists and other dashboards, you can pitch songs before release to playlist editors.

This is how independent songs enter major playlists without a label.

Using Distribution as a Marketing Tool



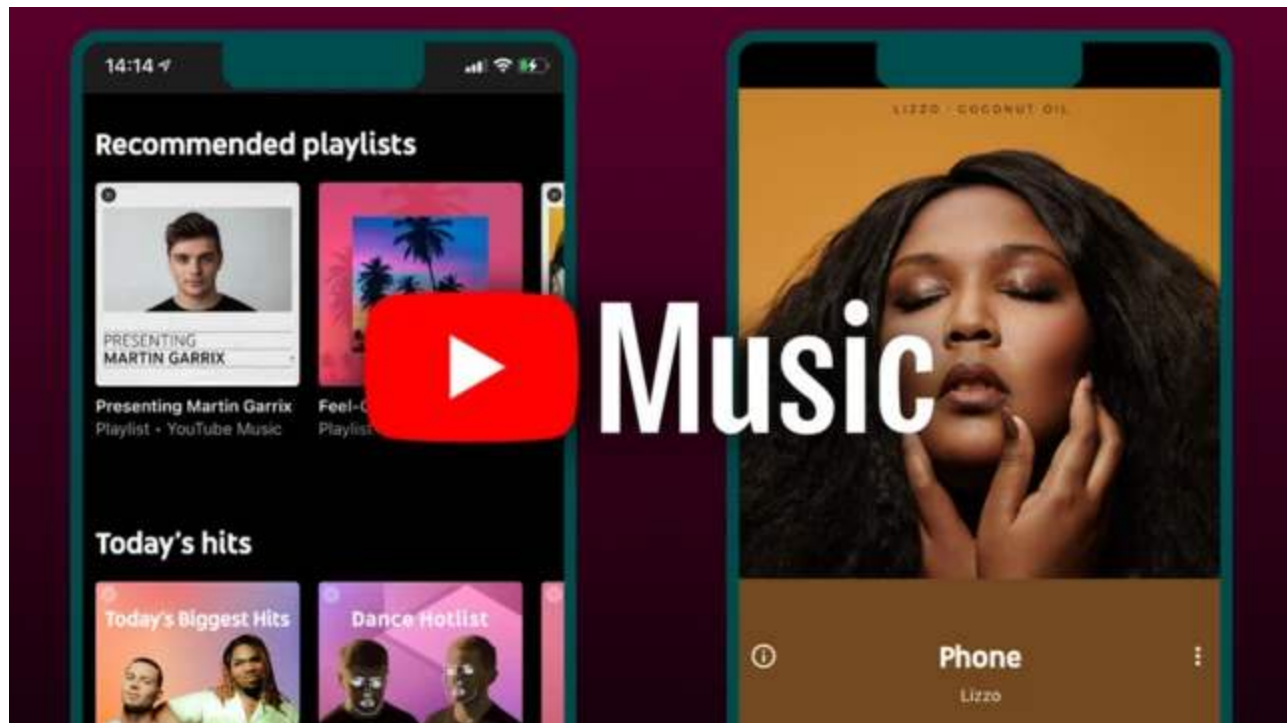
Your distribution link (smart link) becomes your marketing hub.

Every TikTok, Instagram Reel, WhatsApp share, and poster should point people to this link.

Distribution is not the end of the process — it is the **center** of your marketing activity.

Section 7 — YouTube, Content ID and Monetisation

The Difference Between YouTube and YouTube Music



Many artists think YouTube and YouTube Music are the same. They are connected — but they earn money in **different ways**.

- **YouTube Music** pays for streams like Spotify or Apple Music
- **YouTube (main platform)** pays when videos using your music are watched

Your distributor delivers your song to **YouTube Music**, but it can also activate **Content ID** on the main YouTube platform.

That is where hidden money lives.

What Content ID Really Does

Content ID creates a digital fingerprint of your song.

