

BE THE DREAM

A System for a Life in Music



CHRISTOPHE GOZE

CREATE THE WORK. BUILD THE SYSTEM. STAY AT THE HELM.

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Christophe Goze

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Preface

Musicians Are Dumb

A long time ago, I wanted to create a blog with this title.

A musician can spend ten years mastering an instrument, then sign away the fruits of all that work in five minutes.

They can spend weeks choosing a sound, then only a few seconds completing the metadata that will allow it to be identified.

They can invest in equipment without learning how their rights work, achieve a million streams without knowing where those streams came from or what they are building, or gather thousands of followers without owning a single way to contact them directly.

This title is not an attack on musicians.

It is a warning against the idea that an artist can delegate their entire understanding of their career to the people who make a living by exploiting their work.

I am an independent artist, songwriter, guitarist, producer, publisher and label owner. I have built my career over nearly forty years, across several countries and continents.

I learnt the profession in Japan. I developed my sound and my approach to production in London. I have worked with labels, publishers, radio stations, artists and companies specialising in music for media.

I have signed good contracts. I have refused others. I have transferred certain rights when doing so opened a genuinely more valuable door.

I have not made every decision correctly.

This method was born precisely from the successes, the mistakes, the refusals, the losses and the changes of direction. I am not writing to describe a perfect career. I am writing to pass on what the journey has taught me.

A sustainable career is not a career without failure. It is a career that transforms what every experience has left behind.

The Myth That One Track Is Enough

For a long time, the music industry led us to believe that a single track could launch an entire career.

Write a hit. Find a label. Get into a playlist. The career will follow.

It does not always follow.

A track can become enormously successful without carrying the rest of the catalogue with it. A platform can generate thousands of plays without creating a single lasting relationship.

The real challenge is not simply to make one track succeed. It is to build something that remains after attention has moved elsewhere: a living catalogue, a recognisable identity, documented rights, a direct relationship, a professional network and several economic possibilities.

This book does not promise fame.

It will not teach you how to write a hit, manipulate an algorithm or become an expert on every new platform.

It asks a different question:

What would remain of your career if Spotify, YouTube, Instagram or your main partner completely changed its rules tomorrow?

If the answer is “almost nothing”, you do not yet own a system. You are dependent on a system built by someone else.

The purpose of this manual is to help you build what no one should be able to take away from you, turn every new work into a foundation for the next one, and preserve enough freedom to continue creating.

Owning Your Career Does Not Mean Keeping Everything

Owning your career does not mean doing everything alone, refusing partners or retaining one hundred per cent of every right.

Independence is not isolation.

It is the ability to understand what you own, what you entrust to someone else, what you exchange and why you are doing it.

A master can be licensed or assigned if the value created genuinely exceeds the value surrendered. Publishing rights often represent a deeper form of heritage and require long-term consideration.

A partner can accelerate a career, open a territory, finance a work or provide expertise. But no signature should ever be an act of blind faith.

The artist must remain at the helm, even when choosing to share the navigation.

A Method, Not a Recipe

There is no single right way to build a music career.

Not every artist will perform live. Not every artist will work in music for media. Not every artist will create a label or publishing company.

This method does, however, rest on a few principles:

- 1 create before defining yourself;
- 2 build a catalogue rather than a succession of releases;
- 3 understand your rights before transferring them;
- 4 choose partners according to the value they create;
- 5 never entrust your entire future to a single company;
- 6 continue creating while the system grows.

This book does not claim to be universal. It offers principles that will allow each artist to build their own career with greater clarity.

Success is no longer measured only by views, streams or radio plays.

It appears when an audience, however modest, returns because it recognises a world; when the catalogue continues to live, generate value and give meaning to new works; when no platform can erase the entire career with a single decision; and when the artist still owns enough freedom to create the music they believe in.

Fame may come.

But fame is not the destination.

Create the Work. Build the System. Stay at the Helm.

How to Use This Manual

The twenty-two units follow a progression, from the first work to the construction of a sustainable ecosystem. They can be read in sequence to follow the complete method, or individually whenever the artist wants to return to a particular stage of their development.

Every unit begins with **The Direction**, the essential idea guiding the text, and ends with **For the Road**, a thought to carry with you after reading.

The exercises do not appear in the main body of the book. They are gathered at the end in **The Workshop - Test Your System**, an optional section for readers who want to examine their own situation in practical terms.

A final glossary brings together the principal roles and assets discussed in the manual.

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Legal and Territorial Disclaimer

This manual presents a strategic method based on Christophe Goze's professional experience in several countries. It does not constitute legal, tax or accounting advice tailored to any individual situation.

Rights, contracts, collecting societies, formalities and professional practices vary between territories and may change over time. Examples from France, the United Kingdom, the United States and other markets are used to explain a principle; they should not be applied mechanically in another country.

Before signing an assignment, an exclusive licence, a publishing agreement, a long-term mandate or any agreement involving significant rights, have the text reviewed by a professional competent in the applicable law.

From the work to the catalogue

Everything begins with the music. But an isolated work is not yet enough to build a career. This first movement examines how regular creation reveals a direction, allows an identity to emerge and gradually transforms a succession of tracks into a legacy.

The Music Before the System

No strategy can sustainably build what the music itself cannot support.

An independent artist must learn how to distribute, communicate, protect their rights, analyse their results and negotiate with partners.

But none of these things is the starting point.

The starting point remains the work.

Today, it is possible to release a track within a few days, create a visual identity within a few hours and immediately begin searching for listeners. This ease can make an artist feel that they are already building a career.

For decades, the music industry and the media placed the idea in our collective consciousness that a single hit could be enough to create a career.

This belief became particularly strong in the 1980s, when new artists were discovered through a single that received massive radio and television exposure. Suddenly, the public saw a name, a song and an image appear. Everything seemed to begin overnight.

But this picture confused two different things: being discovered through one track and building a career.

A hit could attract attention, lead to a contract and provide access to the media. It guaranteed neither a deep identity, nor the ability to create a second strong work, nor the construction of a catalogue. Many artists consequently remained associated with one song before disappearing from public attention.

That idea is even more misleading today.

The internet has not made the single disappear. Streaming platforms have actually reinforced its importance in the rhythm of releases. But when listeners

discover one track, they can immediately search for everything else the artist has released.

We live in a society in which music is consumed extremely quickly. On Spotify, the window of novelty is genuinely limited: the platform states that a track may remain in a listener's *Release Radar* for a maximum of four weeks if they have not yet heard it.^[1] In my experience, the first three weeks are therefore a critical period.

After that window, the track does not technically disappear from the entire system. It may still be discovered, recommended or added to playlists. But if it has not found its audience or generated enough signals of interest, the algorithmic momentum surrounding the release declines sharply.

An artist cannot build their future on that short window.

To survive, they must be able to create regularly, accumulate works and make the whole they form visible. Those works can perfectly well be released as singles. The problem is not the release format. The problem begins when every single pushes the previous one aside and forces the artist to start continually from zero.

The single is a distribution format. The catalogue is a survival format.

For some time now, the tools offered by the platforms themselves have increasingly acknowledged the importance of this continuity. Spotify notably presents its *Countdown Pages* as a feature designed to support *waterfall release* strategies.^[2]

The principle is to release several singles successively - four or five, for example - while gradually building an album of eight or ten tracks. Every release creates a new opportunity to enter the discovery window, but it also prepares a larger project.

The strategy therefore reconciles two timescales:

the single creates movement; the album gives that movement a destination.

At the end of the cascade, the artist is no longer presenting only a succession of tracks. They are presenting a body of work that can be narrated, explored and preserved over time.

If no wider body of work exists behind the track, if no story connects the works and no path allows the discovery to continue, the attention gained has nowhere to go.

A track can reveal an artist. It is not enough to build their career.

The true secret of success is therefore not simply the intensity of a moment. It is longevity: remaining present long enough for the works to accumulate, respond to one another, find different audiences and continue creating value long after their release.

Presence is not yet a foundation.

An artist can be visible without being identifiable. They can generate streams without creating a lasting relationship. They can master promotional tools without yet possessing a work strong enough to retain the people those tools attract.

The system can circulate the music.

It cannot give the music a strength it does not possess.

There Is No Such Thing as Minor Music

My father used to tell me:

There is no great music or small music. There is good music and bad music.

That sentence taught me not to confuse the value of a work with the prestige of its genre.

Simple music can be deeply moving. An ambitious production can remain empty. A popular song may contain more truth than a technically complex composition.

Genre guarantees nothing.

Neither does technology.

What matters is the strength of the composition, the emotion, the originality and the feeling the work leaves behind.

These qualities cannot always be measured. They require work, listening and a conviction strong enough to keep going before the public or professionals have confirmed anything at all.

At the beginning, the artist often has only one form of proof: their own belief in the value of what they are creating.

Self-belief is the first engine.

This conviction does not mean that every track is excellent or that all criticism should be rejected. It means that the artist believes deeply enough in the work to improve it, complete it, protect it and give it a genuine chance of finding its audience.

Create and Build the Structure at the Same Time

Putting the music first does not mean waiting for years before paying attention to your career.

Creation and structure must develop together.

The artist creates new works while learning the first practices that will allow those works to be properly protected and administered.

They identify the people who took part. They clarify the contributions. They keep the right information. They gradually learn how to register, distribute and organise what they produce.

But when resources are limited, creation retains priority.

A perfect website does not replace a new work.

A content strategy does not replace a catalogue.

An expensive campaign cannot sustainably transform a weak track.

A week spent chasing a new algorithm must not prevent the artist from creating.

Without regular works, there is no catalogue.

And without a catalogue, the rest of the system eventually revolves around an empty centre.

Quality as the Ground Rule

Placing the music at the centre creates a responsibility.

The artist must seek the best standard they are currently capable of, without waiting for an unattainable perfection.

They must be able to ask themselves honestly:

- Does the composition possess genuine strength?
- Can the emotion be felt?
- Does the work offer something personal?
- Does the production communicate the intention correctly?
- Have I genuinely finished the work, or have I merely decided to release it?

The answers will never be entirely objective.

The public may choose a track that the artist did not consider the most important. A technically remarkable work may remain unnoticed. A simpler track may open every door.

But uncertainty about the result does not remove the need for high standards.

The artist cannot control the commercial destiny of a work. They can control the seriousness with which they prepare it and the opportunities they give it.

The work must be done, every reasonable chance must be created, and then the artist must accept that what happens next is not entirely within their control.

What the System Must Protect

The purpose of the system we are going to build in this book is not to replace the music.

It must enable the artist:

- to continue creating;
- not to lose the rights generated by their work;
- to connect every new work to the ones that came before;
- to build a relationship that will not disappear when an algorithm changes;
- to turn income and opportunities into time, tools and future freedom.

The right strategy is therefore not the one that consumes all of the artist's energy.

It is the one that protects their ability to create the next work.

No campaign, contract or release should endanger the ecosystem that will make the next works possible.

Build the system seriously. But always remember what it is meant to keep alive: your next work.

[Spotify for Artists - Getting music on Release Radar.](#)

[Spotify for Artists - Countdown Pages.](#)

Create Enough to See a Direction Emerge

An artistic direction cannot be declared on the strength of one track. It emerges when several works begin to reveal what they have in common.

Many artists try to define their identity too early.

They have produced one or two tracks and are already searching for the precise genre, slogan, photograph, logo and strategy that will represent their entire career.

The desire is understandable. To communicate, you must be able to explain what you do.

But a premature definition can imprison the artist in an image built from material that is still too limited.

With two tracks, the artist has two creations.

They do not necessarily have a direction yet.

A direction appears when certain qualities begin to recur: a way of writing, an emotion, a relationship with rhythm, a sound, a way of telling a story or a particular response from the audience.

You must therefore create enough before drawing conclusions.

Ten Tracks as a First Objective

I consider ten tracks a credible first objective.

This number is not an artistic rule. It represents enough material to begin observing relationships, differences and a possible predominant direction.

Those ten tracks do not have to form an album.

If they tell the same story, an album may become their natural form.

If they belong to three distinct worlds, they may form several EPs.

They can also be released as ten singles, provided that the artist gradually learns how to connect them and present them as the first pieces of a larger whole.

The release format comes after the material.

The mistake would be to manufacture an album of ten weak tracks simply to reach a number. The objective is not to fill a running time. It is to build enough strong works for something of the artist to become perceptible.

A first body of work also makes it possible to answer questions that cannot be resolved in the abstract:

What returns naturally?

Which tracks seem to belong to the same world?

Which direction possesses the greatest strength?

Where is the production quality most convincing?

What does the audience genuinely respond to?

The artist is no longer searching for their identity only in their intentions.

They begin to search for it in the evidence left by their work.

The Nightfly: a Bottle Thrown into the Sea

After *Reminiscence*, I had opened the door to a more acoustic form of jazz. But I had not yet truly established my smooth-jazz direction.

The Nightfly was the first track I built fully in that language.

I initially released it as a single, almost like a bottle thrown into the sea.

The track retained acoustic drums, a samba-like groove and a structure in which the guitar was present from beginning to end, both rhythmically and as the lead instrument.

For the first time, I genuinely dared to enter the world of smooth jazz.

Radio stations began to respond.

That response was not yet enough to build a new period in my career. But it showed that a door existed.

I then produced *Soul to Soul*.

I did not want to copy *The Nightfly*. I wanted to find out whether this direction could produce a second strong work.

When the melody of *Soul to Soul* appeared, I understood that the track possessed a particular strength.

A radio campaign gave it exposure in the United States. The track later gave its name to an album.

The Nightfly had tested the direction.

Soul to Soul had confirmed it.

The album gave it a world.

This passage from an isolated track to a wider body of work is essential. A first work can introduce a hypothesis. A second can demonstrate that it was not an accident. A project finally allows the listener to enter a world.

Listen to What Comes Back

The artist must observe two kinds of signals.

The first come from within: the satisfaction they feel, the coherence between the works, the quality achieved and the desire to continue in that direction.

The second come from outside: the response from the audience, radio stations and the professionals to whom the music has been presented.

These two families of signals will not always agree.

The artist may believe that one track perfectly represents their direction while the audience chooses another. They may consider an experiment secondary when it becomes their first genuine point of entry.

When that happens, they must listen.

The audience does not decide what the artist should become. But it can reveal the place through which the artist's world becomes accessible.

If an unexpected direction receives a very strong response, the artist does not necessarily have to abandon their vision. They can produce one more work in that direction, consolidate the emerging relationship and then use that position to lead the audience gradually towards a wider world.

Following a signal does not mean abandoning your identity.

It means accepting that the point of entry may not always be the one you had planned.

The First Marker, Not the Final Definition

After this first body of work, the artist can begin to formulate a direction.

They now have material to listen to, compare, classify and present.

They can identify a principal genre in order to communicate clearly with platforms, radio stations and professionals. They can choose a first story, a first image and a coherent way of grouping their releases.

But this first body of work is not their final definition.

It is a marker.

It shows where the artist is at that particular point in the journey.

The direction may become more established, broaden or change. New works may reveal a continuity deeper than the genre initially chosen.

What matters is that the artist is no longer working in a vacuum.

From this first body of work onwards, every decision can be based on real material: the works, their quality, the relationships between them and the responses they have generated.

The artist is no longer trying to invent an identity in order to begin a career.

They are beginning to build their career from the identity their works are revealing.

Do not ask your first track to define your career. Create enough to give your direction time to emerge.

3

Build an Identity Stronger Than a Genre

Genre helps people place a work. Identity allows them to recognise the artist when the genre changes.

An artistic direction must be capable of being explained clearly.

When a track is sent to a radio station, offered to a journalist, distributed on a platform or presented to a professional, it needs to be given a principal genre.

That information helps the music find its first place.

It does not, however, define the artist completely.

Genre describes some of the visible elements of the work: its rhythm, its instruments, its mode of production or the codes to which it belongs. Identity lies deeper. It appears in what returns when those elements change.

Confusing the two can become dangerous.

If the artist builds their entire identity around a genre, every evolution risks being experienced as a betrayal. They may end up reproducing the same language simply to preserve the recognition they have gained.

They then protect their positioning at the cost of their development.

A strong identity produces the opposite effect.

It allows the artist to evolve without disappearing.

Reminiscence: Change the Language Without Changing the Artist

I first became known for fusion music combining world elements, a lounge atmosphere and guitar.

The audience immediately recognised that colour. It had become my visible signature.

Then I felt the need to move towards a more acoustic form of jazz.

This change was not an accident. It answered an artistic need, but it was also a career decision. The chillout scene in which I had developed had become extremely crowded. Many artists were now reproducing sounds similar to those we had developed in the 1990s and 2000s.

