

Music Release Guide

Getting Your First Thousand Listeners



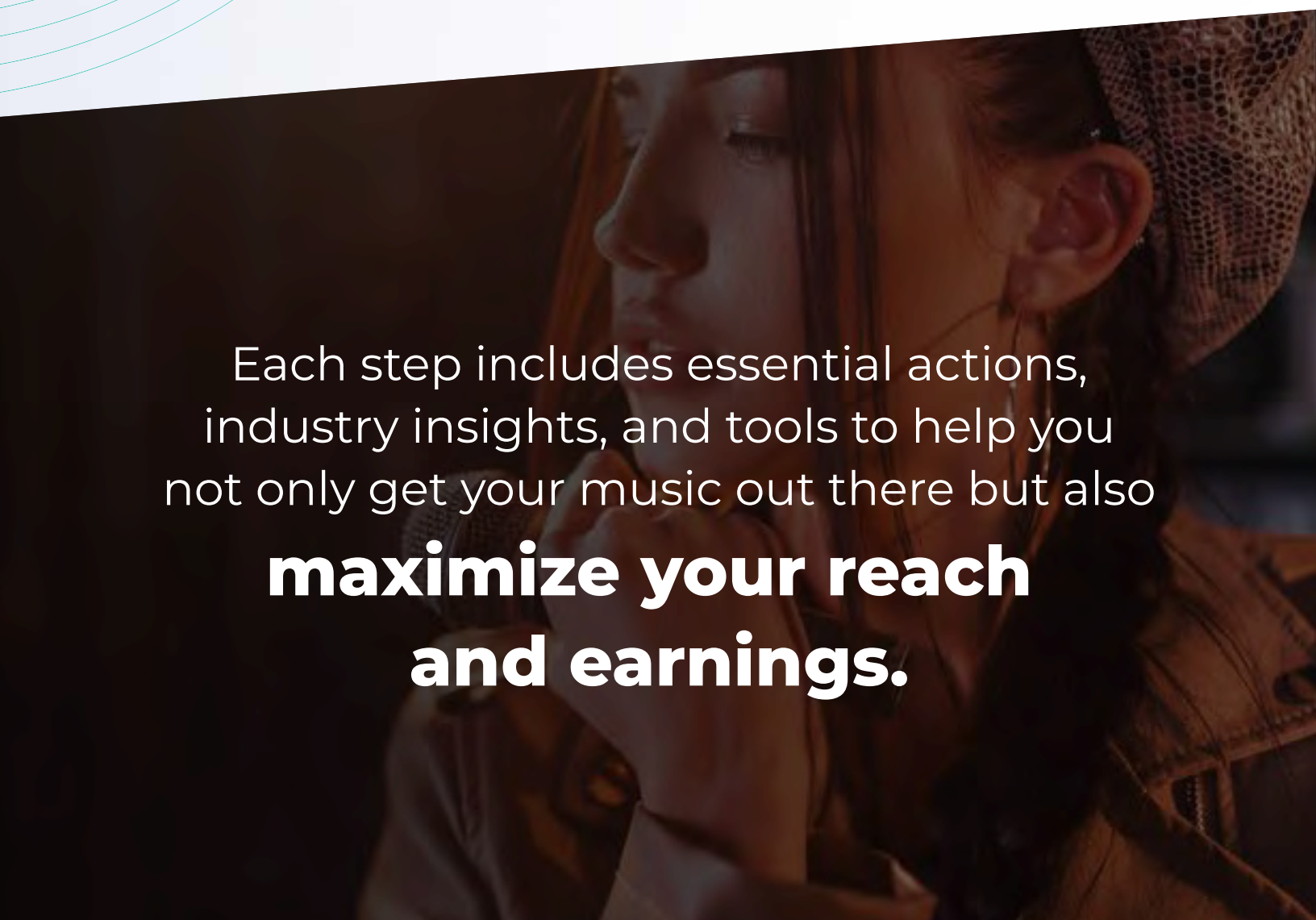
songtools

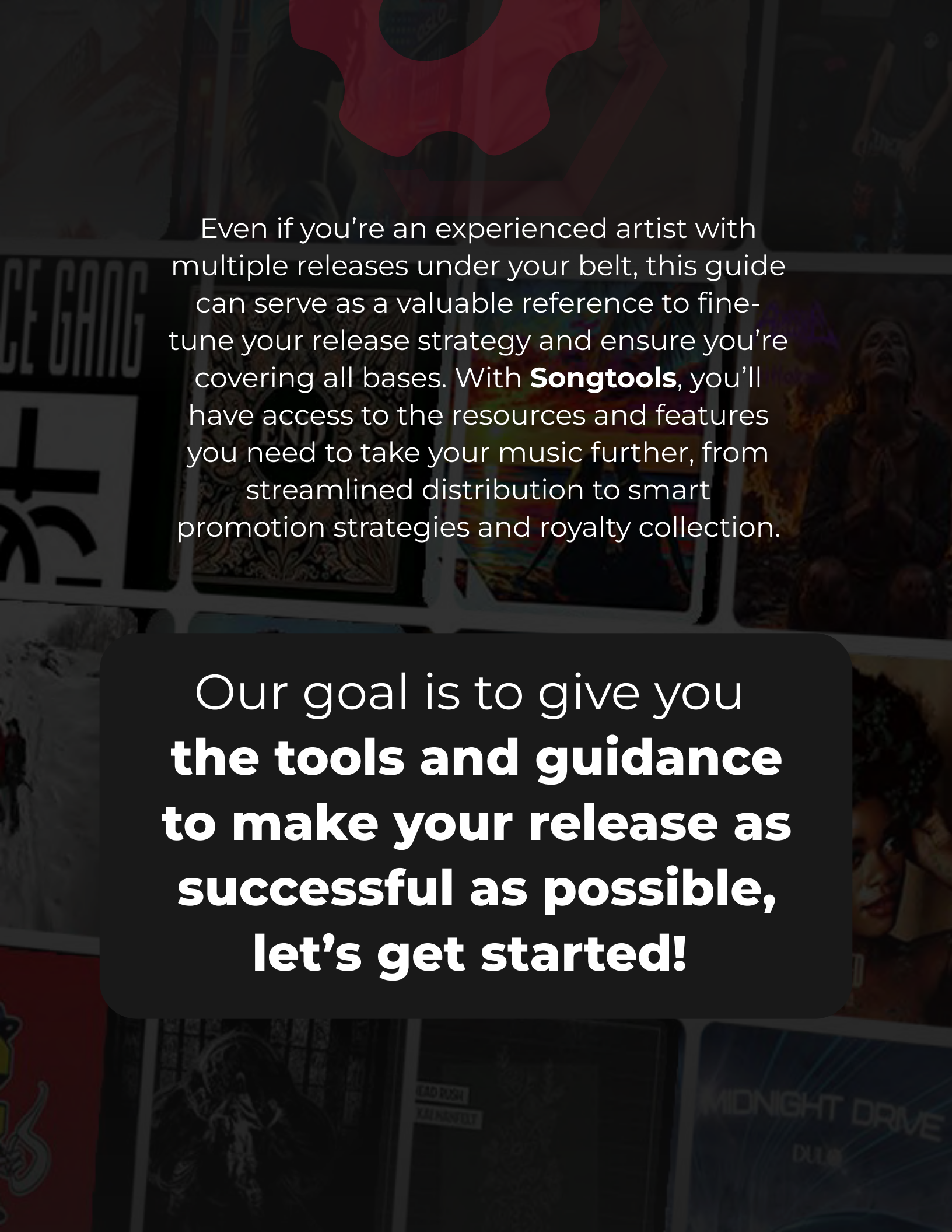
Releasing music can feel overwhelming, especially when you're just starting out. That's why we put together this how-to guide to help you get to your first thousand listeners as an artist. **This will be a step-by-step resource designed** to walk you through everything you need to do to properly launch your music and start building your audience.

