

# DON'T GET PLAYED

The 5 Vicious Myths That Make Artists Starve  
and Music Industry Professionals Filthy Rich



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**BRENNAN MURPHEY**

In this report I am going to debunk five commonly believed yet vicious and extremely harmful myths that stand directly in the way of artists building a fulfilling, successful music career.

If you...

- fall prey to believing in these myths
- use language in your communication or your thoughts that reinforces these myths
- act as if these myths were true

then...

due to confirmation bias and the way your beliefs, thoughts and words influence your actions and perceptions, you will unwittingly create evidence in your experience to support that these myths are factual, and your life experience will reflect them, even though they won't be true for other musicians.

Because of the cognitive dissonance and self-fulfilling prophecy that results from believing in things that simply aren't true, you're going to unwittingly manifest frustrating circumstances for yourself by doing so.

You'll also come to blame your negative feelings and lack of encouraging results on environmental factors. Because of that, you will find yourself stuck again and again in the same dramas and similar circumstances.

I will also explain why so many musicians tend to buy into these vicious myths and why believing in them stands directly in the way of your success.

These myths are:

- 1) No one buys music anymore.
- 2) You need a record label.
- 3) You need distribution.
- 4) Streaming is the answer.
- 5) Fame is necessary for financial success.

These myths are so pervasive and so commonly accepted by musicians that it can be difficult to see them for what they are, especially if you've been attempting to make progress in your music career using the traditional business models that were invented over 100 years ago, but in an industry that has changed more than any other industry in the world since its inception due to advances in technology and media.

So even though most musicians are trying to make progress using a business model that is so outdated as to be almost completely non-functional, the best path to success in 2023 is totally different than it once was. This is why so many musicians still feel stuck even after decades of making strong efforts to grow.

So much has changed with respect to recording technology, media, and the sheer scale of the amount of music released every day that most musicians and academic institutions simply have not caught up.

Essentially, they simply don't realize how much easier it is now in a far more interconnected, globalized and high-tech world to bypass all the traditional industry structures and middlemen entities, get large numbers of new fans using modern self-serve media outlets that are far easier to access and much less expensive than traditional media outlets, then convert those fans to customers using direct marketing.

The problem is that if you believe in any one of these myths, you'll never execute the necessary steps.

## False Belief #1: No One Buys Music Anymore

It's amazing to me how many musicians who pour huge amounts of their time and energy into creating music have somehow come to believe that no one buys music anymore.

What's particularly crazy about this belief is that aside from being totally untrue, it is a fact that the global revenue generated from sales of recorded music products and services has been increasing by about a billion dollars every year since 2014. 2022 was the largest revenue year for recorded music in history.

The latest RIAA report<sup>1</sup> analyzing recorded music sales in 2022 showed that while streaming now makes up about 84% of total revenues in the United States, American consumers still spent more than \$1.7 BILLION dollars last year buying physical media like vinyl and CDs as well as digital downloads. Over 41.3 million vinyl records were sold in 2022, producing over \$1.2 billion in revenue. And more than over 33.4 million CDs were sold in 2022 in the USA, producing over \$482 million in revenue. That doesn't even get into downloads or other physical media formats like DVD, Blu-Ray, cassettes, and flash drives.

A recent survey<sup>2</sup> showed that 31% of Americans are currently willing to pay for music on vinyl. 46% of Americans said they like buying physical copies of the music they enjoy the most.

So why is it then that so many musicians, even some platinum-selling artists who once sold millions of records believe that no one buys music anymore?

Well, it's probably because physical music sales are indeed far fewer than they once were, and most people don't buy physical music now. But it's not the vast majority or even two-thirds of Americans. It's rather a slight majority. If you're one of these people who doesn't buy music, it's really easy to believe that no one else buys it because people tend to think that everyone else acts the same way that they act.

Why is this so dangerous for musicians to believe?

Because if musicians believe that no one buys music anymore, they won't put much effort into packaging, marketing or selling their music, even if about 1 out of 3 people even today say they're willing to buy it.

This false belief combined with other cognitive biases creates a hazardous mental environment for musicians looking to build a music career. If they spend a bunch of money producing an album, for example, then believe they will lose it all because they believe that no one buys music anymore, they probably won't even try very hard to sell the album they produce. They'll probably just give it away instead. If they try to sell it using an ineffective method and no one buys it, they'll fall prey to their own confirmation bias and will believe even more strongly that no one buys music anymore. This could cost them hundreds of thousands if not millions of dollars in lost revenue over the course of their careers.