In that world, listeners often consumed an atmosphere without always knowing who had created it.

I no longer wanted to be recognised only for the general sound of my productions. I also wanted to be identified through my work as a guitarist, my melodies and my way of producing.

Reminiscence, released in 2018, marked that turning point.

I revisited several works from my world-music period and removed many of their most recognisable signs. The fusion elements were replaced by a more jazz-oriented approach, acoustic instruments and a dialogue with other musicians.

Some fans complained.

They missed precisely what had previously constituted my signature: the presence of the world elements.

But they immediately heard the jazz.

Most importantly, they stayed.

They were no longer hearing exactly the same arrangements or colours. Yet they still recognised Christophe Goze.

What Survives the Change

This experience taught me that an artistic identity is not necessarily located in the most obvious elements of a production.

When I removed the world music, several things remained:

the melody;
the guitar;
the emotion;
the depth of the story;
a particular way of taking the listener on a journey.

These elements formed a continuity deeper than genre.

To understand their identity, an artist must therefore ask a difficult question:

What would remain of me if I removed the most visible signs of the style for which I am known?

If the answer is limited to a type of drum sound, a particular instrument, a vocal treatment or a production trend, the identity may still be fragile.

Those elements can contribute to a signature. But they should not be its only foundation.

A stronger identity may be found in a way of writing melodies, creating space, building tension, describing solitude, transmitting energy or looking at the world.

It is not always easy to describe.

But it can be felt from one work to another.

The Audience Confirms Continuity; It Does Not Direct the Story

The audience plays an essential role in the discovery of an identity.

It can recognise recurring qualities that the artist has not yet seen. It can choose an unexpected track, confirm a new direction or show that a particular characteristic of the work is creating a strong relationship.

But it must never decide what the artist becomes.

The artist must remain in control of their story.

This does not mean inventing a character or imposing an artificial interpretation on the audience. It means revealing more clearly the person who already exists behind the work.

The audience may ask for more of what it knows. It may miss a style, a period or a sound. The artist must hear that response, but cannot hand over the direction of their development.

In my experience, a work that is profoundly faithful to what the artist has become does not necessarily provoke the rejection they fear.

If the sincerity, the standards and the energy remain, a connecting thread survives.

The audience may speak of a different period. But it can still recognise that this period belongs to the same journey.

Identity Does Not Forbid Experimentation

Building an identity stronger than a genre does not mean making every work sound alike.

An artist may produce a track that initially appears isolated. It may announce a future direction, remain a unique experiment or wait for other works to give it a context.

There is no need to repeat every experiment.

You simply have to accept that it belongs to the journey.

Identity is not a boundary designed to prevent the artist from leaving their territory. It is the thread that allows them to return, connect their different periods and help the audience understand that different languages can come from the same person.

This distinction creates important strategic freedom.

Genre may change from one work to another and should be stated honestly in metadata, presentations and professional approaches.

Identity connects those changes.

****Genre indicates the door through which a work can enter the market.**

Identity explains why the listener will want to follow the artist when they walk through the next door.**

Give Meaning to the Journey

For a long time, my public presentation continued to speak about world music, lounge or jazz guitar, even though my catalogue had already moved through several transformations.

A gap had developed between the artist I had become and the way my story was being told.

I therefore stopped placing genres at the centre of that story.

I chose three words:

Music. Journey. Reflections.

They do not describe a musical style. They describe the relationship between my music, my travels, my experiences and my way of looking at the world.

The music remains at the centre.

The photographs, stories and reflections become doors leading towards it. They do not replace the work. They help people understand the world from which it comes.

This formulation did not invent a new identity.

It gave words to a continuity that already existed in the catalogue.

That is the difference between artificially building a brand and clearly revealing an artist.

**Your genre tells the world where to place your music.
Your identity gives it a reason to follow you when you
decide to go somewhere else.**

A Track Is an Event; a Catalogue Is a Legacy

The value of a catalogue comes not only from the number of tracks it contains, but from the relationship that time builds between them.

The music industry almost always concentrates its attention on the latest track.

The new single must attract the public, enter playlists, gain radio plays and produce figures visible enough to justify the next release.

A few weeks later, another release takes its place.

This logic turns every track into an isolated event. The artist releases, communicates, observes the results and starts again. They can produce for years while continuing to feel that they are constantly returning to zero.

A catalogue follows a different logic.

Every new work does not necessarily replace the previous one. It can give it a new context, confirm a direction, reveal continuity or open a door into an earlier part of the journey.

The question is therefore no longer simply:

How can I make this track work?

It becomes:

What does this work add to everything I have already built?

Numbers Do Not Create Coherence

An artist can own forty tracks presented as forty independent files, while ten works connected by an emotion, a way of writing or a perceptible evolution may already be beginning to form a world.

That relationship does not require uniformity. A living catalogue can contain several periods, several styles and some isolated experiments. Its coherence comes from the fact that these differences belong to the identifiable journey of the same creator.

The catalogue shows what the artist has attempted, abandoned, explored in greater depth or rediscovered with more experience.

It is not a perfectly aligned collection. It is an evolving body of work.

An Isolated Success Does Not Automatically Transform the Catalogue

I Will Always Love You became my greatest commercial success.

The public chose it. When I created the track, I did not imagine that it would follow such an important trajectory.

On Spotify, it began to appear in hundreds of playlists - more than 3,000 by the time this book was published. The streams rose suddenly and then remained constant.

Yet that movement did not visibly change the progress of the rest of my catalogue.

My other tracks that were already performing well continued to grow at the same rate. They did not begin to appear in the same playlists. The success also remained concentrated primarily on Spotify: on Apple Music, the track performs well, but it does not occupy the same position.

I Will Always Love You is therefore unquestionably a success.

It has generated income, attracted listeners and strengthened a form of recognition. But it did not automatically become an engine pulling all my other works behind it.

This distinction is essential.

A track can achieve considerable success without immediately transforming the structure of a career. The success then belongs first to the track.

The catalogue continues to develop at its own pace.

The mistake would be to assess the artist's entire story through the exceptional figures of a single work. A million streams may represent an event. They do not yet prove the existence of a coherent legacy, a loyal relationship or a system capable of lasting.

Time Sometimes Reveals a Work's Place

The album *Turning Inside* was mainly devoted to an exploration of nu jazz, hip-hop and lounge.

Twelve of its fourteen tracks clearly belonged to that experiment.

Two seemed to come from an earlier period: *Close to You* and *Someday I Will*. They were more closely connected to my chillout language.

Close to You had almost nothing to do with the rest of the album. If I were releasing it for the first time today, I would probably present it as a separate single.

Yet it remained on *Turning Inside*.

For a while, it went almost unnoticed. Then it gradually found its own place. It became the album's most-played track and soon passed 200,000 streams. *Someday I Will* followed a similar path and also became an important track for my audience.

The twelve tracks most representative of the nu-jazz experiment remained far less visible.

That does not mean the experiment was pointless.

Years later, after several albums devoted to jazz and the refinement of my language, I returned to this direction with *City Lights*. This time, the nu-jazz project received a much stronger response.

The first experiment had not necessarily failed.

It may simply have needed to remain in the catalogue long enough to find its place while the artist acquired the skills and identity required to revisit that exploration differently.

Some works immediately become foundations.

Others remain like an isolated stone whose function will only appear later.

And some will never lead to another building.

They still belong to the journey.

Every New Work Can Change the Way Earlier Ones Are Read

The value of a catalogue grows when tracks are no longer imprisoned within their release dates.

A new work can draw attention to an earlier period. An album can reveal that an isolated track already anticipated a future direction. An artistic evolution can give new meaning to an experiment that neither the public nor the artist understood when it was released.

This is how the catalogue becomes more than the sum of its tracks.

The works begin to speak to one another.

The relationship may be artistic: a melody, an emotion or a way of playing crosses several periods.

It may be narrative: the albums become stages in the same story.

It may be professional: a track shows a radio station, publisher or partner that the artist owns other exploitable works.

It may also be economic: a new release leads listeners towards the back catalogue and enables older works to continue generating income.

But this value does not appear automatically.

The artist must stop thinking of the catalogue as the place where past releases lie. They must learn to see it as an active body of work, capable of receiving new meanings and new points of entry.

The next unit explains how to organise, maintain and reactivate this legacy in practical terms.

But the principle must be established before the method:

the latest track is not the entire career. It takes its place in a story that began before it and must be able to continue after it.

A track can attract attention for a few weeks. A well-built catalogue can support a career for a lifetime.

Organise, Maintain and Reactivate the Back Catalogue

A living catalogue does more than exist: it remains available, understandable and capable of meeting its audience again.

When an artist prepares a new release, all their attention naturally shifts towards it.

The latest track receives the best visual, the posts, the radio mail-outs, the messages to the audience and the available budget.

Meanwhile, the previous works gradually disappear behind it.

They may still be present on the platforms, but they are no longer narrated, checked or offered. Some have poor metadata. Others are available only in an old version. A few are almost impossible to find unless you already know their title.

Technically, they exist.

But they are no longer truly working for the artist.

Building a catalogue therefore creates a responsibility that begins after release: keeping the works in a condition that allows them to live.

Make the Catalogue Legible

A catalogue does not become understandable simply because all its tracks appear on the same page.

When an artist owns ten tracks, they can still know them by heart. When they own fifty, a hundred or two hundred, they must begin to see them as a body of work that will need to be presented to different people.

The public is not necessarily looking for the same thing as a radio station.

A sync agency does not ask the same questions as a journalist.

A programmer may be looking for a particular genre. A director may need an emotion, a duration or a specific use. A new listener may simply want to understand which album to begin with.

The artist must therefore be able to view the catalogue from several angles.

It can be classified by period, album, world, emotion, style or use. The same track can naturally belong to several categories.

This organisation does not change the work.

It multiplies the paths through which it can be found.

In my own publishing work, I distinguish between my commercial music, my music for media and the works of the other artists I represent. These catalogues may sometimes use similar languages, but they do not have the same function or the same professional audience.

Classification makes it possible to respond quickly and precisely when a door opens.

A professional requesting acoustic, meditative music suitable for a documentary should not have to search randomly through two hundred tracks.

The artist must know their legacy well enough to show that person the right path immediately.

Keep the Best Version Available

A released work should not become an abandoned file.

The artist must ensure that there is at least one place where their entire important catalogue remains available in its most accurate form: the right master, the right title, the right credits and the essential information.

That does not mean every old work must be continually altered.

Over time, the artist's technique improves. Their equipment evolves. Their listening becomes more precise. They may then hear limitations in an old production that they could not perceive when they made it.

The temptation to correct everything can be strong.

But a production technically below today's standards may still carry the intention of its time perfectly. Its balance, texture or even some of its imperfections may create the emotion that allowed it to find an audience.

Improving a work does not mean refusing to let it belong to its own time.

Several kinds of intervention must therefore be distinguished.

A correction repairs an obvious problem.

A restoration seeks to preserve the work while improving its condition.

A remaster changes the sonic presentation of an existing mix.

A reinterpretation creates a new artistic reading.

These operations do not tell the same story. They should not be confused or used automatically to make every older work conform to contemporary taste.

Sometimes the best decision is to change nothing.

Do Not Erase the Past Unnecessarily

When a new version is genuinely necessary, the artist must decide whether it should replace the original or whether both should continue to exist.

The answer depends on the function of the first version.

If it suffers from a technical error that clearly prevents the intention from being heard, replacing it may be logical.

But if it already possesses a history, an audience or a particular emotion, making it disappear may remove part of the catalogue's memory.

A new version is not automatically the definitive version simply because it is more recent.

It may be another door.

The same caution applies when delivering a work again. A change of master, distributor, identifier or metadata may affect the continuity of its history and its recognition by the platforms.

These decisions are examined in greater depth in the units devoted to rights, metadata and distribution. The principle here is simple:

do not touch an old work without knowing exactly what you are trying to improve and what you risk losing.

Keep the Catalogue Moving

Maintaining a catalogue does not simply mean repairing its files.

It also means creating new contexts in which it can be discovered.

The artist should not always place the latest track at the front. An older work can become relevant again because a season, a story, a new release or an event gives it a different meaning.

A track can be included in a selection built around an emotion.

An album can be retold on an important anniversary.

A new work can reveal the direction that an older track was already announcing.

A photograph, a creation story, a performance, a reflection or a making-of video can open a new door to music released several years earlier.

Reactivation does not mean pretending that the work has just been released.

It means giving it a new reason to be encountered.

The back catalogue then becomes a reserve of content, stories, income and artistic evidence. The more organised it is, the more every new release can rest upon it instead of having to carry the entire career alone.

Repair Without Stopping the Construction

When an artist discovers that their old catalogue is disorganised, the amount of work can become paralysing.

They may want to revisit every master, check every credit, correct all the metadata, redesign every cover and resolve every rights problem before creating again.

That would be a mistake.

Always continue creating.

Repair must progress in parallel, using a limited share of the available time and resources.

The artist can begin with the works that are already generating plays, rights income or professional enquiries. They can then deal with the tracks most important to their identity before moving through the less significant parts of the catalogue.

Everything does not need to be repaired immediately.

But every problem resolved must make the system stronger and prevent the same mistake from being repeated on future releases.

The objective is not to spend your life putting the past in order.

It is to build a method through which the disorder stops growing.

Continue creating the future, but do not leave behind a catalogue that has become incapable of telling its story, circulating and bearing fruit.

Give the catalogue a face

Before hearing the music, the public encounters an image. This movement treats the visual as an asset within the catalogue: a language capable of connecting the works, making the artist recognisable and preserving the memory of every period.

The Cover Is the First Visual Door

The visual identity is one of the pillars of the catalogue: it allows the artist to be identified before the music is heard and connects the works over time.

Before hearing a single note, the public will often encounter an image.

That image may be seen on a platform, in an article, in a newsletter or on the artist's website. It already creates an impression and begins to locate the artist's world.

The visual is therefore not a decoration added at the end of the project. It is one of the elements that allows the catalogue to be recognised, remembered and understood.

A cover identifies a work.

A succession of coherent covers identifies an artist.

Over time, this visual language connects the singles, the albums and the different periods. It shows that these projects belong to the same journey, even when the music evolves.

Among major artists who have built lasting catalogues, this continuity is rarely left to chance. The covers of Yes and Peter Gabriel's visual world show that an image can announce a world before the name has even been read.

The catalogue therefore has an identity that can be heard, but also an identity that can be seen.

Begin with the First Release

The visual concept should be considered from the beginning of the catalogue's construction.

This does not mean that a young artist must immediately know the definitive image of their entire career. Like their musical identity, their visual language will evolve.

But the first release should already express an intention.

What atmosphere should the image create?

Which colours belong to the artist's world?

Which typeface could return?

What kind of photography or illustration extends the music honestly?

A strong cover does not need to be complex. It must be right and contain at least one element capable of becoming a reference point.

That reference may be a typeface, a logo, a family of colours, a photographic style, a layout or a recurring detail.

The objective is not to create a rigid template in which every release looks the same. It is to build a grammar that permits variation while maintaining a family resemblance.

The first visual is therefore not a prison.

It introduces the first word of a language that can become more precise as the catalogue grows.

The Cover Suggests a Direction

A cover does not tell the whole story. It reveals the entrance.

It may evoke a period, an emotion or a territory, then leave everyone enough space to invent their own journey.

It should not mechanically illustrate every word of a song. It should create a feeling that the listener will rediscover within the work.

The more strength a track possesses in its own right, the less it needs to be explained visually.

The cover suggests.

It leaves the door open.

Build from Your Own World

For a long time, I created my covers from my travel photographs.

They represented the places I had travelled through and my way of looking at the world. They extended the journey contained within my music.

When my work evolved towards jazz, my gaze moved closer. I began photographing details in my garden: a flower, a colour or a texture.

The subject had changed, but the underlying concept remained the same: I was still presenting my external world through my own eyes.

I have also worked with photographs by other artists whose work I felt an affinity with. I chose their images because their vision could enter my world naturally.

Continuity does not therefore depend on having to create everything yourself. It depends on the consistency with which the artist chooses collaborators and directs their visual language.

When several singles precede an album, their covers should belong to the same family. They can use different images while retaining a common typeface, palette or detail.

Every single then announces a larger work.

For *City Lights*, the first single's cover represented the project so well that I used it again for the album. The right door had already been found.

The visual identity can change with the musical periods. But every evolution should continue to reveal a relationship between the artist, their gaze and their catalogue.