Whether you're preparing for your very first release or looking to refine your approach, this guide will break it down into four key stages: **Register, Distribute, Promote, and Collect.**

Each step includes essential actions, industry insights, and tools to help you not only get your music out there but also

**maximize your reach
and earnings.**

A close-up, low-angle shot of a woman with long dark hair, wearing a brown jacket and a mesh hat, singing into a microphone. The image is dimly lit and serves as a background for the bottom half of the page.



Even if you're an experienced artist with multiple releases under your belt, this guide can serve as a valuable reference to fine-tune your release strategy and ensure you're covering all bases. With **Songtools**, you'll have access to the resources and features you need to take your music further, from streamlined distribution to smart promotion strategies and royalty collection.

Our goal is to give you **the tools and guidance to make your release as successful as possible, let's get started!**

STEP

01

Register



BMI

SESAC

1

Copyright Your Song

Even though your song is automatically protected by copyright the moment you create it, officially registering with the U.S. Copyright Office provides legal proof of ownership, which is essential if you ever need to take legal action.

- Go to www.copyright.gov
- Choose "**Register a Work**" and select "**Sound Recording**" or "**Musical Composition**"
- Fill out the application with your song details
- Upload your song file (MP3, WAV, or another accepted format)
- Pay the registration fee (typically \$45–\$65)

2

Sign Up with a Performing Rights Organization (PRO)

To collect performance royalties (money earned when your song is played on radio, TV, in venues, or streamed internationally), you need to register with a PRO like ASCAP, BMI, or SESAC.

- Research & choose a PRO: **ASCAP**, **BMI**, or **SESAC** (each has slightly different benefits)
- Create an account and register as a songwriter
- Submit your song details (title, writers, and publisher if applicable)
- Link your PRO account to your distribution platform (if needed)

3

Register for Mechanical Royalties

Mechanical royalties are generated every time your song is streamed or downloaded. Some PROs don't collect these royalties, so you'll need to register with an agency like The Mechanical Licensing Collective for U.S. streaming and download

- Sign up for an account at www.themlc.com
- Register your song to ensure you collect your share of mechanical royalties

4

Register to Collect Sound Recording Royalties

(Master Royalties)

If you own your master recordings (the actual recorded versions of your songs), you're entitled to royalties from digital and satellite radio (like Pandora, SiriusXM, and internet radio). These are not collected by PROs, so you'll need to register with SoundExchange.

- Go to www.soundexchange.com
- Create an account as an artist and /or rights holder
- Submit your recordings to track and collect master royalties

5

Set Up Publishing Administration

(Optional, but Recommended)

If you write and release your own music, you can self-publish or work with a publishing administrator (like Songtrust or a PRO's publishing service) to ensure you collect all possible publishing royalties. Some streaming platforms (DSPs) also offer built-in publishing admin options.

- Decide if you need a publishing admin service (if you're an independent songwriter, it may be beneficial)
- Research platforms like **Songtrust** or **TuneCore Publishing**
- Register your songs to maximize publishing revenue



By following these steps and registering your music in the right places, you're taking a huge step towards properly setting up to collect every dollar your music earns.

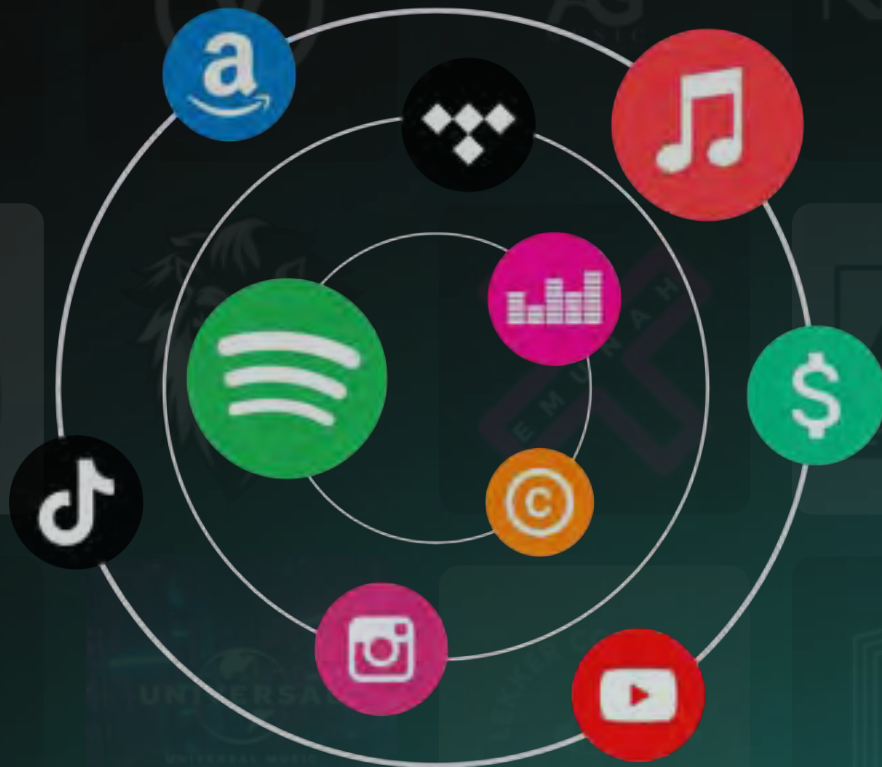
Once you've taken the time to register, you can now move on to the next big step of figuring out how to distribute your music.

