THE MUSIC SPECIALIST

Your Legal & Business Checklist for Entering the Music Industry

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🔹 1. Lock Down Your Legal Identity

Before you release a single beat, make sure your business foundation is solid.

- **Register your stage name** as a trademark (if unique)
- **Form a legal entity** (LLC or sole proprietorship) for tax protection and contracts
- **Get an EIN** (Employer Identification Number) for banking and royalty tracking
- **Open a business bank account** — keep your music money separate

"You're not just an artist — you're a brand. Treat your name like intellectual property."

🔹 2. Protect Your Music

Every song you write, or record is a potential revenue stream. Guard it.

- **Copyright your compositions** (lyrics + melody) via the U.S. Copyright Office
- **Register your sound recordings** separately — they're distinct assets
- **Use split sheets** for every collaboration — who owns what, and how much
- **Keep session notes** and metadata — they matter for future licensing

"If it's not in writing, it doesn't exist. Protect your work before you promote it."

🔹 3. Set Up Your Royalties

You deserve to get paid every time your music is played, streamed, or licensed.

- **Join a Performing Rights Organization (PRO)** ASCAP, BMI, or SESAC

- **Register with SoundExchange** — collects digital performance royalties
- **Use a publishing admin service** (Songtrust, TuneCore Publishing) to collect global royalties
- **Distribute through a trusted platform** (DistroKid, CD Baby, Ditto) with clear payout terms

“Royalties are your retirement plan. Don’t leave money on the table.”

🔹 4. Know Your Contracts

Whether it’s a gig, a sync deal, or a label offer — read the fine print.

- **Understand key terms**: advance, recoupment, exclusivity, rights granted
- **Hire a music attorney** before signing anything long-term
- **Negotiate ownership and control** — especially over masters and publishing
- **Keep copies of everything** — contracts, invoices, agreements

“The wrong deal can cost you your career. The right one can build your legacy.”

🔹 5. Build Your Business Team

You can’t do it all alone — and you shouldn’t.

- **Music attorney** – protects your rights
- **Accountant or bookkeeper** – tracks your income
- **Manager or consultant** – helps grow your brand
- **Mentor or advisor** – keeps you grounded and focused

“Talent gets you noticed. Strategy gets you paid.”

💼 Ready to build your music business the right way?

Visit musicspecialistspeaks.com for more resources, booking info, and mentorship opportunities.