Video

Leave the Major-Label Model Behind

The industry wants us to believe that, in a visual world, video is essential to an artist's development.

A major record company can finance an ambitious production, hire a team and organise its distribution. An independent artist generally does not have the same resources.

They should not reproduce a major label's model with less money. They must invent a presentation suited to their identity and their system.

That does not mean abandoning video.

A handmade creation can be powerful when it rests on an original idea and genuinely adds something to the music.

Skeb, a Goze Music artist, made a video using his own resources. It is not technically perfect and demanded an enormous amount of work. Yet it possesses an idea, a world and a strength that genuinely serve the track.

[Watch the video made by Skeb](#)

The criterion is neither budget nor perfection. It is the additional value created for the work.

An imperfect video carried by a strong idea can enlarge the music. A perfect video without vision sometimes does nothing more than display its budget.

Let the Listener Complete the Picture

The second risk is artistic.

A narrative video associates the music with specific characters, places and events. It can impose a vision so strongly that it becomes difficult to hear the track later without seeing the same images again.

In 1983, Sting explained that he rejected overly narrative videos because they tell viewers what to think and deprive them of their imagination. He preferred images that accompanied the music while leaving the public free to dream.^[1]

I share this view.

Music often becomes stronger when listeners can attach their own story, places and memories to it.

The problem is therefore not the existence of the video, but its function. A video built around atmospheres or open images can preserve that freedom.

Before producing one, the artist should ask:

Does this video enlarge the world of the music, or does it replace the listener's imagination with my own?

Sometimes one strong photograph is enough.

The absence of a video can itself be an artistic and strategic decision.

Give your catalogue a face from its very first work, then build a visual language capable of growing with your music.

Sting, interview with Playgirl, 1983, reproduced in [Sting's official archive](#).

Build and Protect a Visual Legacy

An image becomes a catalogue asset only when the artist can use it over time, prove the relevant rights and preserve its relationship with the work.

When a cover accompanies music for several years, it stops being a simple release asset.

The public associates it with a period, an emotion and sometimes one of its first memories of the artist.

It enters the catalogue's legacy.

That value creates two responsibilities.

The first is artistic: allowing the visual language to evolve without unnecessarily erasing its memory.

The second is legal: ensuring that the artist genuinely owns the permissions required to continue using every image.

Music may remain available for several decades.

Its visual must be able to accompany it for just as long.

Correct Without Erasing the Memory

I have sometimes changed some of my older covers.

I did not do so six months after their release, but ten years later, when the catalogue had lived long enough for me to understand what genuinely needed improvement.

Most changes remained discreet: a more legible typeface, better text placement, new colour grading or a more balanced layout.

For my major albums, I retain the original visual.

That image now belongs to the work's history. Replacing it completely would almost amount to giving the work a different face after the public had already recognised it.

I reserve more substantial changes for secondary projects: old singles, remix albums, instrumental versions or releases that were originally meant to be temporary but ultimately found a lasting place.

Changing an old cover can then become a form of restoration. But, as with a remaster, everything that can be improved does not necessarily have to be replaced.

Secret Garden is an exception. For its reissue on my own label, I could not afford the rights to the original Japanese cover and had to use another visual. Years later, when I was finally able to recover those rights, I returned to the first image. I was not modernising the album: I was giving it back its true face.

Changing a visual may be necessary. Returning to the original can sometimes be the genuine restoration.

Buying an Image Does Not Mean Buying Its Copyright

When an artist uses a photograph created by someone else, a verbal agreement or a friendship is not enough to protect the project over time.

They must know precisely what has been authorised.

Can the image be used as a cover?

For a commercial release?

On platforms, social media, posters and physical products?

For how long and in which territories?

Can it be modified?

Is the licence exclusive?

Buying an image from a stock library generally means acquiring a licence of use defined by its terms. It does not automatically transfer ownership of the photograph. Licences are often non-exclusive and may contain restrictions.^[1]

For a period, I used photographs by a friend whose work I greatly admired.

He made his photographs available through [Stocksy](#). To avoid ambiguity, we chose the image together and I then purchased it officially through the platform.

The human relationship determined the artistic direction.

The platform organised the licence and proof of purchase.

The artist must retain invoices, contracts, licences and the exact identification of every file. Ten years later, they should not have to reconstruct the origin of a cover from memory.

The Distributor Can Detect a Risk, Not Carry It for You

On two occasions, my distributor identified a potential problem while a project was being delivered.

One of the covers had been generated using a design platform such as Canva. The distributor recognised its origin and asked me to clarify the rights.

I preferred to change the image.

This kind of vigilance is part of the value of a good distributor. It can prevent an obvious problem from entering the catalogue.

But the distributor's acceptance is not an absolute guarantee.

Every platform applies its own terms, which may differ according to the category of content used. Canva, for example, specifies that its content remains protected and that users receive only the rights expressly provided by the applicable licence.^[2]

The final responsibility therefore remains with the artist or their company.

The right question is not simply:

Can I download this image?

It is:

Will I still be able to prove in ten years why I had the right to use it?

Artificial Intelligence Must Remain an Assistant

Artificial intelligence can now produce spectacular images very quickly.

I use it, and I find some of the results extraordinary.

But an artistic difficulty is already emerging: when every artist uses the same tools in the same way, their covers begin to look alike.

For a major project, an entirely generated image used without personal intervention may therefore weaken the identity instead of strengthening it.

AI should not replace the creator.

It can offer a starting point, material, a composition or a direction. The artist must then choose, modify, combine, photograph, reframe or transform the result to give it their own perspective.

Legal caution is also necessary.

The rules differ between countries and continue to evolve. In the United States, the Copyright Office considers that using AI as a tool does not prevent protection of a human work, but that simple text prompts are not necessarily enough to make the user the author of the generated elements.^[3]

The artist must therefore check the tool's terms, preserve the stages of the work and avoid assuming that an image is fully protected simply because it was produced through their own account.

AI is a creative assistant.

The vision, the decisions and the responsibility must remain human.

Do not build the visual identity of a work around an image whose origin you cannot explain, whose use you cannot prove and whose future you cannot guarantee.

Adobe explains that its Stock content is licensed for use, generally on a non-exclusive basis, without automatically transferring ownership: [Adobe Stock - Usage and Licensing](#).

[Canva - Content License Agreement](#).

[U.S. Copyright Office - Copyright and Artificial Intelligence, Part 2](#).

--- + # MOVEMENT 3

PROTECT AND ADMINISTER

A work becomes a lasting legacy only when the people, rights, identifiers and agreements surrounding it can still be understood years after its release. This movement builds the administrative architecture that allows a catalogue to exist, circulate and pay the right people.

Understand the Different Families of Rights

A single track can create several rights and several streams of income. To collect and protect them, the artist must understand the capacity in which they contributed.

Independent artists often say, 'I own my music.'

But what exactly do they own?

The composition? The lyrics? The arrangement? The performance? The master? The producer's rights?

All these elements exist within the same track, but they are not the same asset. They do not necessarily pay the same people, and they are not transferred in the same way.

This is one of the subjects young artists understand least. One person may perform every role, but that does not turn all those roles into a single right.

To understand how the money flows, begin by identifying who did what.

The examples in this unit draw principally on the French, British and American systems. They provide a strategic map, not a universal rule of law. Legal classifications, contracts and collecting organisations vary by territory; any significant assignment or exclusive agreement should be reviewed under the law that governs it.

The Lyricist and Composer Create the Work

The lyricist writes the words.

The composer creates the music: the melody, themes or riffs by which the work can be identified, together with the harmonic elements that define it.

They create what exists before the recording itself.

One composition may give rise to several arrangements, several performances and a hundred different masters. The underlying work nevertheless remains the same.

This is why I regard the lyricist's and composer's rights as the deepest core of a catalogue's legacy. A master can age, be remastered or be replaced by a new recording. The composition can continue to live through every one of those versions.

This does not mean it will always generate the greatest income in the short term. A highly successful master may earn far more immediately. But the composition has a particular ability to travel through time.

Lyricists and composers may receive income from uses of the work, including its broadcast, reproduction, public performance and synchronisation. The precise mechanisms depend on the territory, the contracts and the relevant collecting organisations.

The Arranger Gives the Work a Particular Form

The arranger decides how the composition will take shape.

They may choose the instrumentation, develop the structure, write instrumental parts, organise the dynamics and devise introductions, transitions or exchanges between musicians.

Their contribution may be decisive without automatically making them a co-writer or co-owner of the master.

They may be paid a fixed fee, professional fees or a contractually agreed participation. In some systems—notably Sacem—an authorised and properly registered arrangement may also receive a share of authors' rights income.^[1]

If the arranger contributes something that truly belongs to the composition—for example, an original and defining melodic contribution—that may justify recognising them as a co-composer. Contributions and splits should be discussed and put in writing before release. An agreement should neither invent a songwriting credit merely to reward an arrangement nor erase a genuine creative contribution.

The boundary between arrangement and composition can be delicate. That is precisely why it must be clarified.

Musicians and Vocalists Perform the Work

The performer gives physical and emotional life to the composition and its arrangement.

Two guitarists can play the same notes without creating the same emotion. Two singers can interpret the same words and produce two very different recordings.

Musicians contribute their sound, touch, phrasing and sensitivity. This does not automatically make them a lyricist, composer or co-owner of the master.

They may receive an initial session payment—a fee, wage or other remuneration, depending on the applicable framework—and later receive neighbouring or related rights income from the use of their performance. A contract may also grant royalties or an additional participation.^[2]

The session agreement should therefore specify the instrument, the role, the exact name to be used in the credits, the agreed payment and any future rights.

In France, the fixation of a performance, its reproduction and its communication to the public require the performer's written authorisation. The session agreement or contract is therefore more than a record of what happened: it must document precisely which permissions were granted.^[6]

Everyone should leave the session knowing what they contributed and what they will receive.

The Record Producer Guides the Realisation

The record producer helps the artist transform an intention into a finished recording.

They listen, question, select, direct and sometimes arrange. They may influence the structure, the sound, the performances, the choice of musicians and the overall coherence of the project.

Their role is not to take the artist's place. It is to help the artist achieve something they might not have reached alone.

The record producer may be paid a fixed fee, professional fees or **producer points**. These points represent a share, negotiated in advance, of a revenue base defined by the contract. In many agreements with a label or record company, that company accounts for and pays those points.

The agreement must specify the percentage, the income to which it applies, the basis of calculation, any deductions, its duration, territories and payment terms.

Receiving points does not mean owning the master. Conversely, owning part of the master does not necessarily mean being paid in points. Participation in revenue and ownership are two separate questions.

When I produce an entire album for Goze Music without charging the artist for the studio hours, my work and the risk undertaken may justify proposing an agreement under which Goze Music owns the master and then shares the income with the artist. That ownership does not arise automatically from the work performed; it must be stated clearly in the contract.

When the artist has produced the project and my role is limited to artistic direction or advice, it makes more sense for the artist to retain the masters and, if appropriate, license them to Goze Music.

The title *producer* therefore does not determine ownership. What matters is the reality of the commitment and the agreement made between the parties.

The Phonogram Producer Carries the Master

The phonogram producer is the person or entity that takes the initiative and responsibility for the first fixation of the sound recording.^[3]

This may be the artist, their label, their company or an outside partner. The producer's rights concern the recording—the phonogram—not the composition. The producer may receive income from exploitation of the master as well as the neighbouring or related rights allocated to producers.

This role must not be confused with that of the record producer. The same person may perform both functions, but that is not automatic.

Possessing the audio file, assigning an ISRC or registering the track is not, by itself, definitive proof of ownership. The SCPP states that registering a recording does not itself confer rights: their legal or contractual origin must be capable of being demonstrated.^[4]

The Music Publisher Develops the Composition

The music publisher works on the side of the underlying work.

The publisher administers rights, collects income, seeks uses and may develop the composition in a particular territory or market. A publisher does not become the lyricist or composer.

Under a publishing agreement, certain exploitation rights are assigned to the publisher within the limits set by that agreement. Under a management or administration agreement, the publisher or administrator may receive only a mandate, without becoming the owner of those rights. These mechanisms must not be confused.^[5]

In my system, publishing is the most sensitive commitment. A master can be used as leverage to reach the next stage. A composition can be exploited for a lifetime and reborn through many different masters.

I therefore do not assign publishing rights merely because a company promises to 'do something'. I look for a partner capable of understanding the catalogue, administering it and opening a territory or an activity that I could not develop alone.

Performing Several Roles Does Not Remove the Need to Separate Them

An independent artist may be the lyricist, composer, arranger, singer, musician, record producer and phonogram producer all at once. They may also administer their own publishing rights or place them with a publishing entity when the necessary conditions are met.

They may therefore receive several kinds of income from the same track.

But that income will not reach them merely because they did everything. Each capacity must be identified, each contribution documented and each right registered with the appropriate organisation.

The fundamental distinction is this:

Every role may create remuneration, but not every role automatically creates an ownership right.

Before dividing the income from a track, understand which assets were created, who created them, who controls them and on what basis each person is to be paid.

Do not ask only who took part in the track. Ask what each person created, what they own and how they will be paid.

Sacem distinguishes arranging from co-composition and, under certain conditions, provides for the registration and distribution of rights arising from an authorised arrangement: [Sacem in 300 Questions](#).

Spedidam distinguishes, among other things, remuneration arising from private copying, equitable remuneration and the exercise of performers' exclusive rights: [Spedidam — Our Missions](#).

[SCPP — Phonogram Producers' Rights](#).

[SCPP — General Regulations](#).

[Sacem — Practical Guide for Music Publishers](#); [French Intellectual Property Code, Article L. 132-1](#).

[French Intellectual Property Code, Article L. 212-3](#).

--- # UNIT 9

Document the Work Before and After Release

A poorly documented work may be heard without ever producing everything it should earn for the people who created it.

A catalogue that is poorly registered and inadequately referenced does not fully exist.

It may be available on platforms and may even generate plays. But if the people, roles, rights and identifiers are not properly connected, part of its value becomes invisible.

It is like a diseased tree that continues to grow without bearing all its fruit.

The most common mistake is to leave administration until later. The artist releases the track, begins the next one and promises to complete the registrations when there is more time.

Six months later, they no longer remember exactly what was agreed with the guitarist, which name the backing vocalist used, which version of the master was delivered to the distributor or what split was agreed with the co-writer.

Documenting a work is not an attempt to repair your memory after release. It requires a routine that accompanies every track.

Before Release: Decide Who Did What

The first piece of documentation is not metadata.

It is a human agreement.

Before release, the participants must know who wrote, composed, arranged, performed and produced. They must also know who owns or licenses the master, what initial payment they will receive and what future income, if any, has been granted to them.

These decisions can be simple. They must nevertheless be written down.

I use a letter or session sheet offering several alternatives according to the agreement reached before, during or after the recording. The document specifies, among other things:

- the instrument and exact role;
- whether the person is the principal artist or a musician;
- the name or pseudonym to be used in the credits;
- the agreed payment;
- any rights or participation.

It must prevent an old discussion from being reinvented after the track succeeds. A musician should not claim six months later to have co-written a chorus if that contribution was never recognised as composition. Conversely, the artist must not erase a genuine contribution simply because nothing was written down.

The purpose is not to create a heavy legal atmosphere in the studio. It is to ensure that everyone leaves the session satisfied and fully informed about their rights.

If my essential conditions are not accepted, the session may be cancelled. It is better to stop a collaboration before recording than to allow an ambiguity to contaminate the catalogue for twenty years.

Before Delivery: Create the Track's Administrative Identity

Once the agreements are clear, the recording needs an identity card.

Before delivery to the distributor, the artist should check:

- the title and its exact styling;
- the precise names of the principal artist, featured artists and musicians;
- the lyricists, composers, arrangers and producers;
- the principal genre and any subgenre;
- the label or entity;
- the production and release dates;
- the copyright notices for the work and the master;
- the ISRC for each recording and the UPC for the release.

An error at this stage can follow a track for years.

Understand the ISRC Root

The ISRC is the identity number of a specific recording. It contains twelve characters.

Take the code **GBGNP2600005**, also presented as **GB-GNP-26-00005**:

- **GBGNP** is the root allocated to Goze Limited by the competent UK agency;
- **26** is the reference year, 2026;
- **00005** is the designation code selected from the available sequence.

That final number may represent the fifth code allocated that year, but it proves neither the recording's actual production date nor its artistic position. Its purpose is to make the recording unique.

Likewise, **GB** identifies the national agency that issued the prefix. It proves neither the country in which the recording was made nor its current ownership.