This was just the first step towards getting to focus on aspects to grow as an artist, while knowing you're getting **compensated for your work.**

STEP

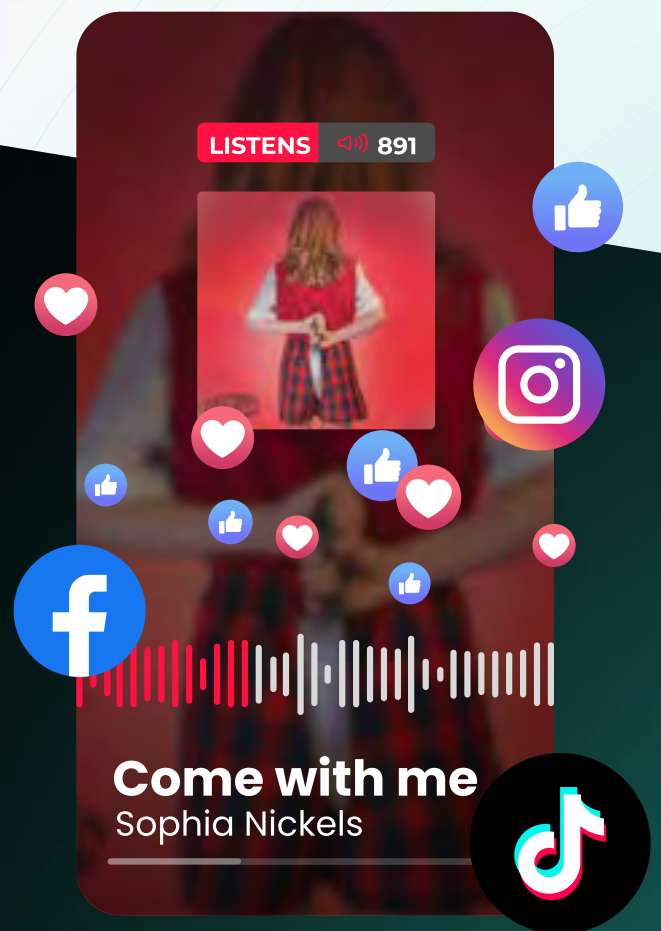
02

Distribute



Once your music is registered, the next step is getting it out into the world. Music distribution is how your songs become available on streaming platforms like **Spotify**, **Apple Music**, and **TIDAL**, as well as download stores and even social media platforms. This is done through music distributors, which are companies that handle the process of uploading your tracks, formatting the metadata, and ensuring you get paid when your music is streamed or purchased.

Choosing the right distributor is an important decision, as different platforms offer various pricing models, royalty payout structures, and extra services like marketing or playlist pitching. In this section, we'll walk you through how to research and choose a distributor, what to look for, and how to distribute your music successfully.



1

Research Different Music Distributors

Not all distributors operate the same way. Some charge a one-time fee per release, while others take a percentage of your royalties. Here are a few major options:

DISTROKID

DistroKid →

Annual subscription, unlimited releases, lets you keep 100% of royalties.



CD Baby →

One-time fee per release, takes a small cut of royalties, offers marketing tools

tuneCORE

Tunecore →

Offers unlimited plans as well as pay per release options

amuse

Amuse →

Provides two types of budget-friendly plans, each with their own features

United Masters

United Masters →

Subscription-based with marketing and sync licensing opportunities

Some other options include: **The Orchard, AWAL, Symphonic Distribution, Songtradr, or LANDR**

2

Compare Key Features and Pricing

When choosing a distributor, consider:



Pricing model

Flat fee, percentage-based, or free with conditions?



Speed of distribution

How quickly does your music go live?



Royalty payouts

Do they take a percentage, or do you keep everything?



Additional services

Do they offer marketing, analytics, or playlist pitching?



Ease of use

Is their platform user-friendly?

3

Choose the Best Distributor for Your Needs

Ask yourself:

Are you releasing music frequently?

If so, an unlimited plan (like DistroKid) might be best.

DISTROKID

Do you want marketing support?

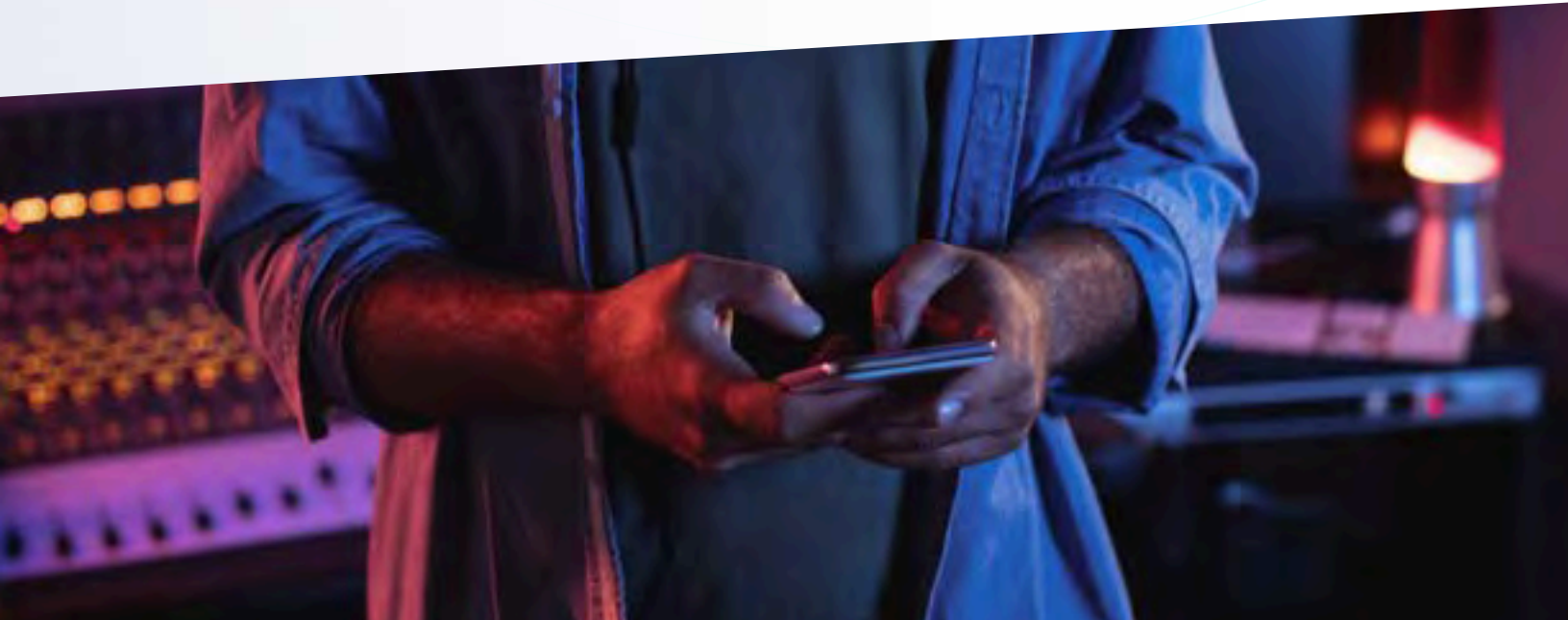
CD Baby or UnitedMasters could be a better fit.



Are you looking for a budget-friendly option?

