

Master Ownership Protection Playbook

Purpose: Confirm, audit, and protect control over your sound recordings and the revenue they generate.

This playbook is designed for independent artists who want **clarity before conflict**.

Not legal advice. A practical control system.

PHASE 1: OWNERSHIP CHECKLIST (Confirm Where You Stand)

Use this section to establish your **current reality**.

Answer every question in writing. If you can't, treat it as unresolved.

Recording-Level Questions (Per Song)

- Do you know who legally owns the master recording?
- Is ownership:
 - Sole
 - Shared
 - Licensed out
- Is ownership documented in writing?
- Where is that document stored?

Distribution Questions

- Who uploaded the song?
- Who is listed as the "rights holder" or "master owner" on the distributor dashboard?
- Is the agreement exclusive or non-exclusive?
- Is there a fixed term?
- Is there a reversion process?

Money & Control Questions

- Who can approve sync placements?
- Who can remove the song from platforms?
- Who can sell or transfer the master?
- Who collects recording-side royalties?

If any answer is unclear, your ownership is unclear.

PHASE 2: OWNERSHIP AUDIT (Find the Leaks)

This phase is about spotting **quiet transfers of control**.

Audit Your Contracts

Review every document connected to the recording:

- Distribution agreements
- Label or partnership deals
- Production or recording agreements
- Beat licenses
- Collaboration agreements

Search for language around:

- "Master," "Sound Recording," or "Recording"
- "Exclusive rights"
- "In perpetuity" or long fixed terms
- "License" vs "Assignment"
- Reversion clauses (or lack thereof)

If ownership is not explicitly stated, assume it is **not fully yours**.

Audit Platform Terms

Check the terms of:

- Your distributor
- Any direct upload platforms
- Content ID or monetization services

Confirm:

- Who is registered as the master owner
- Whether platforms can sublicense your recordings
- What happens if the account is closed

Platform convenience often comes with control trade-offs.

Audit Collaborations

For every joint project, confirm:

- Who owns the master

- Ownership percentages
- Who can distribute
- Who can license
- What happens if one party disappears

No clause = future dispute.

PHASE 3: PREVENTION SYSTEM (Protect Future Releases)

This phase ensures you don't repeat old mistakes.

Lock Ownership Before Release

Before uploading any song:

- Write a master ownership clause
- Confirm ownership percentages
- Decide licensing authority
- Agree on term length (if licensed)

Do this **before** distribution, not after traction.

Use Clear Master Clauses

Every agreement touching a recording should answer:

- Who owns the master?
- Is ownership exclusive?
- For how long?
- Can ownership revert?
- Under what conditions?

Silence is not neutral. It favors the other party.

Separate Payment From Ownership

Paying for:

- Beats
- Studio time
- Engineering

Does not automatically define ownership.

Ownership must be stated explicitly.

Register Ownership Correctly

After release:

- Ensure distributor credits match reality
- Store contracts securely
- Track reversion dates
- Maintain version control

Paperwork is leverage.

QUICK SELF-TEST

If someone emailed you today asking to license one of your songs, could you:

- Prove ownership?
- Approve the deal alone?
- Collect the money directly?

If not, there's work to do.

FINAL NOTE

Master ownership is not about control for control's sake.

It's about protecting future options you can't predict yet.

The earlier you lock this in, the cheaper it is.

The longer you wait, the harder it becomes to undo.