The root remains attached to the registrant to whom it was assigned. Goze Limited is therefore the entity authorised to create new ISRCs from **GBGNP**. The complete codes can then be used by distributors and relevant organisations.

When the necessary conditions are met, an artist or their company may apply for its own root from the ISRC agency in its country. If that is not possible, the artist may request individual codes from that agency or from an authorised manager.

Controlling this allocation makes it possible to maintain a coherent sequence and avoid depending on a different distributor to identify every new master.

A new recording, live version or substantially different mix may require a new ISRC. The same recording, however, retains its code when it is redistributed, licensed or transferred.^[1]

One mistaken conclusion must be avoided: **the ISRC identifies the master; it does not prove ownership and does not, by itself, determine where payments go.**^[2]

Organisations also rely on their own repertoires, registrations, mandates and contracts. Using an ISRC supplied by a distributor does not therefore transfer the producer's rights to that distributor automatically. The risk lies instead in dependence on its data, a break in the historical record or an incorrect declaration of the beneficiary.

Ownership must be established through a reliable legal or contractual chain. The ISRC then helps connect the recording to that information within a register.

Finally, the UPC identifies the commercial release—the single, EP or album—whereas the ISRC identifies each recording it contains.

The objective is not to pretend that a code proves ownership. It is to know exactly which identifier accompanies which work, version and release.

A Society of Authors: the Essential Minimum

I have met too many young artists who released their works without belonging to any society of authors and without knowing who could collect the rights generated by their music.

They had chosen a distributor for their masters, but no one was truly administering their compositions.

One distinction matters from the outset: copyright does not arise from joining a society or registering the work. In countries bound by the Berne Convention, protection exists automatically from the creation of a protectable work.^[3]

A society of authors performs a different and essential function.

It receives a mandate to administer certain categories of rights. It registers works and their rightsholders, negotiates or grants licences, identifies certain uses, collects the corresponding income and distributes it to the people it represents.^[4]

An independent lyricist or composer should therefore identify, very early, the organisation capable of administering their works.

Even if the catalogue earns nothing yet.

Even if they belong to no organisation representing phonogram producers.

Even if they have only a handful of tracks.

The catalogue must be ready before an important use occurs.

Membership Is Not Enough: Every Work Must Be Registered

Becoming a member does not automatically make every composition visible.

After joining, the artist must register each work systematically and verify the information that will identify it:

- the exact title and any alternative titles;
- the lyricists and composers;
- any pseudonyms used;
- the agreed percentages between rightsholders;
- any publisher;
- associated performers or recordings, when the society requests that information;
- the ISRC, where it exists and can help match the work to the master.

PRS explains clearly that it can distribute income from a use only if the work has been registered in its repertoire. It even recommends registering a composition before it is recorded or released, because prompt registration improves the accuracy of payments.^[5]

This discipline must become part of the catalogue routine.

A completed work is registered. A new version or a change of rightsholders is checked. An error in a title, pseudonym or percentage is corrected before it spreads across several databases.

Register Your Pseudonym as Well

When a lyricist or composer signs works under a pseudonym, that name must also be declared to their society of authors and correctly connected to their legal identity and membership account.

At Sacem, members can apply for a pseudonym through their personal account. The society may refuse a name that could be confused with another registered pseudonym or surname.^[9]

This enables works signed under that name to be connected to the correct rightsholder. It prevents a track from circulating publicly under an artistic identity that the collecting organisations cannot link to its creator.

Two uses must nevertheless be distinguished. A stage name used only as a performer is not necessarily the pseudonym under which the artist registers compositions. But if that name appears in the capacity of lyricist or composer, the connection must be established with the society.

Registering a pseudonym with Sacem does not replace any steps that may be required to protect an artist name, logo or trademark against commercial use by someone else.

The public may know the pseudonym. Rights administration must also know exactly who stands behind it.

Choose a Society Suited to Your Territory and Career

Not every country has a society of authors with the same resources, international network or level of service.

Some artists live in territories where the local organisation remains limited. Others work mainly in a language, market or professional network located elsewhere.

Subject to admission requirements, it is now possible to join certain foreign societies remotely. PRS, for example, states that it accepts members based anywhere in the world.^[6]

The choice should not rest on the prestige of a name alone.

Examine:

- the language in which the artist can communicate with the society;

- admission requirements and fees;
- the categories of rights actually administered;
- territories covered directly or through representation agreements;
- the quality of registration and tracking tools;
- distribution schedules, rules and costs;
- the support available when a work has not been identified;
- the effect of the mandate on the freedom to work with other partners.

Sacem, PRS, ASCAP and BMI are recognised organisations, but their mandates are not identical. In the United Kingdom, PRS administers performance rights, among others, while MCPS deals with mechanical rights. In the United States, ASCAP and BMI are principally performing-rights organisations.

Joining a major society without understanding what it collects may therefore leave another part of the rights without administration.

Artists must also avoid granting incompatible mandates to several organisations for the same rights in the same territories.

The objective is not to accumulate memberships.

It is to build a clear collection chain.

Registration Strengthens Traceability, but Does Not Replace Evidence

Registering a work creates an identity record connecting a title, its creators, their percentages and sometimes a publisher or recording.

That record may become extremely useful if another work reproduces a melody, a dispute over authorship arises or a use has been attributed incorrectly.

But registration should not be presented as absolute proof of ownership.

It records what was declared on a given date. Collaboration agreements, split sheets, project files, correspondence and any other material capable of establishing the creative process should also be preserved.

The society may help administer a claim or enforce the rights it represents. It does not replace catalogue documentation or, where a dispute demands it, legal advice.

Why I Remained with Sacem

I remained with Sacem for a reason that goes beyond the collection of income.

For many years, a musical work could be registered with a written score setting out its melody and harmony. Today, Sacem also offers Musicstart, a separate service through which a score, lyrics or an audio file can be deposited to obtain time-stamped evidence of prior existence.^[8]

This is particularly important for a composer. A simple administrative record states that a title was registered under certain names. Depositing the score or audio file also preserves a trace of the musical content to which that registration relates.

That level of documentation, designed specifically for music, mattered in my decision to remain with Sacem.

The language must nevertheless remain precise. A deposit does not create copyright by itself. It documents a work whose rights the society may then administer.

Other methods may establish that a file or document existed on a given date. I will not develop them here because they never replace membership of a society of authors. They do not enter the work into an international repertoire, track its uses or collect any income.

At a time when musicians still had to pass an examination to become Sacem members, some of my friends took a shortcut. They sent themselves a cassette of their music by registered post and kept the envelope sealed. They believed this protected the work without the effort of joining.

But an envelope collects no income. It tracks no broadcast and builds no administration for the catalogue. Sooner or later, those musicians still had to join a society of authors.

Why begin with an isolated form of evidence, only to join later the society that will actually administer the work? For a young songwriter, the simplest and most useful direction is to choose a recognised society from the beginning, register every work systematically and use the protection tools that society provides.

The strength of the Sacem system is that it brings together three functions useful to a musician: registering the work, administering its rights and preserving a dated record of its content.

Never confuse the existence of the right, the registration required for its collection and the evidence that may be needed to defend it.

Allow Rights to Cross Borders

A work does not circulate only in the country where its creator lives.

An American television channel may use music by a composer based in Europe. A Japanese radio station may play a Moroccan track. A concert in London may generate income for several co-writers living in different territories.

Societies of authors therefore work with partner organisations and international networks. Sacem states that it collects for its members from broadcasts in France and abroad. PRS reports agreements in around 150 countries through which it receives its members' international royalties.^[7]

This representation does not guarantee that every use will be identified automatically or that every territory applies the same rules. But without a registered work, correctly identified rightsholders and a collection mandate, the chances of the money finding its owner fall sharply.

The essential minimum for a songwriter is therefore simple:

choose a society of authors consciously, understand its mandate and register every work with it systematically.

After Release: One Week to Finish the Job

Not every step can necessarily be completed before publication. But none should be postponed indefinitely.

My rule is simple: **within the week following every release, all registrations must be completed or checked.**

Depending on the territory and the rights concerned, this may include:

- registering the work with the society of authors;
- registering the master with the producers' society;
- identifying musicians and performers;
- completing registrations with neighbouring or related rights organisations;
- checking credits on the platforms;
- filing contracts, session sheets and licences;

- archiving the final master and its different versions.

The system varies between countries. The universal rule is that artists must know which organisation represents each capacity in which they contributed and verify that the correct information has been supplied.

A release is not complete when it appears on Spotify. It is complete when its artistic, legal and administrative identities are coherent.

The Central Catalogue Register

With ten tracks, an artist still believes they can remember everything. With fifty, it becomes difficult. With two hundred, it is impossible.

Every work needs a central record containing the information above, together with:

- the agreed percentages between rightsholders;
- the owner or licensee of the master;
- any publisher or administrator;
- the territories and terms of contracts;
- the organisations with which the work and master were registered;
- the location of contracts, masters, covers and permissions.

The format matters less than the discipline. It may be a spreadsheet, database or specialist tool.

But this register must exist outside the distributor, remain accessible to the artist and be capable of being handed to whoever may one day administer the catalogue.

A distributor can change. A platform can close. A partner can leave their company.

The register must remain.

It makes it possible to retrace the catalogue's administrative history, identify an available right quickly and accept an opportunity without having to reconstruct twenty years of decisions under pressure.

Documentation Is Not Bureaucracy

Creation remains the priority.

The right method is therefore to turn documentation into a short routine: agreements before release, metadata during delivery, final registrations within the following week.

Then the artist returns to creating.

This discipline seems secondary while a track earns nothing. It becomes essential on the day a radio station plays it, a synchronisation opportunity appears, a label asks to license it or money is waiting for someone at a collecting organisation.

On that day, it is too late to discover that no one knows exactly who owns what.

A work truly enters the catalogue when its artistic story and its administrative identity tell exactly the same story.

[International ISRC Registration Authority — Ownership.](#)

[International ISRC Registration Authority — Why Use ISRC.](#)

[World Intellectual Property Organization — Frequently Asked Questions: Copyright.](#)

[World Intellectual Property Organization — Collective Management of Copyright and Related Rights.](#)

[PRS for Music — Registering Works.](#)

[PRS for Music — Join.](#)

[Sacem — Become a Member;](#) [PRS for Music — Overseas Royalties.](#)

[Sacem — Musicstart, a Fully Digital Work-Protection Service.](#) p. 22.

[Sacem — Welcome Home: Applying for a Pseudonym or Registering a Group Name;](#) [Sacem — Statutes and General Regulations. Article 50.](#)

Neighbouring Rights: the Catalogue's Invisible Money

A right that exists but cannot connect a use to its beneficiary becomes income left sleeping.

For a long time, I understood authors' rights, publishing and the income generated by the exploitation of my masters.

But no one had truly explained neighbouring rights to me.

I was already a member of the SCPP as a producer when a friend asked whether I was registered with SoundExchange in the United States.

I had completely overlooked my American neighbouring rights and neglected the steps required with Adami and Spedidam for the different capacities in which I had performed.

I spent a large part of that summer registering my catalogue properly. It took more than a month of work.

Three months later, I received a first payment of about €3,000.

Then another.

In total, I recovered between €6,000 and €7,000 in rights that already existed but had been unable to find me.

In my case, those sums could still be claimed. Never assume, however, that retroactive claims work the same way everywhere. Claim periods and limitation rules vary by society, right and territory. SoundExchange, for example, states that unclaimed royalties expire after three years, while certain collectively managed sums in France are subject to a five-year limitation period.^[7]

The only prudent rule is to register yourself and your catalogue as early as possible.

I had not created a new source of income.

I had made existing income visible.

Neighbouring Rights Are Not Authors' Rights

Authors' rights attach to the underlying work: the composition and lyrics.

Neighbouring or related rights attach, among other things, to the recorded performance and the phonogram that was produced.

When a recording is played on radio or television, in certain public places or by certain digital services, its use may therefore generate several families of remuneration.

The lyricist, composer and publisher may be paid for use of the work.

The performers may be paid for use of their recorded performance.

The phonogram producer may be paid for use of the phonogram.

Neighbouring rights are not an extra payment made to the songwriter because the track was played. They remunerate different capacities.

In France, the relevant rightsholders include principal artists, musicians who took part in the recording—including session musicians—and phonogram producers. Equitable remuneration and private-copying levies then feed distribution systems for different categories of rightsholder.^[1]

The rules, covered uses and organisations vary between territories. But the principle remains the same:

the work, the performance and the recording can generate separate income.

One Person Can Be Paid in Several Capacities

On a track that I compose, perform, produce and release myself, I occupy several positions.

I am the songwriter of the work.

I am the principal artist.

I am the guitarist on the recording.

My company may be the phonogram producer and the owner of the master rights.

Each capacity must be identified separately.

In France, the SCPP manages certain rights belonging to phonogram producers. Adami and Spedidam administer rights payable to performers, according to their allocation rules and the roles concerned.^[2]

In the United Kingdom, PPL represents both performers and recording rightsholders for certain uses, including broadcasting and the public performance of recorded music.^[3]

In the United States, SoundExchange collects a narrower category of remuneration: digital performance royalties arising principally from non-interactive services. It pays featured artists and recording rightsholders. It does not replace the organisations that pay lyricists, composers and publishers.^[4]

It is therefore not enough to register somewhere and select the first category offered.

Artists must know the capacities in which they can legitimately be declared and which organisation represents each one in the relevant territory.

The Information Must Allow Income to Find the Right Person

To distribute rights income, an organisation must be able to connect several pieces of information:

- the recording that was used;
- its ISRC;
- its title and version;
- the relevant producer or rightsholder;
- the principal artist;
- the musicians and other performers;
- the territory and nature of the use;
- the contracts or mandates supporting the registration.

If a master is registered without its performers, the musicians may become invisible.

If the artist uses several spellings, pseudonyms or presentations of their name, uses of the recording may become fragmented.

If the producer fails to register the catalogue, an organisation may receive money without having the information required to allocate it correctly.

An artist who performed on a recording should also verify that the performance actually appears in the relevant repertoire. PPL explains, for example, that the quality of performer information determines its ability to allocate payments to them.^[5]

The previous unit explained the structure and value of controlling your own ISRC root.

Here, the distinction to remember is simple: the ISRC allows an organisation to recognise the recording, but it does not determine by itself where payment should go.

It does not automatically turn the person who assigned it into the owner or beneficiary. Repertoire registrations, contracts and mandates determine who may receive the relevant income.

The ISRC is a registration plate, not a title deed or a payment instruction.

Do Not Let a Partner Take Your Place by Default

A frequent mistake is to let a label, distributor or compilation organise all the administration without checking what has been declared.

A label may offer to include a track on a compilation or selection. It may then appear in certain databases as the master contact or register the recording in its own name. It may also be tempted to assign an ISRC from its own root; yet if the same recording already has an ISRC, that code should normally be retained even when it is licensed or its ownership changes.^[6]

This does not necessarily mean the label has become the legal owner of the recording.

Everything depends on the contract, licence, mandate and the rights actually entrusted to it.

But an incorrect registration can still direct data and payments towards the wrong entity. Recovering the information and disputing the sums later may take a great deal of time.

Before release, the artist must therefore verify:

- who assigns or supplies the ISRC;
- who registers the phonogram;
- under what mandate;
- for which territory;
- for what duration;
- who receives the producer's neighbouring-rights income;
- and how the performers are identified.

A non-exclusive licence granted to a compilation should not silently become a general assignment of the producer's neighbouring rights.

Delivering a recording should not allow an intermediary to present itself as the owner of rights it does not possess.

The agreement must say so clearly.

The Distributor Does Not Necessarily Collect Everything

Many artists believe that their distributor automatically takes care of all their income.

The distributor generally collects the money paid to it by platforms for exploitation of the master, subject to its contract.

That does not necessarily mean it collects:

- authors' rights in the composition;
- publishing income;
- neighbouring rights belonging to the principal artist;
- musicians' rights;
- the producer's neighbouring rights arising from every use and territory;
- payments administered by SoundExchange or equivalent national organisations.

The word *royalties* creates confusion because several different forms of income are gathered under the same label.

The right question is never:

Does my distributor collect my royalties?

It is:

Which precise payments does it collect, under what mandate and in which territories—and which must I administer elsewhere?

Build Your Territorial Map

There is no single global organisation capable of collecting everything for every capacity and every use.

Artists must begin with their own territory, identify the organisations that represent writers, performers and producers, then examine the international mandates on offer.

They must avoid two opposite mistakes.

The first is granting no mandate and leaving income sleeping abroad.

The second is entrusting the same territory and the same category of rights to several organisations, creating competing claims or collection conflicts.