Amuse offers lower upfront costs and different plans.

amuse



4

Prepare Your Music for Upload

Before submitting your music, make sure you have:

High-quality audio files

(WAV or FLAC)

Album artwork that meets platform requirements

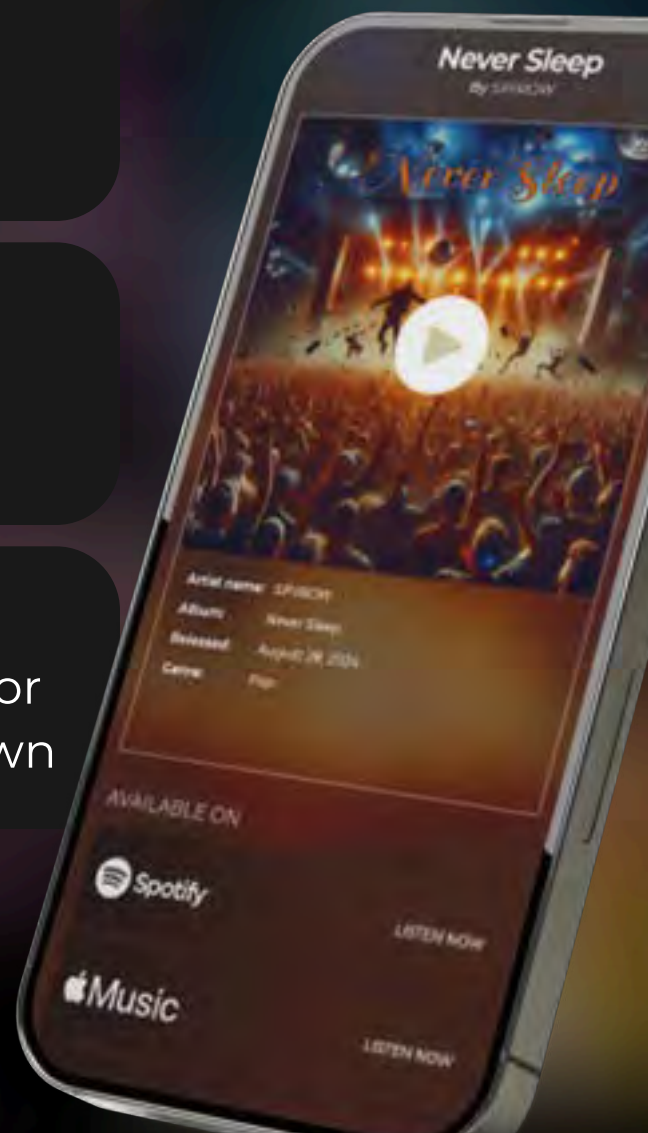
(minimum 3000x3000 pixels)

Metadata

Song titles, artist name, release date, and credits

ISRC codes

Some distributors assign these for you, but you can also get your own



5

Submit Your Music and Schedule a Release Date



Upload your tracks to your chosen distributor



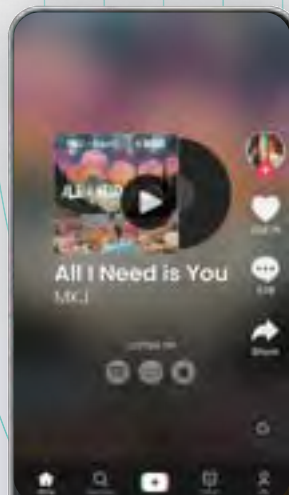
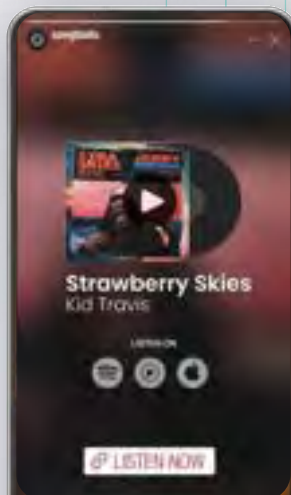
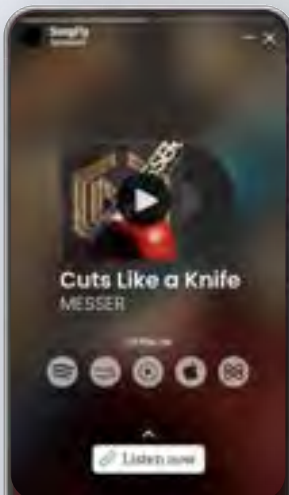
Fill out all required metadata fields

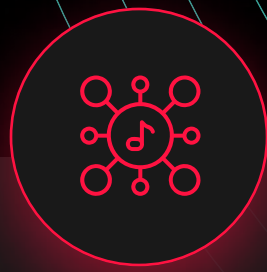


Set a release date (give yourself at least 2-4 weeks for proper promotion)



Enable distribution to as many platforms as possible, including TikTok and Instagram





Without finding the proper distribution, your songs won't be available where fans go to discover new music (streaming platforms, social media, etc.).

By taking the time to research and selecting a distributor that fits your needs, you're setting yourself up for success for every song you put out in the future.

Now that your music is officially live, you can now focus on growing your fan base, promoting your tracks, and making a lasting impact as an artist.

STEP

03

Promote



Automated playlisting to **140k+ Playlists**

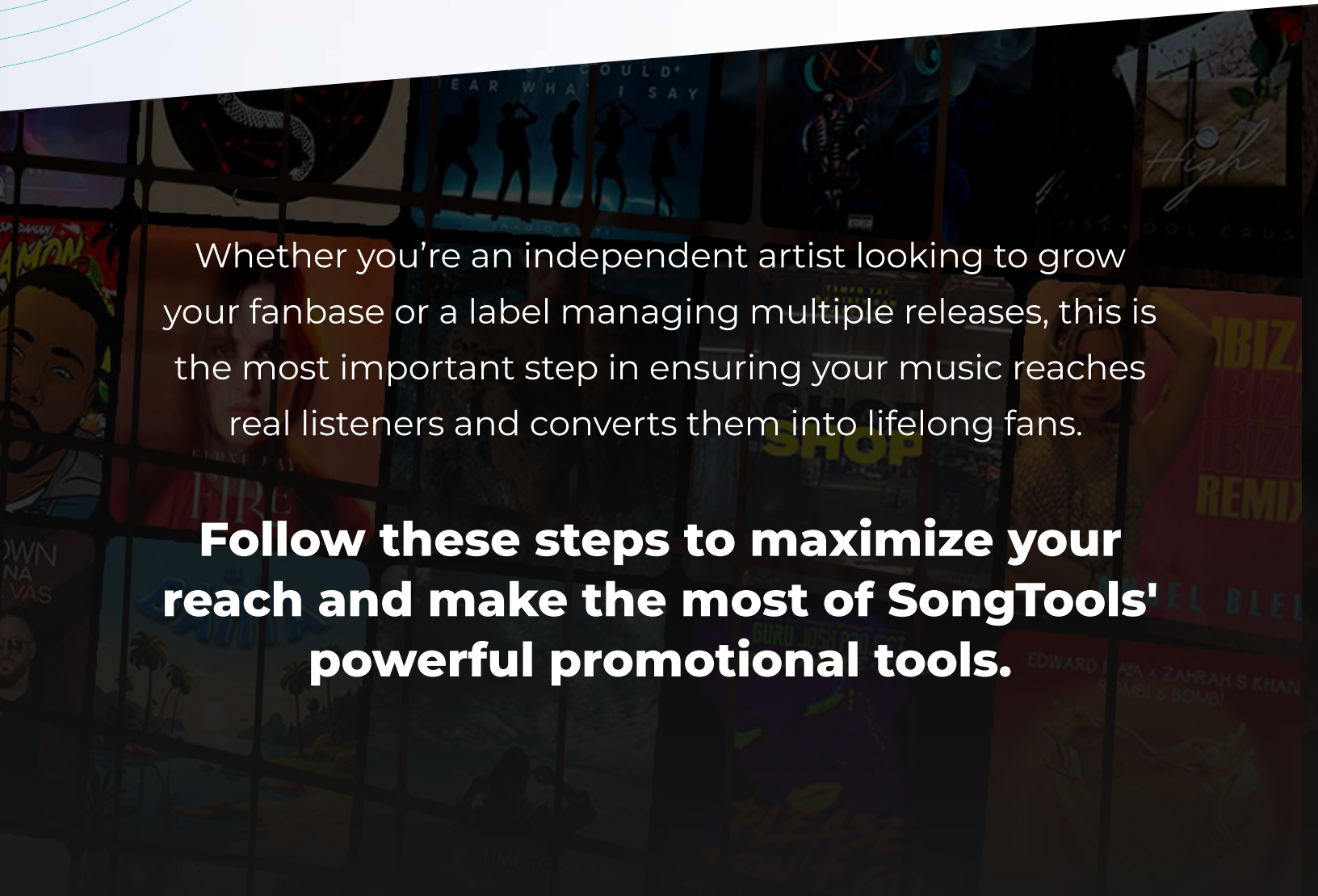
Kickstart growth with free **landing pages & blogs**