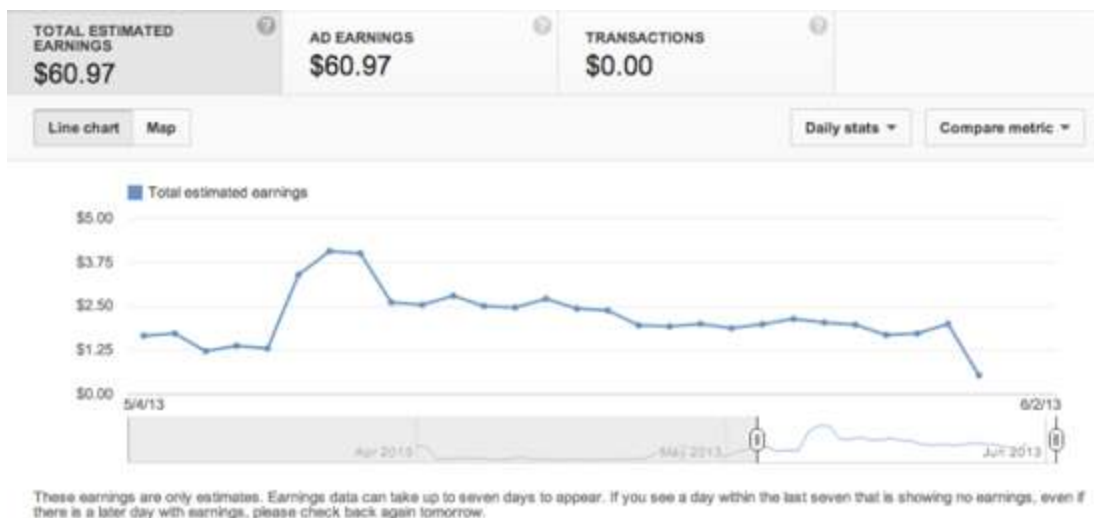
When anyone uploads a video that contains your music — even in the background — YouTube detects it automatically.

You then have options:

- Block the video
- Track the video
- Monetise the video

Most artists choose monetisation. That means **you earn money** from other people's videos.

How Your Distributor Enables YouTube Monetisation



Distributors like TuneCore, DistroKid, CD Baby, and Ditto usually offer a checkbox during upload:

“Enable YouTube Content ID”

If you skip this, you lose a major income stream.

When enabled:

- Your music is registered in YouTube's system
- Ads run on videos using your song
- Revenue flows to your distributor, then to you

Official Artist Channel (OAC)



Jordi Sans ✪

@JordiSansMusic · 76,8 K suscriptores · 200 vídeos

✓ Jordi Sans Official Channel ✓ ...más

jordisansdj.com y 6 enlaces más

Suscribirse

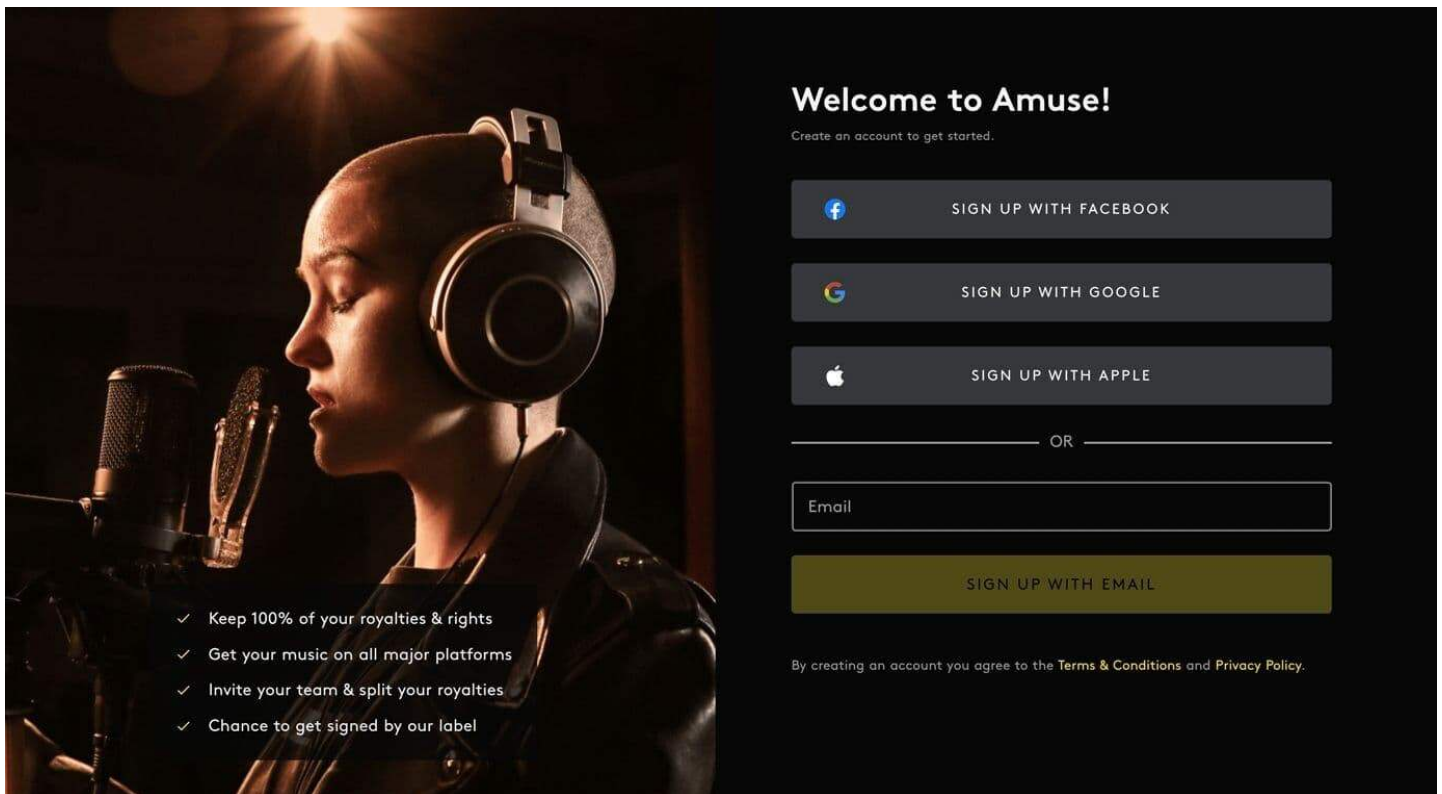
Once your music is distributed to YouTube Music, you can request an **Official Artist Channel**.

