

Learn These Legal Issues Before Releasing Music

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Protect your work. Preserve your rights.

Introduction

This guide highlights common legal risks artists and producers should understand before releasing music.

1. Who Owns the Song?

Ownership is the foundation of every music deal. Without clear ownership, you may lose control over how your music is used, monetized, or enforced. Verbal agreements and assumptions are not enough, you need to create a contract that clearly outlines ownership rights for the beat/instrumental, the composition (lyrics + melody), the lyrics, the master (the final recorded track). Reminder – just because you bought the beat or instrumental, doesn't mean you own it.

2. Producer Agreements & Beat Licenses

Producer agreements and beat licenses must match how the song is actually used. Confusion between exclusive and non-exclusive rights can derail distribution, label deals, and sync opportunities.

3. Split Sheets & Collaborations

Collaborations without written split sheets are one of the most common sources of disputes. Splits should be documented before release and not after money enters the picture. Having at least a memorandum of understanding between the parties that breaks down the splits will help protect you until a finalized contract is executed.

4. Samples, Interpolations & Inspiration

Sampling and interpolation require clearance. Make sure you receive clearance before using it in your music.

5. Copyright Registration

Copyright registration is not optional if you want enforceable rights. Registration strengthens ownership claims and allows access to statutory damages and attorney's fees in infringement cases.

6. Distribution Deals & Label Agreements

Distribution and label agreements often include broad rights grants. Artists should understand royalty structures, term length, and reversion provisions before signing.

7. Metadata, PROs & Administration

Incorrect metadata leads to lost royalties. Accurate registrations with PROs and consistent data

across platforms ensure creators are properly paid.

8. When Disputes Arise

Disputes often surface when a song gains traction. The strength of your documentation determines how quickly and effectively issues can be resolved.

What to Do Next

Review your ownership documents, audit registrations, and ensure your contracts reflect reality. Preventative legal strategy protects long-term creative and financial interests.

Need Support?

This guide is educational and not legal advice. This does not create an attorney-client relationship. If you need contract review or rights guidance, visit [www.https://brittanyrobertslaw.com](https://brittanyrobertslaw.com) or consult with an entertainment attorney before releasing your work.

Release Readiness Checklist

- 1 Ownership documented
- 2 Producer agreements reviewed
- 3 Split sheets signed
- 4 Samples cleared
- 5 Copyrights registered
- 6 PROs updated
- 7 Metadata verified