

Distributor Selection Checklist

Use this checklist **before** uploading any music. The goal isn't to find the "best" distributor — it's to avoid decisions you'll need to undo later.

1. Stage Reality Check

- I know how often I can realistically release music over the next 12 months
- I'm choosing for my *current* output, not a future version of my career
- I understand whether my music income is experimental, supplemental, or meaningful right now

If these answers feel fuzzy, slow down. Distribution decisions punish guesswork.

2. Ownership & Rights

- The distributor does **not** own my masters
- There is no language allowing them to license or exploit my music beyond distribution
- I keep full control over takedowns and catalog decisions

If ownership isn't crystal clear in the terms, that's already a red flag.

3. Exit Strategy

- I can leave without losing ISRCs
- There are no excessive per-track takedown or transfer fees
- The notice period is reasonable and clearly stated

If leaving feels harder than joining, the relationship is unbalanced.

4. Payment & Transparency

- Payout timelines are clearly defined
- Reporting is easy to understand
- There's no vague language around "processing delays" or discretionary holds

If payment language feels vague, delays usually come later.

5. Fee Structure Fit

- I understand whether I'm paying a flat fee or a percentage
- I know how this model behaves if my streams increase
- I've thought about next year's output, not just today's budget

Cheap now can become expensive later.

6. Catalog Growth Check

- Fees won't quietly increase as my catalog grows
- Annual renewals won't penalize consistency
- Long-term costs make sense at higher release volumes

Growth should reward consistency — not punish it.

7. Geography & Payout Reality

- The distributor supports my local currency (if relevant)
- Payout speed matches my needs
- Tax handling is clear for my country

Speed vs reach is a real trade-off. Pick intentionally.

8. Friction Test

Ask yourself:

Will this setup feel boring and forgettable once my music is live?

If the answer is no, something may be off.

Final Check

- I'm not rushing this just to "get the song out"
- I've read the terms, not just the pricing page
- I won't need to rebuild this foundation six months from now

If all boxes are checked, you're probably making a clean decision.