Generate real **fanbase growth**

One-click social media ads, direct **to new fans**

This is the step where everything comes together, and where **Songtools** truly shines. You've created an amazing track, and now it's time to make sure it gets heard. Promotion is the key to transforming your music from just another release into a career-defining moment, and that's exactly what we're here for.

With one-click promotion designed for artists, labels, and playlisters, Songtools gives you access to over **150 million** followers, **20,000** top playlist curators, and cutting-edge advertising tools to reach your perfect audience. We've powered over **2 million** playlist placements and **300,000** successful campaigns...**now it's your turn!**



Whether you're an independent artist looking to grow your fanbase or a label managing multiple releases, this is the most important step in ensuring your music reaches real listeners and converts them into lifelong fans.

Follow these steps to maximize your reach and make the most of SongTools' powerful promotional tools.

1 Use Our Free Tools

Songtools offers three powerful free tools to help artists create organic content, organize assets for paid campaigns, and drive more streams. Making it easy to build a complete marketing campaign that boosts reach and engagement. [Read more](#) →



song**page**

[Go](#) →

Impress your fans with a personalized and adaptive landing page that requires zero coding or design work



song**blog**

[Go](#) →

Publish an SEO-optimized blog for your song and engage with your fans



song**folder**

[Go](#) →

Store campaign assets in the cloud and access millions of images and videos to promote your music

2

Launch a PlaylisterClub Campaign

Songtools is home to the largest community of independent playlisters digging for new music. Considering playlist placements can make or break a track, this is a significant aspect to promoting your release. With **PlaylisterClub**, you can:



Submit your song to a network of **20,000+ curators**

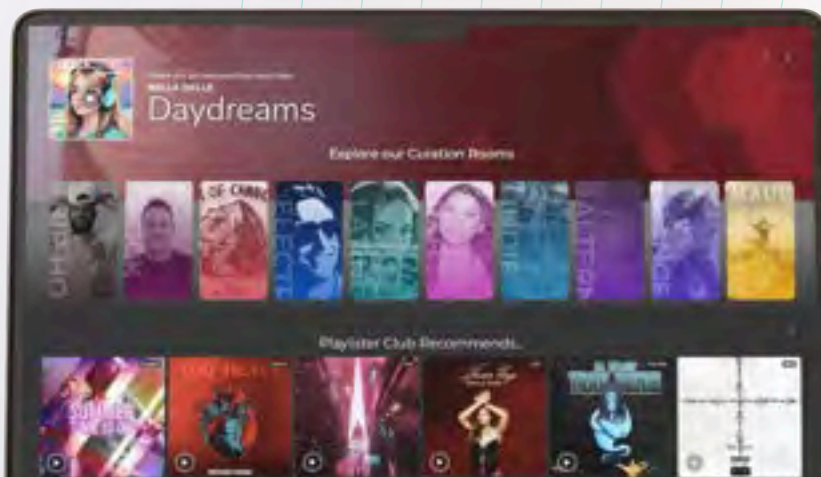


Customize your song preview, tagline, and background to stand out



Monitor performance metrics like Song Engagement Index (SEI) and Brand Engagement Index (BEI) to refine your release strategy and ensure you're on track to achieve your goals

Read more →



3

Launch a Songfly Campaign

Running a **Songfly** campaign on **Songtools** is a powerful way to reach new listeners and grow your fanbase by promoting your music through targeted social media ads. This tool helps you effortlessly connect with audiences who may not have discovered your tracks otherwise, leading to a boost in Spotify listeners, increased followers on platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok, and meaningful fan engagement. With **Songfly**, you can:



Customize campaign settings to feature artist created content: music videos, lyric videos, visualizers, etc.



Leverage SmartGEO targeting to find the most engaged listeners



Track fan conversions and adjust your campaign based on real-time data

[Read more →](#)