In my case, my company was established in the United Kingdom. I obtained an ISRC root from PPL to identify the recordings in my catalogue. In France, I later worked with the organisations corresponding to my different capacities. In the United States, SoundExchange represented yet another door.

This organisation should not be copied mechanically.

It reflects my history, my territories and the structure of my catalogue.

Every artist must build their own map.

Modest Income Can Become a Pillar of Continuity

Today, neighbouring rights are not my principal source of income.

But they are regular.

As long as the catalogue circulates, part of that income continues to circulate with it.

This is precisely how a sustainable ecosystem is built: not only through one spectacular source, but through several properly identified flows that continue to produce while the artist creates the next works.

The €6,000 or €7,000 I recovered did not transform my entire career.

It taught me something more important:

a catalogue may already be working for its creator while its creator still has no idea where the money is.

The independent artist's responsibility is to ensure that every use can find the correct work, the correct recording and the correct people.

Neighbouring rights are not extra money. They are income already created by the catalogue that the artist must enable to find its owner.

[Spedidam — Private Copying Remuneration.](#)

[Adami — Performers' Rights; Spedidam — Our Missions; SCPP — Frequently Asked Questions.](#)

[PPL — The Rights PPL Manages.](#)

[SoundExchange — Frequently Asked Questions.](#)

[PPL — Repertoire Data Policy.](#)

[International ISRC Registration Authority — Ownership.](#)

[SoundExchange — Do Unclaimed Royalties Expire?; Adami — General Policy on the Use of Sums That Cannot Be Distributed.](#)

Choose a Distributor for the Next Twenty Years

The right distributor is not merely the one that puts your music online today. It is the one that enables your catalogue to remain identifiable, usable and available over time.

For many young artists, choosing a distributor appears to be a simple decision.

They compare the price, the number of permitted releases and the speed of delivery. Then they choose the cheapest offer.

That logic may be adequate when an artist has two tracks and wants to understand how the platforms work. It becomes dangerous when they begin to build a catalogue.

A distributor does more than send an audio file to Spotify, Apple Music or YouTube. It delivers masters, covers, identifiers and metadata. It receives usage reports and platform income. It may administer certain uses and provide the data that reveals how the music circulates.

Choosing a distributor therefore means choosing an infrastructure.

An infrastructure should not be judged solely by its entry price.

The Lowest Price Can Create the Costliest Dependency

The most attractive model for a beginner often relies on an annual subscription. The artist pays a relatively small amount and can release music quickly.

That may be sufficient at the beginning. But it raises an essential question:

What happens to the music if the subscription is no longer paid?

I conducted a test with one such distributor. I released two tracks through it, then allowed the subscription to expire. After a payment reminder, my releases were indeed removed from the platforms in less than seventy-two hours.

With two tracks, the risk may seem limited. With two hundred, it becomes considerable.

What happens if the bank card expires, the artist becomes ill or their heirs know nothing about the subscription?

A catalogue intended to last for decades should not be capable of disappearing because someone missed a payment.

The price must also be calculated across the scale of the catalogue. Content ID, social-media monetisation, permanent availability, multiple-artist management, advanced statistics or priority support can gradually change the real cost of the original offer.

Some distributors charge per release. Some take a percentage of income. Others combine subscriptions, fees and commission.

No model is automatically better. The right question is not merely: **How much does the distributor take?** It is:

What lasting value does it provide in return?

Why I Chose a Percentage-Based Distributor

For many years, I have worked with a distributor that retains about fifteen per cent of the income it collects and charges no annual subscription to keep the catalogue available.

The company began modestly, then grew until it was acquired by Sony Music. Its power changed, but its working philosophy remained close to the one I had known from the beginning.

The people I speak to know my catalogue, my company and the history of my projects. When I encounter a problem, I am not dealing only with a form.

The distributor can also listen to a project I submit. If the initial results show interesting movement and it believes in the project's potential, it may decide to present it to platforms or their editorial teams.

That support is not guaranteed. This is precisely what gives it value: the distributor commits its judgement and reputation when it chooses to support a project.

Its interests are also connected to mine. If it earns a percentage, it earns more when the catalogue performs better. This does not guarantee commitment, but it can create an alignment that a subscription alone does not necessarily produce.

The quality of the relationship becomes most visible when a track is assigned to the wrong artist, a cover is rejected, a credit disappears or a Content ID claim blocks the artist's own video.

A good distributor does not guarantee that no mistake will occur. It guarantees that a competent person will take responsibility for finding a solution.

Distribution Means More Than Delivery

Depending on its mandate, a distributor may also handle:

- delivery and correction of metadata;
- Content ID and certain uses on YouTube;
- monetisation on certain social platforms;
- detailed reporting by platform and territory;
- multiple formats, territories or artists.

Content ID can recognise music in a video uploaded by someone else, then allow the relevant rightsholder to monetise, track or block it according to the rights they control.^[1]

This service may provide both income and important monitoring. But the distributor should claim only content for which it controls the necessary exclusive rights in the relevant territories under a valid mandate. The artist must know which masters were registered, in which territories and how to dispute an incorrect claim.

An additional service has value only when its scope is understood.

Data Must Support Decisions

A total stream count is not enough.

The distributor should make it possible to identify platforms, territories, playlists, the concentration of listening, the distribution of income and the development of the back catalogue.

Unit 15 will explain how to interpret these signals. For now, the principle is simpler: **a weak dashboard limits the artist's future decisions.**

Changing Early Is Possible; Changing Later Becomes Risky

Changing distributor remains relatively simple with ten tracks.

With fifty tracks, several versions, collaborations, active playlists and a strongly performing recording, migration becomes far more delicate.

The same recording should normally retain its ISRC. The artist name, title, duration, metadata and audio file must allow the platforms to recognise that it is the same track.

Spotify explains that preserving the listening history depends on its *track-linking* system and on the match between the old and new deliveries.^[2]

An error can separate the new delivery from its play count, playlists or accumulated signals.

This does not mean an artist can never change distributor. It means that the cost and risk of migration rise with the value of the catalogue.

The decision therefore deserves serious thought before the first important release.

No Distributor Replaces a Continuity Plan

Even the best distributor can be acquired, change direction, alter its terms or discontinue a service.

Outside its platform, the artist must therefore retain:

- final masters and covers;
- metadata, ISRCs and UPCs;
- contracts and release history;
- essential statements;
- the access details and contact information required to take over the catalogue.

The artist's company or heirs should know which distributor is used, how to access the account and which obligations must be maintained.

Choosing solid infrastructure reduces the risk. Keeping your own register allows you to survive its disappearance.

The Criteria That Truly Matter

Before choosing a distributor, I would examine:

- the permanence of releases and the long-term business model;
- the ability to use your own ISRCs and UPCs;
- the quality of metadata and statistics;
- the platforms, territories and uses actually covered;
- the frequency and clarity of payments;
- the quality of human support;
- the ability to correct an error quickly;
- genuine opportunities for editorial support;
- departure and migration terms;
- what happens if the company disappears or is acquired;
- and, where platforms permit it, the ability to correct or replace an audio file without withdrawing the entire release, provided the change does not create a new recording requiring its own ISRC.

This final point may appear secondary. For an independent artist, it can make it possible to correct a file or make a slight technical improvement without losing an established release. A new performance, remix or substantial transformation should, however, be treated as a new version when the applicable rules require it.

The perfect distributor does not exist. The artist must seek the best compromise for the catalogue they still want to own in twenty years' time.

Do not choose the service that will release your next track with the least effort. Choose the infrastructure you will still trust with your catalogue when it has become your legacy.

[YouTube — How Content ID Works.](#)

[Spotify for Artists — Re-uploading Music.](#)

Create circulation and build the relationship

Music must leave the workshop and meet an audience. But exposure alone builds nothing if it leaves no relationship, no understanding of the catalogue and no path back to the artist. This movement organises circulation without abandoning the centre of the system.

Every Track Should Open a Door into the Catalogue

A release should do more than generate plays. It should leave behind a new entrance into the artist's world.

A track can attract a listener, reveal an identity, reactivate an older work, create a professional relationship or prepare a future source of income.

It does not need to fulfil every one of these functions. But if it disappears after a few weeks without strengthening anything, the artist risks starting from zero again with the next release.

Releasing Is Not Yet Building

When an artist finishes a track, all their attention naturally turns towards its release: the date, cover, distributor, media and initial results.

For a few weeks, the track becomes the centre of their activity. Then a new work arrives and replaces it in their attention.

The first track remains available, but often ceases to have a function.

A track appears. It receives a few plays. It disappears from the conversation. Then everything begins again.

This succession can feel like the construction of a career when it is producing only a series of isolated events.

The problem is not the single format. A catalogue can perfectly well be built through singles. The problem begins when nothing connects the releases and none of them helps listeners discover what came before or what will follow.

Releasing adds a track to a discography.

Building gives it a place and a function within a larger world.

Four Weeks of Preparation Does Not Mean Four Weeks of Creation

Some manuals now advise independent artists to release a new track every four weeks in order to remain visible to algorithms.

Presented as a universal rule, that pace is madness.

Artists have always worked hard. I have known productions that seemed never to want to end. The right melody still had to be found, an arrangement changed, a sound reworked or enough time allowed to pass for me to hear what was not working.

When studios were extremely expensive, having several months was sometimes an inaccessible luxury.

Today, the home studio enables almost any artist to devote more time to their music and produce masters of excellent quality. Yet this extraordinary access to quality often has the opposite effect: the search for the best result is replaced by a race for quantity.

The artist no longer finishes the work when it is ready.

They finish it when the calendar demands another release.

I tried following this pace myself to understand its effect on the algorithms. My statistics improved very little. The quality of my productions, however, fell noticeably, and I had to rework several tracks before their definitive release on an album.

This does not mean it is impossible to release every four weeks. An artist may have several completed works, prepare the releases far in advance and then organise a regular schedule.

But the release calendar must never become the creative calendar.

Some works arrive quickly. Others require several months. Each must be given the time required to be written, produced, mixed, heard again with sufficient distance and genuinely completed.

The three or four weeks of preparation recommended in the next section begin once the master is considered finished. They are used to check the release, contact the media and prepare its circulation. They are not a deadline imposed on the creation of the work.

Do not work to feed an algorithm.

Work to build a catalogue whose quality you will still be able to defend in ten years.

Technology, styles and production methods will evolve. But a fully realised work will remain proof that you gave your intention the best form you were capable of giving it at that moment.

A Release Begins Three to Four Weeks Before Publication

Spotify currently requires a track to be delivered and pitched at least seven days before release for editorial consideration. This also allows the pitched track to appear in the artist's followers' Release Radar.^[1]

For an independent artist, I recommend allowing three to four weeks.

Many young artists are so impatient to present their music that they want to release it almost immediately. This is a mistake.

Those few weeks can reveal a problem with the file, mix, master, metadata or cover. If an error appears despite earlier checks, the artist still has time to correct or cancel the delivery.

They also provide time to send the music to radio stations, blogs and magazines before release. The media want to discover something new and often prepare their schedules in advance. The earlier the track reaches them—with a clear date and the correct information—the more time they have to listen and decide whether to present it.

The release date should not therefore be chosen according to the artist's impatience. It must give the track time to be checked, presented and prepared.

For an artist who releases regularly, this period does not slow the pace; it merely shifts the calendar. For someone who releases rarely, a few additional weeks make almost no difference to the audience but can profoundly improve the conditions in which the work arrives.

A Door Is Not Necessarily a Commercial Success

We tend to regard a track as successful when it produces many streams, sales or radio plays.

Those results matter. But a quieter track may strengthen the identity, give older works new meaning, touch one person deeply, reveal a skill or create a lasting relationship with a radio station, journalist or other professional.

It may have opened a door that immediate statistics cannot measure.

Conversely, a track may receive an enormous number of plays without leading listeners into the catalogue or creating any direct relationship. It remains a success: it has produced visibility, income or recognition. But the artist must understand the exact nature of that result.

A large stream count does not automatically mean that an ecosystem has been built.

Recognise Which Door Has Opened

Not every release leads to the same place.

- **Into the catalogue:** the listener immediately understands that other works exist and knows where to find them.
- **Into the identity:** the track provides further evidence of the artist's language, sound or perspective.
- **Into the relationship:** the listening experience leads to a website, newsletter, Bandcamp or another space controlled by the artist.
- **Into the professional world:** a radio station, media outlet, publisher, label, musician or agent wants to hear what comes next.
- **Into a new use:** the track reveals potential for media, live performance, collaboration, another territory or a new activity.

The income does not necessarily come from the track itself. It may become the lever through which a source of income appears later.

A door has value only if the artist recognises that it has opened and follows it through.

Leave a Footprint Around the Track

This door does not necessarily require a major campaign. It first requires a clear footprint.

When someone discovers a track and looks for more, they should be able to find:

- an identifiable cover;

- a few lines explaining its origin or place in the journey;
- the essential credits;
- a link to the world or period to which it belongs;
- somewhere to find the artist directly;
- information the media and professionals can use.

This footprint can fit on one simple page. A photograph, short story or making-of can be enough when it genuinely adds something.

The music remains the centre. Everything else is simply a door into it.

The story should not be invented to manufacture interest artificially. Every work already has an origin: a meeting, journey, transition, search, emotion or collaboration. The task is to make it visible without explaining the music so completely that the listener's imagination is suffocated.

When the Audience Chooses the Door

An artist may believe that one track perfectly represents their direction, only to discover that the audience chooses another.

That choice does not decide what the artist must become. But it may reveal the best entrance into their world at that moment.

When a track distinguishes itself spontaneously, strengthen its exposure, make the catalogue easy to reach, tell its story and then allow it to live.

Above all, move on to what comes next.

An audience that has just discovered an artist soon wants another proposition. This can become a bridge track: close enough to welcome the new listeners, but open enough to begin showing the direction the artist wishes to pursue.

This response is not about reproducing a formula indefinitely. It tests whether the first signal can become a period.

The Nightfly, Then Soul to Soul

Unit 2 told the story of how *The Nightfly* tested an acoustic smooth-jazz direction that was still new within my catalogue.

Radio stations responded. I then produced *Soul to Soul*, not to copy the previous track, but to discover whether that response could be extended.

The second track confirmed the direction, gave its name to the album and led listeners towards other tracks such as *Passing Time* and *You & I*.

The Nightfly had tested the door.

Soul to Soul had made people want to cross its threshold.

The album had built the room behind it.

The value of a release is therefore not measured only on the day it appears. It reveals itself in what the artist can build next.

A Release Should Always Leave Something Behind

Every track should add at least one stone to the structure:

- an entrance into the catalogue;
- properly documented rights;
- a story or further evidence of identity;
- a relationship with the audience, press, radio or another professional;
- a visual that enriches the artist's legacy;
- a use or future economic possibility.

Where circumstances justify it, it may also add an owned master. But an artist does not need to own one hundred per cent of every master. One can be licensed or assigned if the exchange produces genuinely greater development.

A work may have an immense destiny or remain an isolated stone for a long time. The artist does not decide everything.

But the artist can ensure that every work is properly prepared, protected, positioned and connected to the world being built.

A track may attract attention for a few weeks. The door it opens can serve an entire career.

[Spotify for Artists — Pitching Music to Playlist Editors.](#)

Build Your Home

Platforms can give you visibility. Only your own home can give all that movement somewhere to meet.

An artist can have a Spotify page, a YouTube channel and thousands of followers without possessing a single place capable of bringing their world together.

The music is in one place, photographs somewhere else, videos on another service and the story inside a biography written for a platform. The audience's contact details remain locked inside accounts the artist cannot truly access.

The identity exists, but it is fragmented.

As long as the platforms continue to show the content, this situation appears acceptable. The problem arrives when one changes its rules, reduces visibility, closes the account or loses its audience.

The artist then discovers that they built a presence on land they did not own.

A Platform Is a Door, Not a Home

Every platform has a function. Spotify is for listening. YouTube allows people to watch and go deeper. Bandcamp can enable them to buy and support the artist directly. A newsletter maintains a relationship.

But no one of these spaces should contain the artist's entire public existence.

Their rules are decided by someone else. The format can change, reach can fall, the account can be suspended and the audience can move away.

A website does not remove every risk. It also depends on a domain name, hosting and technical tools.

But it offers one essential difference: the artist can retain the address, move the content and change service provider without asking a platform for permission to continue existing.

A platform is an entrance.

The website is the address to which every door can lead.

Myspace: Still Owning a Page but No Longer Owning the Relationship

In the early 2000s, Myspace became the place where every musician had to be present.