Meanwhile, my clients and I have successfully sold over 6,832 albums on PHYSICAL media directly to our fans via email blasts and Facebook ads, bypassing the entire industry mess of middlemen, labels and distributors and generating over \$265,000 in revenue from extremely simple online marketing campaigns.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.riaa.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/2022-Year-End-Music-Industry-Revenue-Report.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://today.yougov.com/topics/media/articles-reports/2019/04/12/record-store-day-2019-records-generations-poll>

## False Belief #2: You Need a Record Label

While it was once true that the only way for most artists to get music recorded, mixed, mastered and mass produced in high fidelity was to get signed to a major record label, that hasn't been true since at least the mid-1990s with the invention of ADAT recorders, CD burners, etc. But that's why record labels exist at all – because it used to cost over \$250,000 to produce a record when everything was done with analog tech.

With contemporary digital recording technology, someone with a laptop, an audio interface and a DAW has access to higher quality recording, mixing and mastering tools than million-dollar studios had in the mid-1990s. And companies like Disc Makers<sup>3</sup> have been willing to mass produce recordings for independent musicians on physical media since the 1940s. It's easy today to start your own record label.

The bigger problem that independent artists face is how to actually sell the music they make en masse. If they manage to get past the first vicious myth that no one buys music anymore, the next problem they will face is getting at least enough people to buy the music to pay for the costs of producing it.

Because music recordings are low-price, high-volume products, most musicians quickly discover that they need to sell thousands of records to make a decent income. Although they may be able to sell a significant number of physical albums at their live performances, the number of records they sell is limited by the size of the crowd they're playing for. And they're not sure how to sell music outside of live events.

So they take their recordings to record labels with the hope that those labels will be able to do a better job of selling their music online or in brick and mortar music stores than they can, because in their minds, that's what record labels are supposed to do – market the music better than the artists can.

But then many artists discover that a lot of independent record labels in the contemporary music industry are having just as hard a time driving sales as the artists themselves are. Artists who get signed to them rarely benefit substantially from working with independent record labels.

Some artists who manage to get signed to major record labels end up seeing significant revenues come in from the sale and licensing of their recordings, but this often comes at the price of their artistic freedom.

What so many musicians fail to understand is that literally the only advantage that a label of any size could possibly have over an independent artist without a label is a better marketing system. The only reasons they might have a better marketing system is because they have a larger audience at their fingertips, and they know how to convert people in that audience to customers. But most indie labels don't have that.

Fortunately for independent artists, it is easier today than it has ever been in history to get lots of people into mass communication mediums like social media platforms and email. These platforms now reach the majority of the developed world. Even the major record labels did not have access to these tools back in the early days. The media networks they had access to were tiny compared to what we have today. When you get right down to it, most indie record labels do nothing but distribution and a little publicity. They leave the sales to the online stores and streaming platforms. And they're barely scraping by.

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<sup>3</sup> Disc Makers is a trademark of Disc Makers.

## False Belief #3: You Need Distribution

This one is particularly silly in a similar way to vicious myth #2 because it has been possible since at least 1994 to sell physical media or merch directly through a website instead of through an online store like iTunes.<sup>4</sup> Yet most musicians still think they need to be on Spotify or iTunes to even be taken seriously.

While it was once necessary to have a distributor to take your boxes full of vinyl records, cassettes or CDs and ship them all over the country to get them into record stores, this hasn't been necessary to sell your music worldwide for over 20 years now.

Assuming you have the records to begin with or a master digital file you can upload to a web server, all you really need to get your music to anyone almost anywhere in the world is a web page offering the music, a credit card processor integrated with that web page, a way to drive traffic to that web page and some shipping supplies if you're shipping a physical product. It has been possible to set something like that up since 1994 and keep 100% of your sales revenue aside from the credit card processing fee.

So why do musicians still believe they need a distributor to get them on online stores and streaming platforms like iTunes and Spotify? And why are they willing to give these stores 10% to 50% of the dough?

It's mainly because musicians just don't understand how Internet traffic works. They think that if their songs are out there on some kind of streaming platform or store, more people will hear it and buy it.

But it just isn't true! You won't necessarily get ANY more listeners or customers by just getting your music on a popular platform than you would by putting the music on your own website. And that's because even though there are hundreds of millions of people using platforms like Spotify and Apple Music, there are also hundreds of millions of SONGS on those platforms and over 60,000 new songs being released on them every single day. No one is going to find your music just because you're on a platform like that. Whatever platform you set your music up on, you'll have to drive traffic to your pages there.