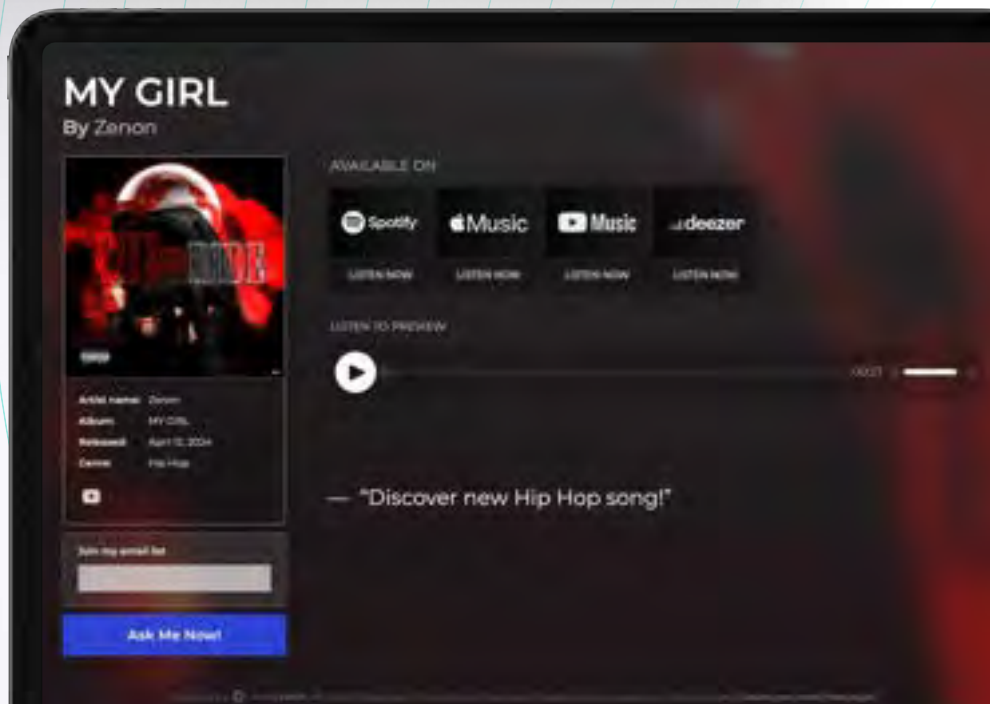
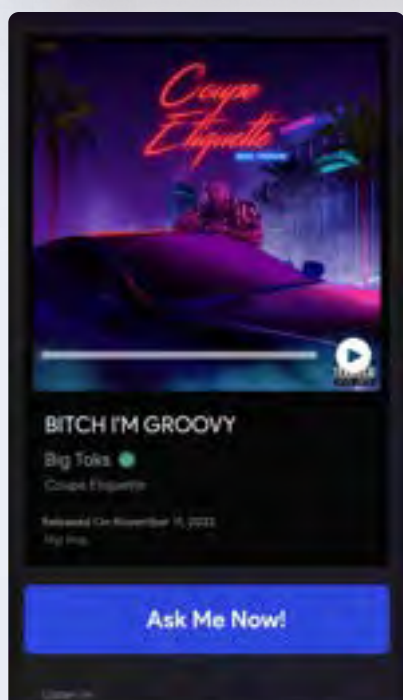
The screenshot displays the Songfly campaign interface. At the top, it shows the song title "Spanish Sun" by Jonas Greene, categorized as Rock. There are buttons for "Buy Now to start promoting" and "Change song". Below this, the "Ad creative" section is visible, with a note that it is "Customized". The interface offers options for "SmartCreative" and "Custom Ad". Under "Custom Ad", there are tabs for "Background", "Content", and "Custom Ad". The "Image Gallery" tab is selected, showing a search bar with the text "Blond girl singing" and a search icon. Below the search bar, there are several image thumbnails. On the right side of the interface, there is a circular badge that says "NEW ARTISTS 50% OFF PLAYLISTING". On the left side, there is a preview of the ad creative, showing a video player with a "Buy now" button and social media sharing icons.

4

Engage with Your Audience

Promotion doesn't stop with ads and playlists—connecting with fans is essential.

- Keep your **Songblog** active by posting updates and encouraging fan interaction
- Respond to comments, messages, and feedback on social media
- Encourage fans to share your music and build organic momentum



CASE STUDIES



songtools

Read through these impactful case studies to see how real artists have successfully used **PlaylisterClub** and **Songfly** to promote their music and achieve significant growth!



Meet

Arianna Tsar

Arianna Tsar is a 13-year-old Toronto-based recording artist making waves with her bold, authentic approach to pop music. Known for her sharp lyrics, dynamic vocals, and vibrant production, Arianna is quickly becoming a voice for her generation, inspiring listeners to embrace their individuality and speak their truth.



PlaylisterClub Campaign

148

Playlist Placements



Spotify Listeners

+80% Increased

after starting her
PlaylisterClub Campaign



Follower Reach of

1.8 Million



Meet **liquidfive**

liquidfive is a DJ and producer based in Mülheim, Germany, known for his unique blend of house, electro, and pop influences. With a growing global fanbase, he has established his sound internationally through electrifying live performances and high-energy dance tracks. His recent single, "Smoke Alarm," is an electrifying anthem featuring hyper-intense vocals and explosive beats.



SongFly Campaign

↑ **129.79%**

increase in average daily new listeners on Spotify



Spotify Followers



212.32% Increased
in average daily new
followers on Spotify

Over 99,800
impressions on
Instagram and TikTok

For more examples showcasing a variety of artists who have successfully used our tools to promote their tracks, [Click here](#) to view all case studies.



BLOG POSTS



songtools

For additional resources and valuable insights to boost your music promotion efforts, explore our blog posts covering everything from marketing strategies to industry trends.



3 Things You Should Know About Cover Art For Playlisting Success



How To Use Instagram Ads To Grow Your Music: A Data-Backed Strategy

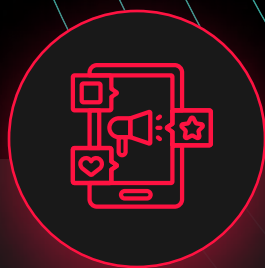


The Importance Of Save Rates: Tracking Listener Engagement On Spotify



When It Comes To Digital Ads, The More You Spend, The Cheaper It Gets

Check out our full collection of blog posts for promotional tips, industry insights, and more, [Click here](#) to explore!



Promotion is key to reaching your first thousand listeners, and we understand how overwhelming it can feel when you have so many other things to manage.

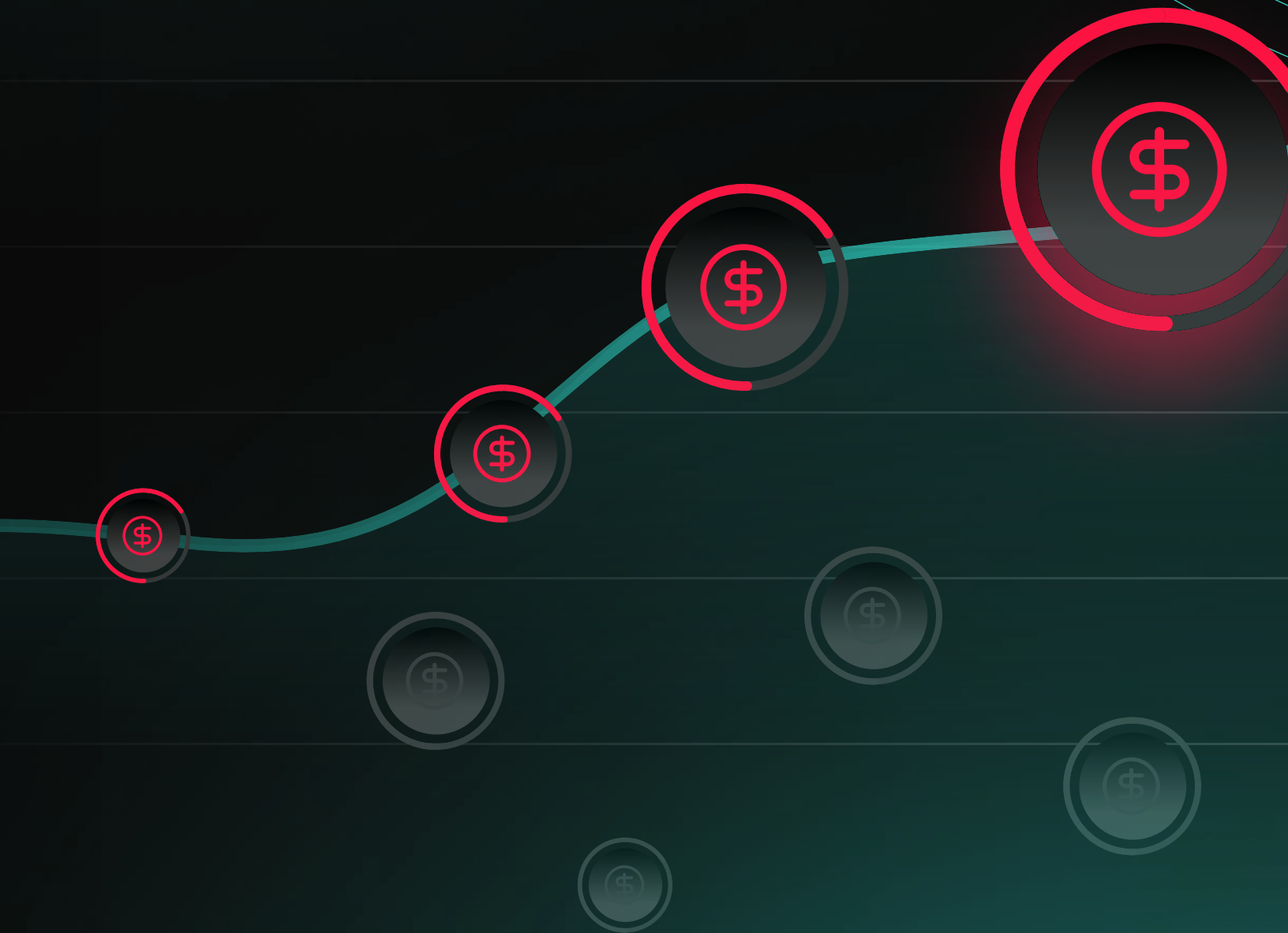
That's why we've made it simple, with just the click of a button, we'll handle getting your music in front of the right audience, so you can focus on everything else in your release process.