Artists published their music, announced concerts and gathered their fans there. For many, the page became their website, communication space and address book all at once.

Then the public moved elsewhere.

Myspace did not literally close overnight. Its function simply all but disappeared. Artists still had pages; there was no longer anyone there to visit them.

Later, a technical migration also made years of music, photographs and videos uploaded by users unavailable.^[1]

This story reveals an essential distinction:

an account can still exist after the relationship it contained has already disappeared.

The artists did not necessarily lose their fans because those people stopped loving the music. They lost them because they owned no other route through which to find them again.

The story of Myspace does not tell us to reject platforms. It teaches us not to confuse the place where the public gathers today with the home in which our career must still live tomorrow.

The Day Three Pages Disappeared

My personal Facebook account was hacked. This can happen to anyone, even when security measures are in place.

Following the breach, Facebook permanently closed my account. My Goze Music page and Instagram account were connected to it.

Within twenty-four hours, all three spaces had disappeared.

I was unable to recover them. When a major platform takes such a radical decision, finding a person to speak to and mounting a defence can become extraordinarily difficult.

The incident revealed more than a security problem. It showed that several parts of my public presence depended on the same ecosystem and could fall together.

The disappearance was a loss. But it did not erase my home.

My website still told my story. My newsletter still allowed me to communicate. YouTube retained my videos, performances and reflections. Bandcamp still presented and sold my music.

An artist can build a significant presence on a platform. But they should never allow that platform to own their public existence.

Three Pages Can Be Enough

The idea of an artist website was long shaped by major record companies: a spectacular home page, complete biography, news, gallery, shop, calendar, videos, detailed discography, several languages and numerous animations.

An independent artist does not need to recreate that structure with fewer resources.

They need a clear, living website simple enough to maintain themselves.

My artist website has only three pages. It does not try to present every detail of my career. It tries to make one world immediately understandable.

The visitor should grasp:

- who the artist is;
- what they can listen to or discover;
- what story connects the works;
- where to continue the journey;
- how to remain in contact.

One page can present the identity and current creation. Another can lead to the music and the catalogue's different periods. A final page can bring together the essential story, newsletter and contact details.

The exact number of pages does not matter. What matters is the absence of unnecessary rooms.

A complex website creates a new obligation: news, dates, shop, links and maintenance. Without a team or enough time, it eventually projects an image of abandonment.

A small, current website is more credible than a large, neglected one.

The right question is not: **What could my website contain?**

It is: **What information must remain accessible if all my platforms disappear tomorrow?**

The website must protect the essentials without consuming the energy needed for creation.

Tell a World; Do Not Copy a Profile

An artist website should be neither an enlarged copy of a Spotify biography nor an accumulation of links.

It should express a perspective.

On my website, I no longer present Christophe Goze through a list of genres, a professional CV or a succession of achievements. I speak about music, journey and reflection.

I show how a life lived across several countries, encounters, photography and my way of looking at the world flow through the work.

My reflections and photographs belong there because they remain connected to the music.

The music remains the centre. Everything else helps people understand the man and the world behind it.

The website then becomes more than a promotional tool.

It becomes a work of coherence.

A Home Must Know Whom It Is Receiving

I have another website for Goze Music.

The Christophe Goze website speaks about the artist: his music, story, images and reflections.

Goze Music presents the professional organisation: the label, publishing, studio, production, music for media, collaborations and the other artists represented.

The two spaces sometimes speak about the same person, but they do not open the same conversation.

A listener does not need to work through a complete media-composer CV. A director, music supervisor or artist looking for a producer, by contrast, needs to find precise professional credits quickly.

A young artist does not need several websites. But if their activities become very different, they may need distinct entrances rather than piling everything into one incomprehensible space.

A home must know whom it is receiving and which conversation it wishes to open.

The Real Direct Asset

The website brings everything together. The direct relationship begins when the visitor can choose to stay.

This is where the newsletter becomes essential.

Following on a platform expresses interest, but the platform remains the intermediary. It decides how many people see the message and in what form.

An address voluntarily entrusted to the artist creates a more portable relationship. It must, of course, be protected and used in accordance with the applicable rules.

The website and newsletter therefore perform two complementary functions:

**the website gives the artist's world an address;
the newsletter allows those who entered it to find their way back.**

The website should not imprison the audience. It organises circulation.

Someone may discover the artist on YouTube, understand the story on the website, join the newsletter, then buy an album on Bandcamp. Someone else may receive a letter, return to watch a making-of and continue listening on the platform they prefer.

The website receives movement created elsewhere, gives it context, then redistributes it towards the most appropriate space.

When a platform changes, the artist changes a door.

They do not rebuild the entire house.

**Do not build your entire career in the busiest streets.
Give those who discover you an address where your
world will remain standing.**

[The Guardian — Myspace Loses All Content Uploaded Before 2016.](#)

Choose Each Platform According to Its Function

A platform does not deserve your time because everyone else is there. It deserves it when it performs a precise function within your system.

When artists begin structuring their careers, they often receive the same advice: be everywhere. Spotify for listening, YouTube for discovery, social media for visibility, Bandcamp for sales, a newsletter for communication and a website to bring it all together.

Taken separately, this advice seems reasonable. Combined, it can produce a system that is impossible to maintain. The artist eventually spends more time feeding the presence than building what that presence was meant to serve.

The problem is not the number of platforms.

It is the absence of a decision about their function.

Presence Is Not a Strategy

Opening an account does not create a relationship.

Publishing the same message in five places does not build five different doors. It may simply repeat an action with no defined objective.

Before investing in a platform, the artist should complete this sentence:

I use this space primarily to...

...help people discover or listen to my music.

...sell directly.

...deepen my story or maintain a community.

...preserve a relationship, present professional proof or archive my work.

A platform can fulfil several roles. But its principal function determines what the artist publishes there, how much time they give it and how they judge its usefulness.

If two platforms do exactly the same job, one may have become unnecessary.

If a space demands a great deal of work while producing no discovery, relationship, sale or professional proof, its popularity does not justify its place.

My System Became Simpler Over Time

After expanding my presence for years, I realised that multiplication blurred my identity and scattered my energy. I reduced the number of spaces in which I publish actively and gave each a clear mission.

My website is my home. My newsletter maintains the direct relationship. Bandcamp is my store: it presents and sells my music to listeners who want to support my work directly.

YouTube is the principal audiovisual door. It brings together official videos, live performances, making-of films and my reflections accompanied by my music and images.

Those reflections are signed and placed alongside my other creations. They open a different door into the same artist.

Bandsintown occupies a more unexpected position. It was originally designed mainly to announce concerts. I do not perform live and never expected it to become important to me. Yet many people began looking there for information about my activities.

I adapted its function to that real behaviour. From the platform, I can send free updates to the people who follow me. Bandsintown has become my second newsletter.

A platform can therefore earn its place through the way the audience uses it, not only through the purpose for which it was designed.

By contrast, Christophe Goze the artist currently uses neither Instagram, TikTok nor Facebook.

Instagram requires a publishing rhythm that does not match the way my music develops. TikTok raises another question: its language, image and age profile correspond neither to my audience nor to the way I want to present my work.

Those platforms may be effective for other artists. They are simply not useful within my system when measured against the time required, the audience sought and the identity I want to preserve.

That decision applies to Christophe Goze the artist. It does not apply in the same way to all my activities.

Goze Limited and Earth Studio retain a Facebook presence. Those entities do not use it to tell my artistic story or communicate with my audience. Facebook gives them professional visibility and allows me to follow companies, studios, artists and people with whom I work.

The same platform can therefore be irrelevant to the artist and useful to the professional structure.

Do not make every identity speak everywhere. Choose where each has a precise reason to exist and whom it addresses.

Streaming platforms retain their role in listening and circulation. But I do not ask them to become my home or carry my entire relationship with the public.

This system suits my music and should not be copied. A live artist will favour spaces connected to concerts; a songwriter working for other artists will need a more professional showcase. The architecture depends on the career.

The principle does not change: **every tool must know why it is there.**

Absence Can Be a Strategy

Not being on a platform does not mean becoming isolated.

Artists constantly hear that they must be here or there because the public is there. But refusing a platform can be an act of specialisation: the energy saved allows the artist to become stronger somewhere else.

That absence can also teach the audience where to find the artist under better conditions.

I tried presenting my music on Instagram through fifteen-second clips. People watched those fifteen seconds and moved on. I saw no evidence that this attention brought more listeners to Spotify or into my catalogue.

In my case, Instagram did not develop the music. It consumed time that could have developed the rest of the system.

I closed that channel to concentrate on YouTube, where someone can stay longer, listen, watch a making-of, discover a reflection and continue towards other works.

This does not prove that Instagram is ineffective for every artist. It shows that a heavily used platform can remain strategically useless when it creates no movement towards the chosen objective.

Being everywhere can even create greater invisibility. The artist's attention, time and identity are scattered across too many spaces. The audience naturally chooses the easiest option: consuming whatever appears in front of it without looking further.

The artist must sometimes create a different habit. By concentrating videos on YouTube, sales on Bandcamp and the story on the website, they gradually teach the audience where to find each part of the world.

The old saying that it does not matter whether people speak well or badly of you as long as they speak of you is misleading here. Attention has strategic value only when it strengthens something: a work, identity, relationship or path into the catalogue.

Finally, measure the cost of platforms dominated by an algorithm. When it changes, artists may be pushed to change their format, rhythm and strategy yet again. By chasing those changes, they eventually work for the platform more than the platform works for their career.

A deliberate absence is therefore not an empty space.

It is time, coherence and strength reinvested elsewhere.

Measure a Platform Against Its Mission

Not every platform should be judged by the same number. A discovery space must expose the music to new people. A relationship space can be valuable with a smaller but loyal audience. A store may reach fewer people while creating a more direct economic relationship. A professional showcase may receive very few visits but lead to an important contract.

The correct question is:

Is this platform doing the job I gave it?

Does it attract new people? Bring them back? Create buyers rather than visitors? Help the right professionals understand the project?

A platform that no longer fulfils its function can become a simple signpost, be reduced to a minimal presence or be abandoned. The recovered energy then returns to a more useful channel—or to creation.

Build a System Light Enough to Last

The best system is one the artist can still feed after a release campaign or during an intense period of creation. Every new space creates a debt of time: it will need updating, responses and adapted content.

Before adding a platform, ask what it provides that the current system cannot already obtain.

If the answer is clear, it may become a new door. If the answer is merely 'because an artist has to be there', wait.

The objective is not the largest possible presence.

It is the most coherent circulation possible between discovery, listening, relationship and catalogue.

Do not try to be everywhere. Build a few useful doors, know where each one leads and make sure they all return to the same world.

Understand What Lies Behind the Numbers

A number tells you that movement occurred. It does not tell you where that movement came from, what it is building or how long it will last.

Stream and follower counts have become two of the first criteria used to evaluate an artist.

They are visible, instantly comprehensible and allow two profiles to be compared in seconds. That simplicity gives them an authority they do not always deserve.

A large audience may have gathered around one track, a viral video or an earlier artistic period. The follower count then measures support accumulated in the past. It guarantees neither present attention nor future loyalty.

Likewise, one million streams may come from a single playlist. Five hundred thousand may be spread across one hundred playlists selected by different people. The counters show two results. They do not tell the same story.

Artists must therefore understand **the origin, concentration and consequences of the movement**.

Do Not Adopt the System's Emotional Pace

The market is saturated. Approximately 106,000 new ISRCs were delivered to platforms every day in 2025.^[1]

This figure should not frighten the artist. It should clarify the environment in which they work.

Everything now encourages urgency: release faster, attract attention, satisfy the algorithm, increase the statistics, sign before someone else takes the place.

Under this pressure, an artist may make in a few days a decision that will weigh on the catalogue for twenty years.

Two speeds must be distinguished.

When a decision can be corrected—testing a message, changing a presentation, trying a new channel—it is possible to move quickly.

When it commits ownership of a master, publishing rights, the catalogue's identity or a lasting contractual relationship, slow down.

Move quickly when the mistake can be corrected. Slow down when the decision can follow you for twenty years.

Algorithms may guide a tactic. They must never set the direction.

The noise outside the shop can inform the craftsperson. It must not decide what is being built in the workshop.

Name a Number Correctly

A place in a major playlist has real value. It can generate income, introduce the artist's name and create spectacular acceleration.

But if the playlist removes the track, the movement may stop almost immediately.

By contrast, a track included in numerous personal or editorial playlists reveals a broader base. Several people chose to keep it or incorporate it into their own world.

The same principle applies to radio. One play on a major station creates powerful exposure. Twenty stations that play the track, continue programming it and want to receive the next one are beginning to form a network.

The first result may be more visible. The second may be more resilient.

Do not oppose them. Understand what you actually possess.

I Will Always Love You became my greatest commercial success, principally through Spotify. It performs well on Apple Music but does not occupy the same position. Nor did it visibly accelerate the rest of my catalogue or automatically create new professional opportunities.

That does not make the success an illusion. Spotify represents a very significant proportion of my streaming income. The economic result is entirely real.

But I must name it accurately: the track is a major listening and revenue success on a platform that dominates my system. It did not become a universal locomotive.

A track can succeed in one function without succeeding in every function.

Counters Are Not the Legacy

I took over the catalogue of an artist whose ISRCs had been generated by a former label in a territory that was difficult to administer directly.

To bring the masters clearly into the Goze Music catalogue, we chose to begin again with new identifiers.

One track displayed more than a million streams. By changing its ISRC, we lost that visible history and the playlist connections that had carried it.

The track never recovered its success on Spotify. It was exactly the same master, but it had disappeared from the paths that once carried it. Algorithms and methods of discovery had changed.

We accepted the risk because clarifying the catalogue seemed more important than preserving the counter.

The experience reminded me that a counter is neither the track, its ownership nor its identity.

I saw another form of disconnection with one of my artists. In 2024, a track achieved major success on YouTube. The channel had around 300,000 followers and millions of views.

Then the artist released nothing for two years.

By 2026, the artist had matured and changed sound. The 300,000 followers were still displayed, but the new single's result was completely disappointing.

They had become a marker of past success built around a different artistic proposition.

Changing direction was not a mistake. Artists must be able to evolve. But a relationship that is not nourished can become a statistical memory.

An artist is not an influencer whose follower count mechanically guarantees the reach of the next piece of content. The artist embodies the brand that connects the works. When the work changes and the relationship has been interrupted, part of the audience may need to be won again.

A follower chose to remain informed at a particular moment. They did not sign a contract requiring them to remain two years later or to love everything the artist will ever create.

A Dashboard Must Explain the Movement

A good distributor should do more than display a total. As far as the available data permits, it should reveal:

- the platforms and territories producing plays and income;
- the playlists carrying the track and what kind they are;
- the degree of dependence on a single source;
- whether the same listeners return;
- whether they discover other catalogue titles;
- the subscriptions, sales or professional relationships created by the exposure.

Statistics are not there to be admired. They are there to support decisions.

If eighty people add a track to their playlists following an initial exposure, human decisions have extended the movement. Where possible, the artist can identify some of those curators and present the next release.

This takes time and should not become an obsession. The objective is not to chase every play, but to identify the places where a number reveals a relationship capable of continuing.

Not Every Success Has the Same Name

To understand what a track has accomplished, I examine several dimensions:

- **exposure:** did it reach many people?
- **economics:** did it generate significant income?
- **catalogue:** did it lead towards other works?
- **relationship:** did people return or become buyers?
- **professional development:** did radio, media or partners ask for what came next?
- **artistic identity:** did the track strengthen understanding of the artist's world?

A track may be extremely strong in only one of these dimensions. It is still a success.

This way of reading results also protects the artist from discouragement. A work with few plays may strengthen an identity, create a lasting relationship or open a door whose effects will appear only years later.

Not everything that matters becomes immediately visible on a counter.

Do not ask only how many people listened. Ask what brought them to the track, what they did next and what will remain when the number stops rising. Numbers may guide a tactic. They must never set the direction.

Luminate, Year-End Music Report 2025: daily average of 106,000 ISRCs delivered to digital services in 2025.

Open the right doors

A career does not advance along one path. A track may open a territory, a relationship, an activity or an unexpected market. This movement looks for doors suited to the artist's difference and for networks capable of leading to the next one.

Sirocco: One Track, Several Career Doors

A powerful track should not be exchanged for the first opportunity that appears. It can become the proof that opens several different doors.

In 1998, I composed *Sirocco* for the opening of a North African restaurant in London.

I did not realise that I was creating the track that would transform my entire career.