It would actually be orders of magnitude easier for someone to find a needle in a haystack the size of a barn than to randomly happen upon one of your songs on iTunes, Spotify or SoundCloud. Getting distribution might get your music "out there" but it's out there with so many hundreds of millions of other songs that you might as well be asking people to find Waldo in the dark in the middle of the Las Vegas Electric Daisy Carnival by bumping into him without even knowing what he looks like or what his name is.

And then there's the issue that if someone DOES happen upon your song and play it or buy it after you use a distributor to get it up there, then the store that sells it will get that person's contact information and payment instead of you, which means that you're just getting a cut of the money and not the contact.

This is why a lot of artists choose to use Bandcamp instead. Bandcamp gives you the emails of your buyers. The problem with Bandcamp is that it's still a platform you don't control and they still take a cut of your revenue without actually driving traffic to your sales pages. What's worse, if you try to run social media ads to drive traffic to a Bandcamp page, you won't know what that traffic is doing because Bandcamp does not allow you track the traffic and conversion rates on its platform.

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<sup>4</sup> iTunes is a trademark of Apple, Inc.

## False Belief #4: Streaming Is the Answer

Streaming may now account for 84% of the revenue of the recorded music industry, but that doesn't mean you should focus 84% of your marketing efforts on getting more plays and listeners on Spotify. To the contrary, while streaming can be lucrative if you can get enough monthly plays, you're going to need an insane number of them to make significant money. Streaming services only pay copyright holders \$0.019 (Napster)<sup>5</sup> to \$0.00069 (YouTube)<sup>6</sup> per play, requiring 77,474 to 2,133,333 plays per month just to earn the US monthly minimum wage of \$1,472. Most artists have no idea how to get anywhere close.

While streaming is certainly lucrative for the streaming companies, it's not anywhere near as lucrative for artists because it's expensive and time consuming to increase the number of listeners you're getting on streaming platforms. Most artists try to do this by reaching out to playlist builders or running ads to drive traffic to songs. Unfortunately, these platforms pay so little per play that it's really hard to earn it back.

Now, that doesn't mean that streaming doesn't have its place. Streaming is a great way for consumers to discover new music. The thing is, it doesn't work well for generating revenue unless you either get millions of streams per month or you have a way to contact your listeners and sell merchandise to them or both.

If you just send people to the streaming platforms to listen, what you're really doing is helping mega-corporations like Spotify and SoundCloud to get customers instead of getting customers for yourself.

Every time you send someone to a streaming platform to listen to your music, you also want to make an effort to get their contact information or open up a communication channel with them. It's a waste of time and money to send people to a place where they can't actually buy from you because there is no option for them to do so. But you won't care anyway if you believe vicious myth #1.

Not only that, but when you send traffic to the streaming platforms, these streaming platforms will use cookies and pixels to track the traffic you send to them and show them ads all over the Internet wherever they go. They'll be making money on that traffic you send them. If they had to pay to get that traffic, it would cost them a lot more than the payout they give you per play to get the traffic you send them.

By directing you to post your music on their platforms, these media companies are leveraging your desire to be heard and the immense time and effort you are putting into producing music in order to get a lot of high-quality free Internet traffic for themselves at your expense, which they then easily profit from.

If enough artists send enough people to those streaming platforms to listen often enough, many of the people who go there will eventually buy a premium subscription to those streaming platforms. Then, most of that subscription money goes to the platform and the major labels that supply the platform with its most popular content using the "pro rata" model that favors major artists and labels over independents.

Say you send a fan to Spotify to listen to your music and they end up buying a premium membership for \$9.99 per month. Let's say they remain subscribed for 5 years. You just brought Spotify \$599.40 in revenue. What do you get paid for that? At an average payout of only \$0.0032 per play, not much! Let's say that they play your songs a total of 10,000 times during that period. You would get paid only \$32.

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<sup>5</sup> Napster is a trademark of Rhapsody, Inc.

<sup>6</sup> YouTube is a trademark of Google, Inc.

## False Belief #5: Fame Results in Financial Success

It's natural to assume that because many of the most financially successful artists are also the most famous that fame leads to financial success.

But it's just not true!

There is absolutely ZERO direct correlation between fame and financial success. ZERO. ZILCH. NADA.