By using **Songtools** in your strategy, you'll not only grow your streams, reach new fans, and land more playlist placements, but you'll also save time to do what truly matters to you as an artist: creating more music.

STEP

04

Collect



You've finally made it to the last step of your music release process, this is where you will see all of your hard work come to fruition. After registering, distributing, and promoting your music, it's time **to start collecting the royalties you've earned.**

This is an essential step that ensures you get paid every time your music is streamed, downloaded, or performed. Whether it's digital royalties, radio plays, or live performances, knowing where and how to collect your earnings is significant to growing your career as an artist.



1

Track Your Streaming Royalties

Your music is being streamed on platforms like Spotify, Apple Music, and TIDAL, which means you're earning royalties every time someone listens to your song. To collect these earnings, your distributor will handle the payouts, but it's essential to check in regularly to ensure everything is accounted for.



Log in to your distribution platform

(DistroKid, TuneCore, CD Baby, etc.)



Monitor your earnings and track how much you're making per stream



Verify that your ISRC codes and metadata are correct to avoid missing any payments

2

Collect Performance Royalties

These royalties are earned when your music is played on the radio, TV, in venues, or streamed in public spaces. To collect performance royalties, you'll need to stay registered with a Performing Rights Organization (PRO) like **ASCAP**, **BMI**, or **SESAC**.



Log into your PRO account and check your performance earning



Make sure your songs are correctly registered and linked to your PRO account



If your music is getting airplay or used in public spaces, track your earnings and submit any usage data if needed



[Visit →](#)



[Visit →](#)



[Visit →](#)

3

Collect Mechanical Royalties

Mechanical royalties are earned every time your music is downloaded or streamed. These are handled by agencies like **The Mechanical Licensing Collective (MLC)** for U.S. streams and downloads, so you don't need to worry about collecting them directly, as long as your music is properly registered.

- Sign up with The Mechanical Licensing Collective at www.themlc.com (if you haven't already)
- Ensure your song is registered and that all relevant metadata is submitted
- Review your earnings reports regularly to make sure you're receiving your share of mechanical royalties

THE MLC

4

Collect Master Royalties

(Sound Recording Royalties)

If you own the master rights to your recordings, you're entitled to master royalties every time your music is played on platforms like Pandora or satellite radio. These royalties are collected through services like **SoundExchange**.



Create an account with
SoundExchange at
www.soundexchange.com



Register your master recordings to
track your royalties



Monitor your account for any payments
or usage reports

5

Track and Collect Publishing Royalties (Optional)

If you've set up publishing administration, either independently or through a publishing administrator like **Songtrust**, you'll be entitled to publishing royalties. These royalties are earned whenever your music is performed publicly, covered by other artists, or used in films or TV shows.



SONGTRUST

If you're using a service like **Songtrust**, log in to track your publishing earnings

Monitor any royalties from sync placements, performances, and streaming platform

Make sure your songs are registered with the correct performing and mechanical royalty organizations

6

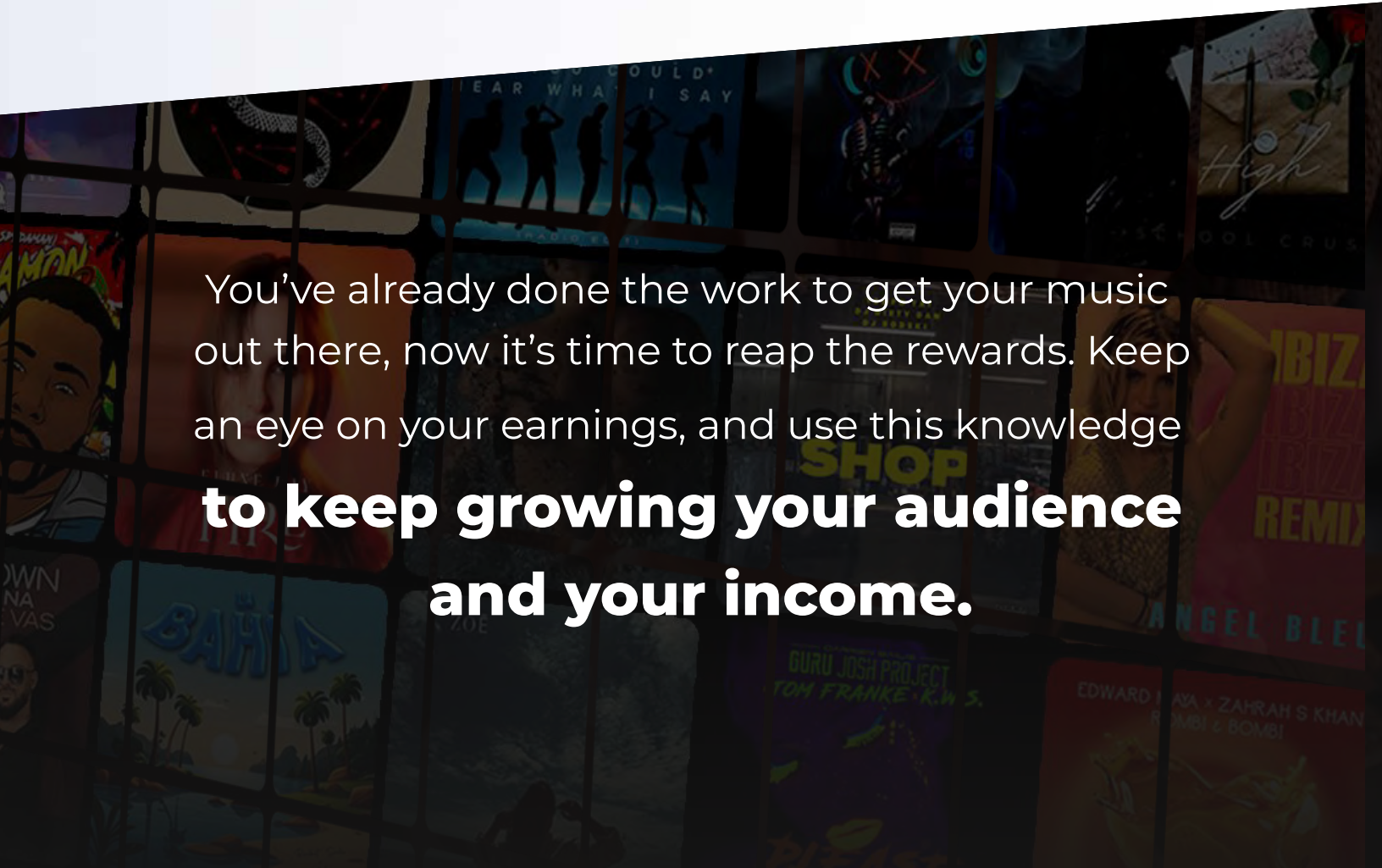
Check Your Earnings Across All Platforms