The restaurant quickly became well known. Its founders decided to release a compilation devoted to Arabic fusion. *Sirocco* was selected for *Arabesque*, released in 1999.

At the time of that first release, I owned the master and had not yet assigned the publishing rights.

The track began attracting attention and several offers arrived. I understood that its potential extended beyond the compilation on which it had appeared.

I did not yet know how far it could travel.

But I knew I should not lock it away too soon.

The First Negotiation: Do Not Assign Under Threat

A major British label offered to acquire the master rights. Its principal interest was placing *Sirocco* on an important compilation.

I refused.

The label then explained that without the assignment, the track would not appear on the compilation.

I replied that this was not a problem.

In the end, *Sirocco* was included anyway.

The track had become stronger than the threat used in the negotiation.

My decision did not arise from a rule that artists should never assign a master. In different circumstances, I might have done so if the exchange opened a stage of my career that was genuinely inaccessible by any other route.

But this was a poor exchange.

The label wanted a lasting asset in return for one appearance on a compilation.

The value created did not greatly exceed the value surrendered.

Over time, retaining the master earned me about ten times more than the offer I had received.

The refusal was neither pride nor an abstract declaration of independence.

It was a judgement about the proportion between what was being asked of me and what I was being given.

Repeat Licences Without Losing Control

After *Arabesque*, requests multiplied.

Sirocco became the subject of nearly sixty non-exclusive master licences.

Each partner received the right to use the track within a defined framework.

None gained general control of the master.

That difference proved decisive.

One exclusive assignment would have produced a payment and perhaps considerable exposure. Non-exclusive licences allowed the same asset to circulate repeatedly, generate several streams of income and attract new professionals without taking away my ability to decide what happened next.

The master became leverage.

I sometimes use a deliberately simple image: the master can be the bait on the line. It attracts the larger fish—a relationship, contract or activity capable of feeding the career for much longer.

But the bait should not be surrendered at the first movement in the water.

Understand what each proposal can truly help you reach.

First Door: the Lounge Career

One of the major British lounge labels of the period first included *Sirocco* on a compilation.

It then invited me to make my first commercial album, *Show Me the Way*.

This opportunity was no longer merely about exploiting an existing track.

It opened an artist career.

Sirocco had proved that an audience existed for my blend of guitar, world fusion and lounge. The label no longer wanted only one track. It wanted to develop the world behind it.

The track created for a restaurant opening had become the entrance to my lounge career.

That distinction matters.

A compilation may simply consume a track.

A partner may recognise within it the possibility of a future catalogue.

The value of the offer changes when the professional wants not only to exploit what exists, but to participate in what can be built next.

Second Door: Music for Media

During the same period, I was trying to enter the world of music for media.

I sent publishers advertising music made in Japan, pop and orchestral compositions.

I received almost no response.

Then I asked myself a brutal question:

What am I offering in London that British professionals cannot already find a hundred times around them?

Was I the young Frenchman they were waiting for to teach them how to produce pop?

Probably not.

But they did not receive a track like *Sirocco* every day.

I discarded the music that told a false story about my value in that market. I retained only four world-fusion tracks representing a specialism that few people could offer in the same way.

Within a month, I had my first contract.

The decision taught me one of the most important rules of my career:

in a crowded market, specialisation allows you to be understood before you are recognised.

Publishing Entrusted Where It Could Work

I did not apply the same strategy to every right in *Sirocco*.

I entrusted the publishing to an independent publisher I trusted.

The success was beginning to create problems: unauthorised uses, rights to identify, requests to handle and exploitation to monitor.

That publisher concentrated on *Sirocco* and did considerable work.

I had not kept everything.

I had chosen a partner capable of making a right more active and valuable than I could have done alone at that moment.

Later, Boosey & Hawkes offered me what was, at the time, a comfortable advance to publish part of my catalogue.

The revealing detail is that *Sirocco* was not even included. Its publishing had already been entrusted elsewhere.

But the track had demonstrated my language and potential.

Boosey & Hawkes commissioned new television music within the same artistic territory. The company also recovered blocked income from my commercial catalogue and helped administer my releases when I needed it.

The album I subsequently wrote in that style for media became a genuine success and led to advertising opportunities, including a nomination for one of those works.

Sirocco had not been assigned to that partner.

It had served as proof from which to build a new catalogue.

A Track Can Open an Activity It Never Joins

This story challenges a common assumption.

For a track to open a door, it is not always necessary to give it to the person standing behind that door.

Sirocco demonstrated a style.

The partner saw a possibility.

In return, I created many new works in that direction.

The original track remained where I had chosen to place it. But the proof it supplied built a new economic branch, a new catalogue and one of the most important activities of my professional life.

The entire chain began with a track composed for a restaurant.

The True Order of the Cards

In retrospect, *Sirocco* opened two major doors almost simultaneously: my career as a lounge artist and my career as a composer for media.

The result did not come only from the track's success.

It also came from the order in which the cards were played.

I refused a master assignment that offered insufficient value.

I multiplied non-exclusive licences so the track could circulate without leaving my control.

I entrusted publishing to a specialist partner capable of doing real work.

I used the track as proof to secure a media-music contract without requiring that it enter the contract itself.

I created new works in return for the commitment of a major publisher.

The perfect sequence did not consist of keeping everything.

It consisted of knowing why I retained certain rights, why I entrusted others and which new door every decision was supposed to open.

When a track becomes stronger than expected, do not look only for ways to sell more of it. Ask how many different careers it may still help you build.

Test Other Territories and Build a Multiplying Network

Do not change your music to be accepted. Change the context in which it is heard. Test from a distance first, and travel only when relationships give you a genuine reason to do so.

An artist may create powerful music, possess a clear identity and receive almost no response in their own territory.

They sometimes conclude that the work is not good enough. They change style, simplify the language or imitate what succeeds around them.

But the problem does not always lie in the music.

It may lie in where the music is being presented.

An exceptional Gnawa artist heard only in Morocco operates among many musicians who know that language intimately. Their level may be excellent without immediately making them exceptional in that context.

The same music presented in Tokyo may become rare.

The artist has not changed. The value of their difference has become more visible.

No One Is a Prophet in Their Own Country

Early in my career, I signed several option agreements in France. Labels described me as a ‘young wolf of French chanson’.

Yet nothing concrete happened.

I then went to Japan, and things began moving quickly.

My music had not improved during the journey. It had entered an environment more curious about what I could bring.

Many artists who later became internationally famous had comparable experiences.

In the early 1970s, Genesis still had limited success at home. Yet *Nursery Cryme* found a much larger audience in Italy, where the group was received enthusiastically and began playing larger venues than in England.^[1]

Italy did not create Genesis's talent. It recognised earlier what the group's home market did not yet see clearly.

That detour gave the group confidence, early external recognition and another reason to continue. Genesis did not change its identity to convince England. It first found the territory capable of hearing it.

This led me to a conviction:

Artists have no artistic nationality. They are citizens of the world and must seek the places where their voice carries furthest.

This does not mean abandoning a country, uprooting a family or moving an entire life in pursuit of a hypothesis.

The displacement I recommend today is strategic first.

Move the music before moving the person.

Test the Territory Before Travelling

In the 1990s, it was often necessary to visit a country physically to meet professionals. Today, an artist can begin remotely.

Identify a territory in which the music may offer an interesting difference, then find the radio stations, labels, publishers, artists, studios, media and communities working with that language.

Present the project and observe what returns:

- do people respond?
- do they request more tracks?
- does a collaboration begin?
- does someone introduce the artist to another professional?

- does the network expand beyond the first contact?

If no response comes, the artist has gained information without disrupting their life. They can change the approach, choose another contact or test elsewhere.

If several responses converge, travel acquires a function.

It is no longer a journey made in the hope of a miracle. It consolidates relationships that already exist.

Skeb: Sweden Before the Journey

Skeb, a Goze Limited artist, was living in Spain when he began working remotely with a Swedish artist.

The first contact worked. They completed several projects, and the Swedish artist—who valued his talent, style and personality—introduced him to other people.

A new project was offered in Sweden. At that point, travelling became obvious.

He went for a month and returned. Since then, he has travelled back regularly to work in Sweden without moving his life there.

During the same period, he also completed several projects with an artist in Japan. The collaboration was real, but it never expanded his network. It produced no new contact and no strategic reason to travel.

The difference was not the number of projects, but their ability to create the next relationship.

A collaboration produces work. A multiplying network produces new relationships made possible by that work.

Obtain a Dialogue Before Asking for a Listen

When contacting a professional, be confident but never aggressive.

For a cold approach, I recommend communication in two stages. If a radio station, label or publisher provides a specific submission procedure, follow it.

In the first message, briefly introduce your name, origin, musical genre and precise reason for writing. Be polite and relevant to the recipient.

Do not tell your entire career story or ask for a favour yet. Simply request permission to send a link.

I have received too many messages like this:

‘I make lounge music and want to sign with your label. Listen to this.’

Then comes the link. No real introduction, no reason for contacting Goze Music, no request for permission and sometimes not even a thank you.

I often delete them without listening.

Perhaps I have missed the artist of the century. But if communication begins as an order, with no respect for my time or work, the collaboration is likely to become difficult when the stakes increase.

Once permission is given, send one simple link and only the necessary information. Unless specifically requested, do not attach an MP3 to the first message.

No reply does not always mean rejection. The message may have been forgotten or buried during a busy week. Wait around three weeks, then send one short, courteous follow-up.

Your first objective is not to obtain a listen.

It is to open a dialogue.

The medium can also make a difference. A polite telephone call can surprise when everyone else writes. One friend still sometimes uses a fax: in an office that receives almost none, the message becomes visible because it follows a forgotten route.

These are not universal recipes. They simply remind us that before music can be heard, the artist must give someone a reason to offer their attention.

Share a Contact Without Walking in Someone Else's Place

A network multiplies when its members are willing to share.

In Japan, I learnt a culture in which the person sharing a contact is not automatically judged responsible for the project that later arrives. In Europe, I became more cautious.

When I see a serious, committed and responsible artist, I may share contact details and allow them to mention my name. When I believe deeply in their potential, I may make the introduction myself.

But my involvement ends there.

I cannot walk in their place. If I do, their project becomes my project and follows a different path.

A contact opens a door. It never removes the artist's responsibility to enter, communicate, convince and build their own relationship.

Networks Belong to People

In this business, we do not truly work with an entire company. We work with one or two people inside it.

The logo may be prestigious. But those people listen, respond, understand the project and decide to carry it further.

The strength of a relationship usually rests on three things: talent, style and human compatibility.

Talent gives a reason to begin.

Style gives a reason to remember.

Human quality gives a reason to continue.

The artist is not looking for an abstract country in which to 'succeed'. They are looking for people to whom their difference has value, then for relationships capable of carrying that difference further.

Never Wait Motionless Before a Closed Door

A territory or sector may not respond immediately. That does not mean the objective should be abandoned.

The artist can develop the catalogue, reputation or activity elsewhere, then return with new proof.

If they dream of music for media but receive no response, they can build an artist career, obtain radio play or make the catalogue more identifiable. When they return to publishers or agents, those people will no longer see the same project.

Not giving up does not mean repeating an ineffective approach forever. It means holding the direction while building the elements that will allow another approach to the door.

The greatest danger is not taking another route temporarily.

It is waiting motionless for someone to open the door.

Move your music first, observe where relationships begin to grow, then travel to consolidate them. A territory becomes strategic when it produces not only a project, but the next contact.

Tony Banks discusses the early Italian success of Nursery Cryme in a public interview with Chris Welch: [Genesis News — Tony Banks Q&A](#).

Choose the Economic Engine That Fits the Artist

The best economic engine is not the most prestigious. It is the one your music can feed and you can operate without becoming someone else.

When independent artists seek to support themselves through music, they are often given a long list of possibilities: live performance, streaming, synchronisation, publishing, writing for others, production, teaching, direct sales, licences or commissions.

That diversity can seem reassuring.

It can also become another form of dispersion.

The artist tries to develop everything at once. They prepare a concert, approach music supervisors, offer production services, publish across several platforms and begin an online course. They work enormously hard, but no activity receives enough energy to become a genuine engine.

Multiple income sources are important to career resilience. They do not all need to be born at the same moment.

At the beginning, the artist should identify the economic door best suited to the music, their abilities, the opportunities that respond and the professional life they genuinely want to build.

The Music Indicates Certain Doors

Not every work circulates in the same way.

A singer-songwriter who wants recognition as the principal artist will often need live performance. The stage allows the audience to meet the person carrying the words, voice and story. It develops visibility, creates a direct relationship and can then increase listening across the catalogue.

Disliking travel, rehearsals or the organisation surrounding concerts may not be enough to remove live performance from the system. If the objective remains a performing career, the artist may have to accept that constraint during at least part of the development period.

The same songwriter may instead decide that the real ambition is to write for other artists. The stage is then not necessarily the engine. Energy should go towards publishers, performers, producers and relationships capable of circulating the songs.

Instrumental music more naturally opens other possibilities. It can accompany documentaries, television programmes, trailers, idents, radio spots and many other uses connected to moving images.

This does not mean a song will never be synchronised or an instrumental composer should never perform publicly.

It means the nature of the work makes certain doors more accessible than others.

A realistic strategy begins with that observation, not with whichever income source everyone happens to be discussing.

Real Synchronisation Is Not What People Imagine

When young artists hear *synchronisation*, they often think immediately of film or a major advertising campaign.

Those placements exist, but they are rare, fiercely contested and often controlled by established publishers or partners.

Much of the everyday work lies elsewhere: documentaries, factual programmes, television magazines, institutional content, idents and radio spots.

Demand for instrumental music in this environment is considerable. Songs are much harder to place because lyrics already impose a subject, language, voice and meaning on the image. They can be relevant when they address exactly the required theme, but they remain the exception.

A singer with ten songs should not build an entire business model on the belief that television will synchronise them.

They can find a sync agent to pursue genuine opportunities, but the main engine will probably lie elsewhere.

An instrumental artist with a clear language and an initial coherent catalogue can reasonably devote more effort to this door. An agent can represent existing tracks while specialist publishers are approached for new works suited to their needs.

The commercial catalogue and the media catalogue can then complement one another without necessarily becoming the same thing.

Why Music for Media Became My Engine

I do not perform live.

The stage itself does not make me particularly uncomfortable. Everything around it does: travel, fatigue, organisation and the work required before and after each concert.

Music for media appeared almost naturally in my career. It was not originally the result of a grand plan. An opportunity arose, my instrumental language suited it and I immediately loved the activity.

I then devoted my efforts to it.

This door paid better over the long term, rewarded my ability to produce a substantial catalogue and allowed me to work in an environment compatible with my personality. It became one of the economic pillars of my career.

Another artist might have encountered the same opportunity and refused it because their true desire was the stage.

They would not necessarily have been wrong.

An economic engine must generate money, but it must also allow the artist to continue creating. If it demands a life they hate every day, it will eventually exhaust the career it was meant to support.

The decision sits where four realities meet:

- what the music can naturally serve;
- what the artist does particularly well;
- which doors genuinely begin to respond;
- which professional life they are willing to repeat for several years.

Choosing Does Not Mean Becoming Trapped

The professional world resembles a large stadium in which the action takes place.

It has many entrances: live performance, radio, publishing, synchronisation, production, collaboration, a territory or even an unexpected track.

The first difficulty is getting inside.

The chosen door will probably influence the beginning of the journey, but it does not condemn the artist to remain in the same part of the stadium. A recognised performer can write for others. A producer can become an artist. A synchronised track can attract radio or a label. A live career can prove to a publisher that an audience already exists.

The initial engine is not a definitive identity.

It is the first activity capable of putting enough energy into circulation to finance, expose or strengthen the rest of the catalogue.

The artist must still verify that it produces more than temporary agitation.

Do professionals ask for more music?

Do concerts bring new listeners into the catalogue?

Do placements become regular?

Do collaborations create further relationships?

Does the income help finance the next works?

If nothing returns, change the approach, try another door or strengthen the proposition.

If an activity begins producing repeated results, give it enough time and resources to become a genuine engine.

The artist can then build other income around that first strength so that no single company, platform or activity controls the entire future.

But diversification follows identification.

Before multiplying engines, start one.

Do not choose your business model because it works for another artist. Choose the door your music can open and the professional life you are prepared to build behind it.

Remain in control of your career

Independence does not mean keeping everything or doing everything alone. It means understanding the value exchanged, protecting a centre of gravity and building an economy that always leaves the artist able to decide and create what comes next.

Use the Master as Leverage and Protect Your Publishing

Independence does not mean keeping every right on principle. It means knowing which rights can advance the career and which must protect its future.