This merges:

- Your personal channel
- Your Topic channel (auto-generated by distribution)
- Your releases and videos in one place

This makes your channel look professional and improves discoverability.

Common YouTube Revenue Mistakes by SA Artists



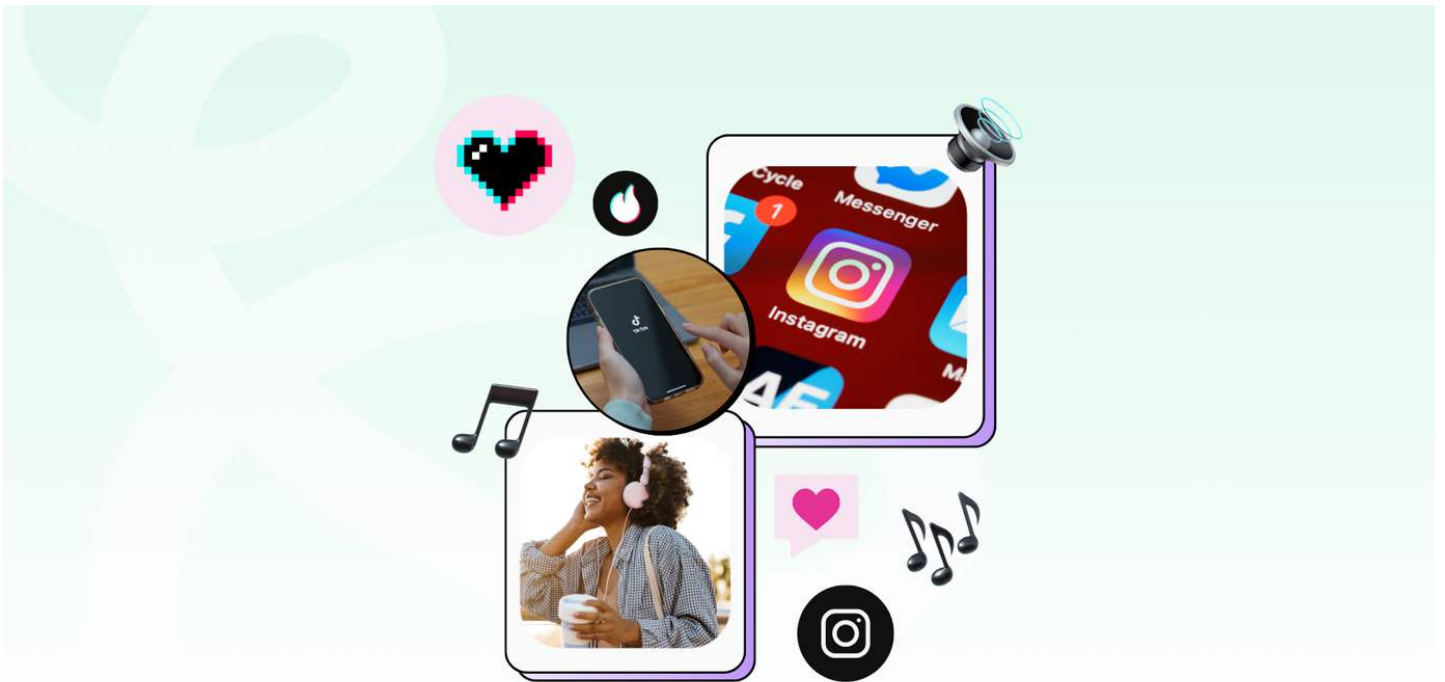
Common mistakes:

- Uploading songs directly to YouTube without distribution
- Not enabling Content ID
- Duplicating uploads causing copyright conflicts
- Not applying for an Official Artist Channel

YouTube is often the **biggest** earner for African artists because of how widely it is used.

Section 8 — WhatsApp, TikTok & Social Platforms as Distribution Channels

Distribution Beyond Streaming Platforms



Today, many listeners discover a song on social media **before** they ever open a streaming app.

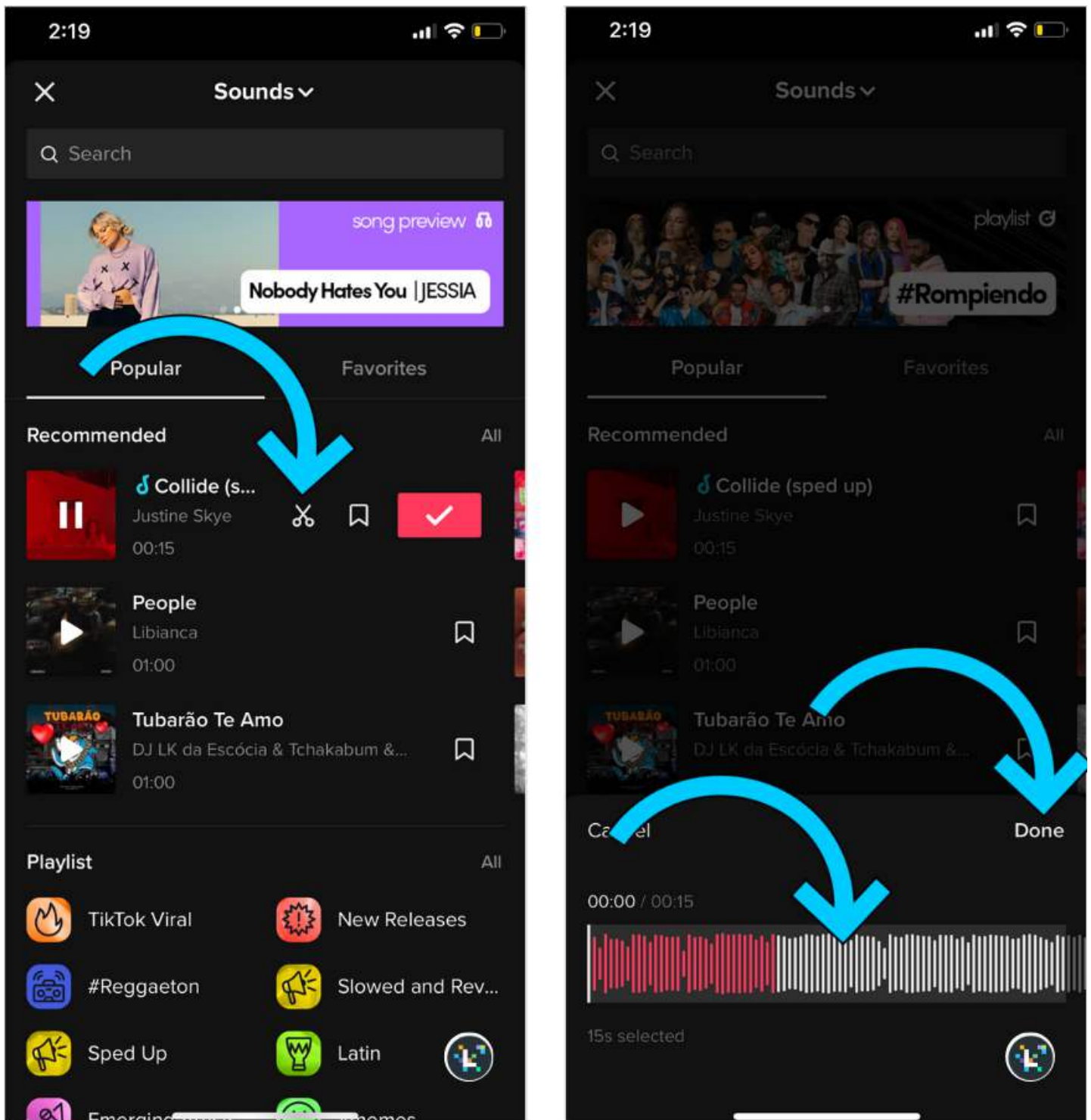
This means your distribution link (smart link) must be ready to receive traffic from:

- TikTok videos
- WhatsApp shares
- Instagram Reels
- Facebook posts

Streaming platforms are where people **listen**.

Social platforms are where people **discover**.

TikTok as a Distribution Engine



When your music is distributed properly, it becomes available inside TikTok's sound library.

Creators can then use your song in their videos. If a trend starts, thousands of videos can use your sound — pushing listeners to streaming platforms.

TikTok is not just marketing. It is **modern distribution** because it places your audio into millions of videos instantly.

WhatsApp Sharing and Direct Fan Distribution



In South Africa, WhatsApp is one of the strongest music sharing tools.

Fans don't say "search this song."
They say "Here's the link."

This is why your smart link (from your distributor or link service) is critical. It allows fans to share one link that opens Spotify, Apple Music, YouTube Music, and Deezer.

This is **peer-to-peer distribution** powered by fans.

Instagram Reels, Facebook & Short-Form Discovery



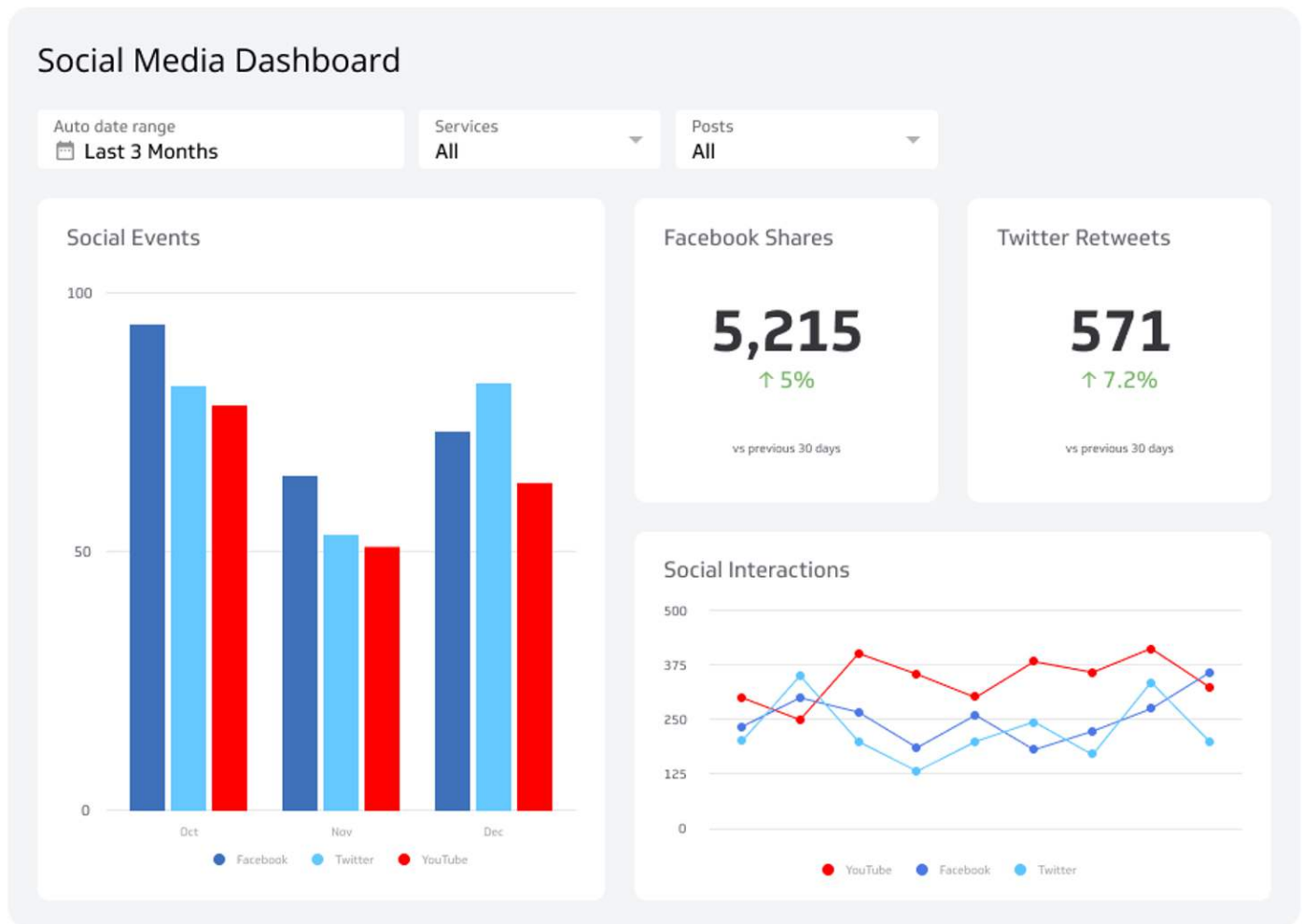
When your music is delivered to platforms, it also becomes selectable inside Instagram and Facebook's music libraries for Reels and Stories.