With multiple sources of income coming from streaming, performances, downloads, and syncs, it's important to regularly check all platforms to ensure that you're getting paid what you're owed.


- Set up direct deposit or payout options for all of your accounts
- Check reports monthly to track your growth and ensure all payments are received
- If you notice discrepancies, contact your distributor, PRO, or licensing agency to resolve any issues



By following these steps and staying organized, you'll be able to collect all the royalties you've earned from your music. **Understanding how to track and collect your payments** is a crucial part of sustaining your music career, so make sure you're staying on top of these details.



You've already done the work to get your music out there, now it's time to reap the rewards. Keep an eye on your earnings, and use this knowledge **to keep growing your audience and your income.**

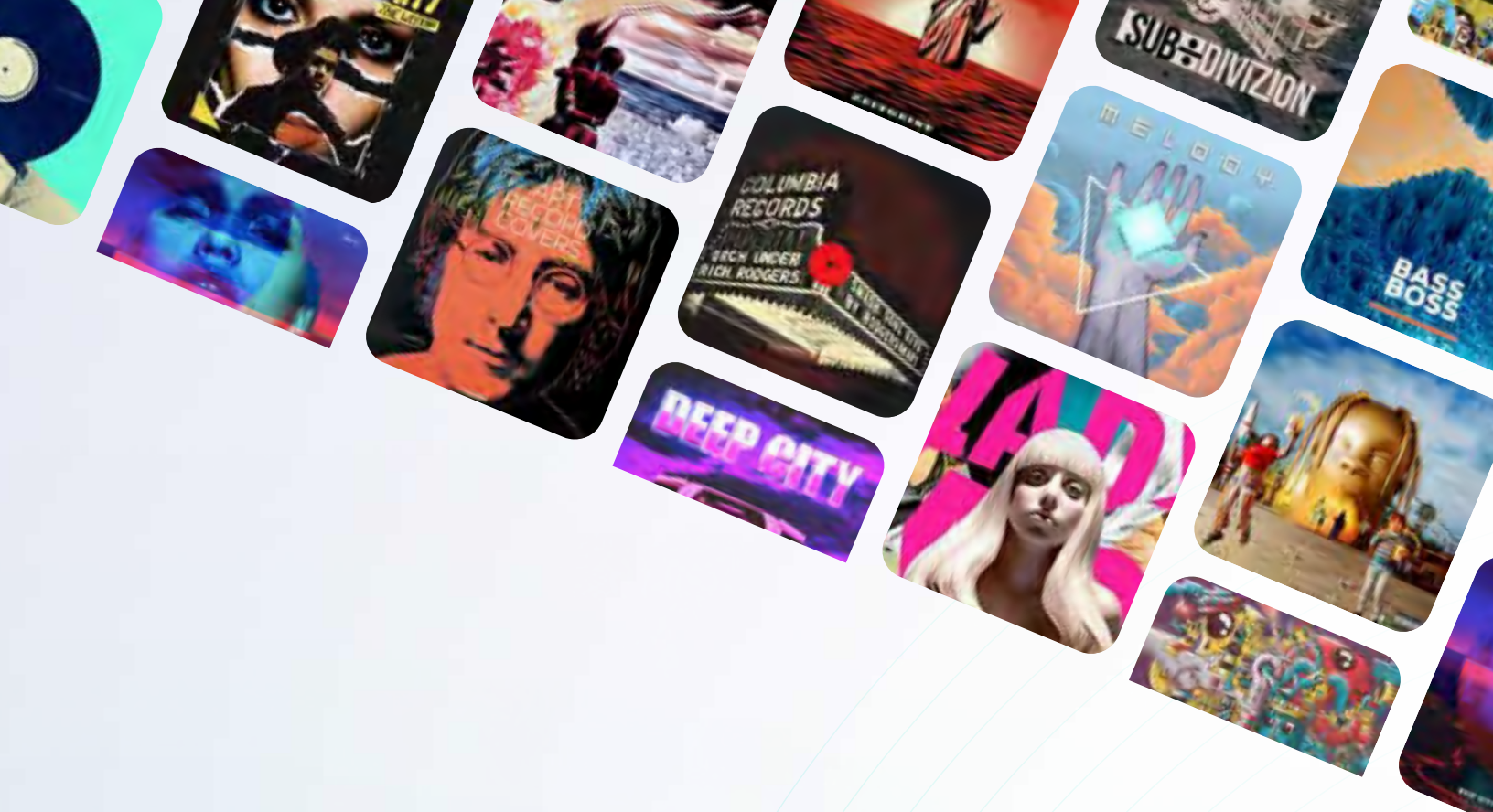


As you can see, successfully releasing your music requires careful planning, execution, and ongoing evaluation. By following these steps, from setting up your release with a clear strategy to consistently engaging with your audience and measuring your campaign's success, you're not just putting your music out there, you're positioning yourself for sustainable growth. It's crucial to remain flexible and reassess your efforts if you're not seeing the results you hoped for.

Optimizing your approach, whether it's tweaking your marketing or adjusting your target audience, is key to turning slow progress into success. In the end, putting in the work, analyzing your efforts, and adjusting when necessary will guide you toward reaching your first thousand listeners and beyond, ensuring that not only are you getting your music heard, but you're also being properly compensated for your artistry.



We hope this guide helps you make the most out of your next release. We can't wait to see the incredible growth you achieve as an artist!



songtools

Start with Songtools now to watch your audience grow through playlisting and digital ads:

[Start Promoting >](#)



Let us handle the promotion stage of your release process, so you can focus on creating more of the music that your fans love!