

THE BEHIND THE SCENES MUSIC ADMIN WORKBOOK

Master the administrative aspects of sync licensing!

*****DISCLAIMER. THE INFO CONTAINED HEREIN IS NOT LEGAL ADVICE. PLEASE CONTACT AN ENTERTAINMENT LAWYER IF LEGAL ADVICE IS NEEDED.*****

**So you think it's enough to just make sync-worthy music?
Well you'd be wrong!**

Having syncable music is just the start to a sync career. The legal, behind the scenes admin stuff is where the real money is made. It's also the thing that can get you blacklisted if you're not careful. Let's get into it!

What's in a song?

There are several different legal entities living inside one song. And when I say "song", I'm referring to JUST the song -- NOT the recorded track -- that's a whole separate thing.

Here is a breakdown:

Music + Lyrics

 + **abc** = **SONG (aka "publishing")**

Here we have just the "song" that hasn't yet been recorded. This song contains two legal entities:

- The WRITER'S SHARE
- The PUBLISHER'S SHARE

What's confusing is that typically the legal ownership of both of these shares is commonly referred to as the "publishing," even though it represents both the publisher and the writer shares.

Both shares are split evenly automatically, or have the same "weight". You can own a percentage or all of either one, or both.

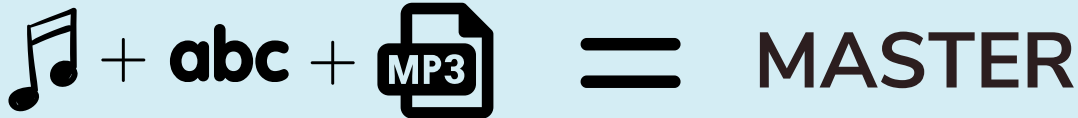
- **For example, let's say you are a songwriter who has a publishing deal. Typically, you would own the entire WRITER'S SHARE, and your pub co. would own the entire PUBLISHER'S SHARE. Although it's becoming less common, certain sync agencies take a percentage of the PUBLISHER'S SHARE when they sign your song, entitling them to a higher upfront fee % and performance royalties.**

Owning a share in the "publishing" (pub and writer) entitles you to back-end performance royalties in addition to the upfront sync fee. (we will get there!)

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Music + Lyrics + Recording



Here we have the "master" - aka the recorded version of your song.

The master is legally recognized as a separate entity from the song. This means you can have an infinite number of masters for every 1 song, because there is no limit to the amount of ways you can record a song differently.

- For example: let's say you record a cover song of "Can't Help Falling in Love" by Elvis. You will NOT own the publishing (the song), but you will own the Master (the recorded version). This is exactly why Taylor Swift re-recorded all of her music; because Scooter Braun purchased the rights to her original masters from her record label. In order to own her masters, she had to re-record new versions of her songs.

Just like with your publishing (your song), you can own a percentage, or ALL of your master, depending on the agreement you have with your collaborators. Typically, producers who work on the track but do not contribute to the songwriting are only entitled to a percentage of the Master.

Master-share holders are not entitled to back-end performance royalties from a PRO, but are entitled to mechanical and streaming royalties per their % ownership.

COPYRIGHT ©

The copyright is a separate legal entity of the song. It states who OWNS the song, rather than who is entitled to royalties. It's possible to own your publishing, and not your copyright, and vice-versa. Owning your copyright does not entitle you to performance royalties from broadcast. It does entitle you to certain other copyright-related royalties, such as derivative works, etc. You can register your works with the federal copyright office (in the USA).

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P.R.O.'S & GETTING PAID



PRO stands for Performing Rights Organization.

These organizations are missioned with the task of collecting your broadcast performance royalties on your behalf and distributing them to you. They do NOT collect streaming royalties. They pay out based on who owns what percentages of the "publishing" (pub and writer). There are now FOUR in the USA - ASCAP, BMI, SESAC, and GLOBAL (newest). ASCAP and BMI are open to anyone, the other two are invite-only. All cost just a small sign-up fee.