This means:

- You can promote your own song using the official audio
- Fans can create content with your song
- Your audio spreads organically

Short-form video is now part of the distribution chain.

Why Social Platforms Are Now Part of Your Distribution Strategy



A modern release cycle looks like this:

Social video → Smart link → Streaming platform → Shares → More social videos.

This loop repeats and grows your streams.

Distribution used to be one direction.

Now it is a **loop between social media and streaming**.

Excellent. This section helps learners avoid a very common trap:

Signing a **label deal** thinking it's just **help with distribution**.

Section 9 — Distribution Deals with Record Labels

How Record Labels Handle Distribution

Record labels traditionally controlled distribution because they had direct relationships with stores and, later, digital platforms.

Today, labels still handle distribution — but they combine it with:

- Marketing
- Promotion
- Funding
- Brand building

This is very different from a simple distributor whose only job is delivery and reporting.

Exclusive vs Non-Exclusive Distribution Deals

Potential Risks and Pitfalls of Exclusivity Clauses



Some labels offer “distribution deals” that are actually **exclusive**.

This means:

- You cannot use other distributors
- They control where and how your music is released
- You may be locked in for years

A true independent distributor is usually **non-exclusive** and allows you to leave anytime.

360 Deals vs Distribution-Only Deals

A **360 deal** allows a label to earn from:

- Streaming
- Live shows
- Merchandise
- Publishing
- Sponsorships

A **distribution-only deal** only allows them to earn from the master recording streams.

Artists must clearly see which one they are signing.

Questions to Ask Before Signing With a Label



Before signing, ask:

- Who owns the masters?
- Is this exclusive?
- How long is the contract?
- What percentage do you take?
- What marketing support do you provide?
- Can I leave if I'm unhappy?

If these questions are unclear, do not sign.

When a Label Distribution Deal Actually Makes Sense

Label distribution makes sense when:

- The label is investing money into you
- They are actively marketing your music
- They open doors you cannot open alone
- Your career is ready for scale

If they are only offering to “put your music on platforms,” you can do that yourself.