Here are a list of famous artists that went completely bankrupt AFTER going multi-platinum:

- 1) Meat Loaf
- 2) Tony Braxton
- 3) Ted Nugent
- 4) Marvin Gaye
- 5) David Crosby
- 6) MC Hammer
- 7) Billy Joel
- 8) George Clinton
- 9) Leif Garrett
- 10) Isaac Hayes
- 11) Willie Nelson
- 12) Jerry Lee Lewis
- 13) Mick Fleetwood
- 14) Ron Isely
- 15) Tom Petty
- 16) Wayne Newton
- 17) Harry Nilsson
- 18) Michael Jackson

That should be proof enough that your financial success is not a direct function of how many people know who you are, who has heard your music, or how big the crowds are wherever you're performing.

If that's not enough to convince you, let's look at the other side of it. I have a client who extremely talented but not famous, who has never been on any major record label, who was only making about \$50,000 per year total with his music from performances and had an email list of 4,100 fans built up over 20 years of playing small local and regional shows. Most people have no idea who this person is.

We worked together in packaging his 10 albums onto a flash drive, setting up a series of web pages to sell that flash drive along with some other merchandise, then sent 7 emails to his list of fans. He had never used this email list even once before.

We sold \$35,000 worth of flash drives in less than one week from those 7 email blasts. After a few months, we had sold over \$60,000 worth of flash drives, which was more than he typically made from concerts in a year and we did it in a fraction of the time with a fraction of the labor.

So while it's true that you need fans to make money, you don't need millions of them to make a living.

## So, What To Do?

Hopefully now you see how believing in these myths could be costing you a fortune or even preventing you from making any money at all from your music. But obviously, you're going to have to take action to change things. And you're going to have to grow your fan base and monetize it differently than the way you've been doing it so far. Do the same things in the same way, you'll get the same results.

So at this point, you may have questions like:

- How do you create physical music media and merchandise that your fans are likely to buy without breaking the bank hiring designers and paying manufacturing costs?
- How do you avoid winding up with a bunch of merch that you can't get your fans to buy?
- Once you have your products set up for your fans to purchase, how do you get them to actually buy your stuff instead of just streaming your music on Spotify? Why would they do that anyway?
- What if you have zero or very few fans? How do you grow your fan base without playing concerts?
- What if you don't have a lot of recorded music? Can you still make money in that scenario? How?
- What if you have fans but no email list? Can you build an email list from scratch and if so, how do you do that in way that the people you get on the list actually buy your stuff?
- What if you're not that good at making music yet and you don't have professional recordings or you're not confident in putting your music out there?
- How long does it take to build a system that can get you lots of new fans?
- How do you actually sell music and merch to them consistently enough to support yourself?
- If you're not going the traditional route with labels, distributors, stores and streaming platforms, what tools do you actually use to get your music out there and earn an income?

If you have questions like these and you're serious about getting results as fast as possible, then your very next step should be to book a free music career evaluation with me.

You can click this link to book your call now:

<https://calendly.com/brennanmorphey/call>

In this call, I'll evaluate the quality of your music, the size of your fanbase, your present capability to market directly to your fans and if I think I can help you get to the next level, I'll give you some options for working with me and setting up the same kinds of systems I've used to get myself and my clients results.

This business evaluation is 100% free and is not a "sales call in disguise".

If you don't want to speak with me just yet, but still want to learn more about what I do and how I help musicians like you get new fans, create compelling music merchandise offers and sell those offers directly to fans, then you can check out this quick training video right here in my free Facebook group that shows you the key to it all, which I call the **Fan Feedback Loop**:

<https://www.facebook.com/100073811499767/videos/242706828505346/>

The Fan Feedback Loop is the key to 10x the rate of your music career WITHOUT using sleazy tactics like buying followers or working with slick music industry professionals that don't deliver the results you want.

As a career musician, music producer and DJ who began his journey at age 5 with the violin and struggled for decades trying to find a way to build a music career from scratch that actually works, here's the most important message I could possibly convey to you...

Believe in the power of music to change lives and realize that potential new fans would much rather support you directly than international corporate conglomerates. If your music is good, the only reasons they're not doing that is because they don't know you exist and they've never heard your music, or you're not giving them the option of buying anything directly from you. Whose fault is that? And who can fix it?

So instead of spinning your wheels or selling yourself short, learn how to bypass the whole mess of the music industry, get your music out there using systems that you control and save yourself decades of frustration by getting your own fans, products, and customers instead of pandering to gatekeepers or relying on middlemen who don't have your best interests at heart to do the necessary work for you.

It's time to seize control of your destiny and [get some effective help](#). I promise you won't regret it.

# TO YOUR SUCCESS!



Brennan Murphey a.k.a Planewalker