Signing Up & Registering Your Music

In order to get paid your performance royalties, you will need to sign up and register your music as you create it. You don't need to upload the recorded version (you don't even need to have a recorded version to register), you just need to add the title, and who owns which parts and %. You will be assigned what's called an IPI number when you sign up - it's like a member number that your PRO will use to identify and pay you. Same goes for all other writers on your song -- they need to be signed up with a PRO in order to be findable in the system!



Re-titling

Those sync agencies that own a % of your publishers share when they sign your song will often re-register your song with a new title. This is because they are typically only entitled to pub royalties from sync licensing deals THEY have procured, nothing else.

When an agency pitches your song and it gets selected for a placement, they will send the song's registration info to the production company to put on their "cue sheet", which is a list of songs (cues) they used in their production. When it comes time for them to pay out their performance royalties, they will send the money to the corresponding PRO, and the PRO will pay you out. Needless to say, properly registering your music is a **MUST!!**

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ONE-STOP & SPLIT SHEETS



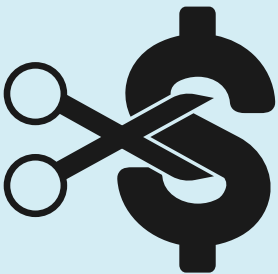
Make Your Music One-Stop

"One-stop" music is just as it sounds - it's music that music supervisors can clear in only one "stop"; i.e., they don't need to go knocking on anyone else's door to get permission to use the song. One-stop tracks are becoming more and more in-demand because they are easy to clear. To make your music one-stop, you must get all parties to sign a one-stop song agreement that indicates that any one party to the song can make a deal on it without the others' permission.



Split Sheets

Split sheets are legally binding documents that lay out the ownership splits of the song and master. It is typical to see split sheets that keep the two entities separate, meaning there are clear separations of the publishing and master rights. They also include everyone's contact info, address, and PRO IPI (member) numbers. It's good practice to complete a split sheet for every song you make with a collaborator.



Nashville Splits

This term refers to the good faith practice of splitting song ownership equally among every participant by default, regardless of their level of contribution. It is the most common way of splitting rights because it is the least complicated. Of course, this is not a law, and you can adjust the splits however you see fit and agree upon with your co-writers. It's just important to note that unless you say otherwise upfront (before writing), you can expect most musicians to abide by this industry standard.

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META-DATA & DELIVERABLES



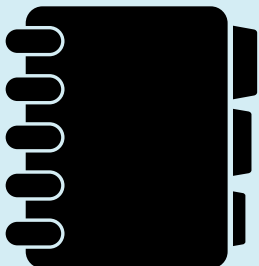
Meta-data

Meta-data is the information that is added to the music file. It typically consists of everyone's names, contact info, PRO #'s, release date (I/A), splits, lyric themes, and often times, lyrics themselves. Although meta-data entry is becoming less necessary with the rise of more advanced music cataloguing software (like Disco.ac), it's still good to get into the habit of including it in your track.



Deliverables - Stems, files, lyrics

When you finish a song and you're ready to pitch it, you should always print and have at the ready: high quality files (WAV or AIFF) of the final full mix, the instrumental mix, and "alt" mixes, which are different combinations of the various tracks in your song (for example, a full mix without the drums, or a mix with drums and bass only, etc.), all the session stems (which can be requested by music editors), and lyrics in an editable file.



Staying Organized

As you progress in your sync career and make more music, without an organizational system in place, things will get messy really fast. You can't rely on memory alone to know who wants percentage of which songs, or who has the session files for song XYZ, etc. It's good practice to create a google drive or dropbox file system where you can easily store, access, and send all important files and documents. Trust me, you'll be kicking yourself when the music supervisor has to pass on your song because you forgot to print an instrumental version and now you can't find the original session file!!

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ACTION ITEMS

1. Sign up with a PRO!!
2. Register your songs with your PRO
3. Create a file organization system, and upload what you have already.
4. Create a master list of all your songs and write down who owns what at which %, and their updated contact info.
5. Execute split sheets and one-stop song agreements for all the music you think you'll want to pitch.
6. Locate and properly file all of your previous sessions.

RESOURCES

1. <https://soundexchange.com>
2. <https://app.tuneregistry.com/>
3. <https://www.themlc.com/>
4. <https://disco.ac>