Section 10 — Release Checklist for South African Artists

Metadata Completed Correctly



Before upload, confirm:

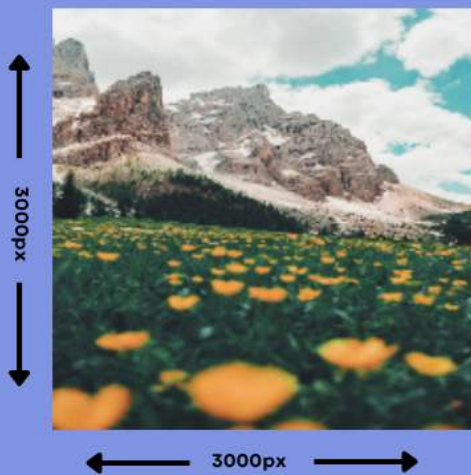
- Artist name spelled consistently (same as previous releases)
- Correct song title and version (e.g., Radio Edit, Remix)
- All contributors listed (producer, featured artists)
- Correct genre and language

Wrong metadata creates duplicate profiles and lost royalties.

ISRC, WAV File and Artwork Ready



RESIZE IMAGE TO 3000X3000 PIXELS



Image's Format: PNG

[Download](#)

Dimensions in pixels :-

Width: px Height: px

DPI: dpi

Quality: %

Try Popular Dimensions

3 inch x 5 inch	4 inch x 6 inch
5 inch x 7 inch	6 inch x 8 inch
8 inch x 10 inch	900 px x 1500 px
1200 px x 1800 px	1500 px x 2100 px
2400 px x 2400 px	3.5 cm x 1.5 cm

- Resize any image to an exact 3000x3000 pixels in seconds – no cropping, no distortion.

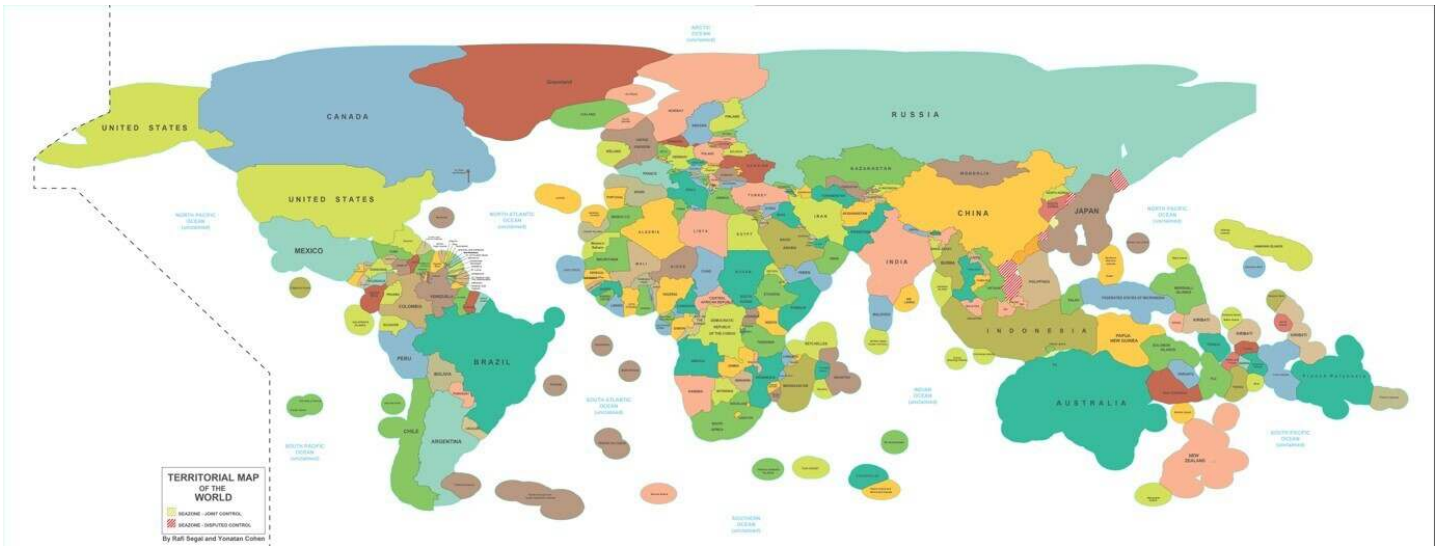
safeimagekit.com

Checklist:

- Final mastered WAV (24-bit / 44.1kHz or higher)
- 3000 × 3000 px artwork, clear and professional
- ISRC generated or assigned by distributor
- No blurry images, social media screenshots, or text clutter

Artwork rejection delays releases.

Distributor Selected and Settings Confirmed



Confirm during upload:

- Correct release date (at least 2–3 weeks ahead)
- Worldwide territories selected
- All stores/platforms selected
- YouTube Content ID enabled

Do not rush this screen.

Royalty Collection Societies Registered

Before release, make sure you are registered with:

- SAMRO
- CAPASSO
- SAMPRA

Distribution does **not** collect these royalties for you.

Marketing Plan Aligned With Release Date



Prepare:

- Pre-save campaign
- Smart link ready
- Playlist pitching submitted
- Social media content scheduled
- WhatsApp broadcast message ready

A release without marketing is a silent release.

Section 11 — Real South African Distribution Case Studies

Independent Amapiano Producer (DIY Distribution)

Scenario

An independent Amapiano producer creates a track in a home studio and uploads it through a distributor. They enable YouTube Content ID and set a release date three weeks ahead.

What they do right

- Tease the hook on TikTok before release
- Share a smart link on WhatsApp groups
- Pitch the song via Spotify for Artists
- Encourage dancers to use the sound on TikTok

Outcome

The song trends on TikTok. Streams spike on Spotify and Apple Music. Content ID earns from hundreds of user videos.

Lesson

Viral discovery + correct distribution = real income without a label.

Gospel Artist Releasing Singles Consistently

Scenario

A gospel artist releases one single every 6 weeks instead of an album.

What they do right

- Each release gets playlist pitching time
- Church members share links via WhatsApp
- Songs are used in YouTube worship videos (Content ID revenue)
- Strong presence on Deezer's African gospel playlists

Outcome

Steady monthly growth in streams and royalties across platforms.

Lesson

Consistency beats one big album drop.

Independent Hip-Hop Artist With Strong Metadata Discipline

Scenario

A hip-hop artist carefully keeps artist name, artwork style, and metadata consistent across releases.

What they do right

- No duplicate profiles created
- Clean catalogue appearance on platforms
- Easy tracking of streams and royalties
- Professional brand look

Outcome

Better algorithm recognition and accurate royalty tracking.

Lesson

Metadata discipline is a career advantage.

Small Record Label Distributing Multiple Artists

Scenario

A small label signs 5 artists but uses a distributor instead of a major label deal.

What they do right

- Control over release dates
- Coordinated marketing for each artist
- Distributor dashboard used to track all earnings
- No ownership given away to third parties

Outcome

The label keeps control and higher profit margins.

Lesson

Distributors empower small labels too.

Mainstream Artist With Label Distribution Support

Scenario

A mainstream artist signs with a label that handles distribution **and** marketing.

What they do right

- Label funds music videos and PR campaigns
- Editorial playlist placements secured
- Strong national and international promotion

Outcome

Massive exposure and streams, justified by label investment.

Lesson

Label distribution makes sense when real marketing power is added.

Section 12 — The Future of Music Distribution

From Gatekeepers to Direct-to-Fan

In the past, artists needed labels, stores, and radio to reach fans.

Today, artists can distribute music globally and speak directly to fans through social media, email lists, and smart links. Distribution is no longer controlled by gatekeepers — it is controlled by creators who understand the system.

The future belongs to artists who build **direct relationships** with their audience.

The Rise of Independent Distribution Power

Independent artists now chart, trend, and go viral without labels.

Why?

Because distributors, streaming algorithms, and social platforms reward:

- Consistency
- Engagement
- Smart release planning

The power has shifted from “who you know” to “how well you understand distribution.”

AI, Data, and Smarter Release Decisions

Artists can now see:

- Where listeners are located
- Which songs perform best
- When listeners are most active

This data allows smarter decisions about:

- Tour locations
- Release dates
- Marketing focus

Distribution is becoming data-driven, not guesswork.

Blockchain, Ownership, and Transparent Royalties

Emerging technologies like blockchain promise:

- Transparent royalty tracking
- Instant payments
- Clear ownership records
- Automated split payments between collaborators

While still developing, this shows where music distribution is heading — toward fairness and transparency.

Why Artists No Longer *Need* Record Labels to Go Global

A song created in a bedroom studio in South Africa can reach millions globally within days — if distributed properly.

Record labels are no longer the only path to global exposure. Knowledge of distribution, marketing, and audience engagement is enough to build an international presence.



- ✓ Keep 100% of your royalties & rights
- ✓ Get your music on all major platforms
- ✓ Invite your team & split your royalties
- ✓ Chance to get signed by our label

Wel

Create an



Email

By creatin

Wel

Create an