In independent music, ownership is often presented as an absolute rule.

Artists should own every master, retain all publishing rights and refuse every assignment.

That position appears protective.

It can also become so rigid that it prevents a career from moving forward.

A right is an asset. Entrusting it to a partner can be an excellent decision if that partner creates value far greater than the value surrendered.

The real question is not:

Must I keep everything?

It is:

Which right am I exchanging, for what value, and what will I build next?

The answer begins with the different strategic roles of the master and publishing.

The Master Can Finance a Stage

The master is a specific recording of a work.

It can be distributed, licensed to a project, used in synchronisation or entrusted to a label.

An artist can therefore use a master as leverage.

A non-exclusive licence allows a partner to exploit the recording within a defined framework without preventing the artist from granting other licences. This allowed *Sirocco* to circulate through numerous compilations while its general exploitation remained under my control.

An exclusive licence can also be acceptable if its territory, duration and purpose are clearly defined.

Whatever the contract is called, identify the rights entrusted, permitted uses, territory, duration, exclusivity and return conditions. Under French law, an assignment of authors' rights must, among other things, define each transferred right and delimit its scope, purpose, place and duration.^[1]

Even an assignment can sometimes be justified.

A label may finance an entire project, provide access to an otherwise unreachable market, bring international exposure or establish a decisive professional relationship. The master is not simply sold. It is exchanged for a more important stage of the career.

A defined project—a single, album or collaboration—should not, however, commit every future work. The artist must be able to use the reputation, contacts and credits gained to build again under their own control.

Assigning one master to climb a step can be strategic.

Assigning every master because no other solution was ever built creates dependency.

Publishing Protects a Deeper Value

Publishing concerns the rights attached to the composition.

One work may be embodied in many masters. It can be covered, rearranged, adapted or synchronised in a new version. Recordings change; the composition remains.

This is why I regard my publishing catalogue as the deepest core of my legacy.

I can be relatively flexible with a master when a precise opportunity justifies it.

I find it far harder to assign publishing rights permanently.

The value received must then belong to the long term: a significant advance, access to a territory, competent administration, exploitation I could not obtain alone or a relationship with a company that genuinely understands my objectives.

An advance is often a useful signal. The publisher commits its own money and has an economic interest in recouping it from the contractual income. But it guarantees neither work nor success.

Understanding of the project, reputation, past results, the people responsible for the catalogue and their ability to exploit it remain essential.

A contract that places the work in a drawer creates no value, however prestigious the publisher's name.

Assignment, Administration and Sub-Publishing Are Not the Same

There are several possibilities between keeping everything and assigning everything.

Where an artist already has a publishing entity, it may remain the publisher while entrusting only catalogue administration to a partner. The partner registers works, collects certain income or resolves problems, but the artist's entity retains the relevant publishing rights.

Without a publishing entity, the artist can still retain rights and learn to administer works as a songwriter, within the collective-management system and law applicable in the territory.

The artist can also conclude a territory-limited sub-publishing agreement. An Italian, Japanese or American partner then works the catalogue in a market it understands better without necessarily receiving worldwide control.^[2]

This is the structure I now prefer.

I am my own publisher, registered as such with Sacem, and work with territorial partners when their presence creates real value.

This allows me to retain the centre of the catalogue while giving it several local relays.

For a young artist, the initial objective is not necessarily to obtain the legal status of a publisher immediately. It is to retain rights, register works correctly and

learn to administer them until the catalogue has enough value to justify a structure or attract a serious collaborator.

One track can trigger that process. It is better to wait for it than assign a fragile catalogue simply to say that you have a publisher.

Can Both Master and Publishing Be Assigned?

Yes.

But the exchange must open an activity or stage that survives the rights surrendered.

An artist may assign the master and certain publishing rights in a fully financed album if the agreement is genuinely limited to that project and freedom returns afterwards.

Check provisions that can extend the commitment indirectly: options, exclusivity, preference over future works, re-recording restrictions, territory, duration and use of the artist's name. A supposedly limited project can control what follows through these mechanisms.

The same choice may be made to enter a new activity: composing for a film, writing for an established artist or creating a specific catalogue for a specialist publisher.

What the artist retains may not be ownership of the work.

It may be a credit, reputation, experience, contacts and a new position in the professional world.

Those assets can become more valuable than the future income of one isolated project.

But if a partner requests master and publishing rights without significant finance, real access, an exploitation commitment or foreseeable career transformation, it is not proposing an exchange.

It is asking the artist to surrender the future.

Always Keep a Centre of Gravity

In my view, an independent artist making only commercial music should control at least one of the two principal assets: masters or publishing.

If masters are entrusted to a competent label, protect the compositions.

If a publisher can genuinely develop the works, retain enough control over the recordings.

This is not a universal legal formula.

It is a strategic balance.

Artists should always possess something that continues growing with them independently of the current partner.

The size of the percentage sometimes matters less than the ability to decide. A catalogue need not be owned one hundred per cent to remain a legacy. But the artist must know what remains under their control, what can still be offered and when freedom returns.

The danger is not only assigning a right.

It is assigning every path through which the next stage could be built.

Contract forms and the effects of assignment vary by territory. Any worldwide, exclusive or long-term assignment deserves review by an adviser competent in the applicable law.

A master can help you reach the next step. Publishing can carry your work for a lifetime. Never exchange them without knowing which finances the present and which protects the future.

[French Intellectual Property Code, Article L. 131-3.](#)

[Sacem — Practical Guide for Music Publishers.](#)

Exchange Rights for Genuinely Greater Value

The value of a contract is measured not by what it promises, but by the verifiable resources the partner commits to the rights it receives.

A music contract can commit in minutes what an artist spent ten years building.

A famous name, international release or enthusiastic contact can make an opportunity seem exceptional. But a proposal is not yet value.

A partner may request a master, a publishing share or several years of control while contributing little that is concrete. The artist must compare the lasting value of the rights surrendered with what the contract will enable them to build.

That value can take several forms:

- an advance or finance;
- credible access to a market;
- a team, skill or network;
- reputation and credits capable of opening the next door;
- precise means of exploitation;
- involvement that could not be obtained alone.

‘We will try to push the track on Spotify’ does not justify the assignment of an asset.

The Advance Also Measures Commitment

An advance is not merely money received before future income.

It requires the partner to share the risk.

A label once offered me a contract with no advance while presenting itself as an important company. I replied:

‘If you are an important label but cannot pay me an advance, I must conclude that I am richer than you, that you need me more than I need you and that your offer does not interest me.’

The label ultimately paid the advance I requested.

Not every agreement without an advance is bad. A young company may provide work, a network or expertise whose value exceeds its means. But a powerful company asking for significant rights must be able to demonstrate that power.

An advance does not guarantee success, but it transforms words into economic commitment.

Require a Commitment to Exploit

Within my method, assigning rights without a genuine exploitation commitment is unacceptable.

The applicable law may already impose certain duties. In France, for example, a publishing agreement requires the publisher to ensure permanent and continuous exploitation according to professional practice.^[2] But that protection does not replace a precise understanding of what the partner promises or of the remedies actually available under the relevant contract and law.

The obligation should not promise a result.

No label can guarantee streams, no publisher a synchronisation and no agent radio play. Results depend on decisions they do not entirely control.

The contract should commit concrete, verifiable means proportionate to the rights surrendered.

It may specify a budget, campaign, team, territories, prospecting or programme of action.

Simply placing a project online is not exploitation.

If the partner performs the agreed actions without achieving the result, the original exchange may still have been honoured.

The artist can negotiate reversion or another rights-return mechanism from the outset. They may request one later, as I have done, but it is not automatically granted merely because exploitation disappoints. Other remedies may exist

depending on the applicable law and breach; a competent adviser should evaluate them.^[3]

Never discover after signature that the partner's only obligation was delivering a file to platforms.

Ask Them to Restate the Offer

When evaluating a proposal, I often ask the other person to explain it again as though I were hearing it for the first time.

I listen to what they request, what they bring and how the contract will work. The inconsistencies I noticed in writing are quickly confirmed.

A subject poorly understood on paper is usually understood even less when it must be explained aloud. Hesitation, contradiction and vagueness immediately reveal whether the person understands the mechanism being proposed.

This also tests competence. A flaw may arise from an attempt to take advantage of the artist or simply from poor understanding of industry practice.

When the legal framework is clear, I can identify precisely what does not work. A bad contract can then collapse in minutes.

For a worldwide agreement, long term or significant assignment, be represented by a lawyer, agent or adviser genuinely experienced in that type of contract and territory.

I have sometimes allowed a respected professional to take over a negotiation in my name. Bad offers rarely survive someone who knows their true value.

Nothing Exists Until It Is Signed

In this business, an agreement that seems ninety-nine per cent certain can still disappear.

I experienced this in France, Japan and London. One day, my publisher was signing his copy of a very important contract when the telephone rang. Months of negotiation were cancelled within seconds.

My rule is never to speak publicly about a project before every party has signed.

Even a signature does not guarantee that the public will see the result. My music was selected and paid for a major Yves Saint Laurent campaign. At the last moment, the entire campaign was cancelled. The contract existed and the work was paid, but no one ever heard it.

Distinguish contractual certainty from public certainty. Do not announce a negotiation and, where dissemination can still disappear, wait until it has actually happened.

Over time, this discretion builds credibility. Reputations travel quickly in music.

Once a contract is signed or your word is given, honour it. I have too often seen artists accept terms, then attempt to renegotiate after production because the track suddenly seemed more valuable. Be demanding before you sign; when you freely accepted a valid agreement and the other party fulfils its obligations, stand by it.

Aki Morishita once reminded me that this is a small world in which everyone knows everyone. Breaking your word can close more doors than a bad contract.

The story of Eddie Van Halen's solo on *Beat It* takes this principle very far. Quincy Jones asked him to play on Michael Jackson's track. Van Halen accepted without payment as a favour to the producer and recorded one of pop music's most famous solos.^[1]

The track became a vast success. Yet Van Halen continued to describe the performance as a favour. Already famous in rock, he was also exposed to a worldwide pop audience. The indirect value in recognition and reputation cannot be calculated.

The lesson is not that musicians should work for free. It is that value sometimes appears somewhere other than immediate payment—and that an agreement should not be renegotiated simply because the result exceeds expectations.

Honouring your word does not mean accepting the other party's failure to honour theirs. Before signing, examine both parties' obligations, the consequences of breach and any termination or reversion mechanisms available and negotiable.

**Do not sign for the promise of a result no one controls.
Exchange your rights for commitment, resources and
real value. Then honour your own commitments with
the same rigour you demand from the other party.**

Eddie Van Halen described recording the solo without payment as a favour to Quincy Jones in a [2012 CNN interview](#). The session is also reported by [ABC News](#).

[French Intellectual Property Code, Article L. 132-12.](#)

Under French law, Article L. 131-5-2 provides, under certain conditions and according to sector-specific arrangements, a termination right where there has been no exploitation after an exclusive transfer: [French Intellectual Property Code, Article L. 131-5-2](#).

Build a Resilient Economy and Reinvest in Your Freedom

Money earned by music should do more than finance the present. It should make the artist freer to create what comes next.

One source of income may suddenly become enormously important in an artist's career.

Enjoy that success, continue developing it and never entrust the entire future to it.

I summarise the principle this way:

Enjoy the success. Never trust it.

When a platform, territory, partner or activity works, it would be absurd to limit its growth in the name of diversification. It would be equally dangerous to build an entire life on the assumption that its rules will remain unchanged.

A dominant source must therefore perform two functions: pay for what it produces today and help build what will protect the artist tomorrow.

Resilience does not mean instantly possessing ten profitable activities. It means never allowing one company, platform or client to control the possibility of continuing.

Give Money Several Missions

Independent artists sometimes forget to pay themselves.

They reinvest everything in the next track, promotion or equipment, treating their own labour as the one expense that can wait. Eventually, this weakens

creation itself. An artist who can never live from what they build has not created a sustainable system.

Part of the income should simply pay for the work already completed.

The rest can serve several purposes according to the situation:

- build a safety reserve;
- create or improve new works;
- maintain and enrich the existing catalogue;
- buy better tools;
- fund training;
- engage musicians or outside expertise;
- buy time and therefore creative freedom.

There is no universal allocation. An acoustic album may justify hiring musicians. A research period may require training or a new instrument. An established catalogue may need restoration, documentation or better presentation. An uncertain period may make the safety reserve the priority.

The best reinvestment is not necessarily the one promising most streams. It is the one that increases the artist's lasting ability to create, control and develop the work.

Let the Structure Grow with the Need

Acting professionally from the beginning does not mean immediately creating a heavy company.

For nearly ten years, I used **Anything Goze** as a trading name. My releases and contracts appeared under that name, and professionals learnt to recognise it. It gave my work a framework without imposing disproportionate administration.

I created Goze Limited later, when my needs had genuinely changed. I wanted to bring rights together within a legal entity, establish publishing activity and sign other artists.

The company did not create the career. The career eventually made the company necessary.

A young artist can already distinguish the professional activity from the individual: choose a name, preserve documents, use a dedicated address and organise expenditure, contracts and the catalogue. The legal form should come

when income, rights, partners or responsibilities justify it under the rules of the country.

A structure should solve a real problem. If it consumes more time, money and energy than it protects, it has probably arrived too early.

Separate the Studio from the Office

The independent artist performs at least two jobs.

They create and they administer.

Those activities use different kinds of attention. Answering emails, filing contracts and checking metadata place the mind in a different state from composition and recording.

I therefore separate the studio from the office. My studio remains a creative environment. For administration, I use an old MacBook that travels with me. An old PC would perform exactly the same function.

The machine's value lies not in its power, but in the boundary it creates.

I can organise the label, answer messages and manage the catalogue without turning the studio into an office. When I return to create, I do not find the administrative tasks left open a few minutes earlier.

The investment is small. The gain in attention is considerable.

Protect What Machines Cannot Recreate

My masters, photographs, videos and other essential catalogue assets are stored on a portable drive that moves between the studio and office computers.

A fixed copy of that drive is stored separately.

The portable drive maintains continuity of work. The copy protects the legacy if the first drive is lost, stolen or damaged. Where possible, an additional backup in another location prevents one incident from reaching every copy.

Equipment can be replaced. A lost archive cannot always be.

A catalogue is more than the files available on platforms. It includes masters, versions, visuals, contracts, credits, metadata and everything that will still allow the work to be identified, exploited or restored in twenty years.

That archive is part of the artist's legacy. It deserves the same attention as rights and income.

Do not reinvest only to produce more. Use every success to build a career that can survive the loss of an income source, platform or machine—and that always returns to you the freedom to create.

Never Start from Zero Again

A career becomes sustainable when every new work rests on stronger foundations than the one before it.

This method does not promise to make an artist famous.

It cannot guarantee a playlist, radio play or the opening of an expected door.

No one entirely controls the destiny of a work.

But the artist can decide what remains after the exposure has passed.

They can release a track, obtain plays and retain nothing from the period. Three months later, they must find another image, rebuild a story, recover an audience, understand the rights and convince the same professionals again.

Or they can bring every new work into a living system. The track joins an identifiable catalogue, a home, a direct relationship, an archive, documented rights and a network that already knows the work.

The commercial result remains uncertain.

The starting point is no longer the same.

What a Platform Cannot Take Away

I would say that an artist no longer starts from zero when they still possess what a platform cannot remove:

- a clearly recognised artistic identity;
- an organised catalogue whose rights they understand and sufficiently control;
- a website and mailing list through which to communicate directly;
- a loyal community, however modest, prepared to follow elsewhere;
- properly preserved masters, visuals, stories and documents;
- relationships with radio, media, artists and professionals;

- several income possibilities so that no company can place the entire career at risk;
- a working method that allows creation to continue without rebuilding the organisation for every release.

The artist will not necessarily own one hundred per cent of every work. A master may have been licensed, publishing entrusted or a project shared with a partner.

Independence does not require keeping everything.

It requires a centre of gravity strong enough to continue when a partner, contract or platform disappears.

Signs of a Career Beginning to Last

The first sign is not a number.

The audience, however modest, returns naturally to each release because it recognises itself in the artist's world, not merely in one track.

The identity becomes clearer. Style may evolve, but a signature remains perceptible. People no longer hear only a song; they recognise a way of looking at the world.

Professionals also identify the work. Major opportunities may not yet have arrived, but radio stations, journalists, publishers or programmers know who the artist is and what the work represents.

The catalogue begins to form a genuine legacy. Each new work no longer replaces what came before. It can confirm, illuminate, reactivate or open it to another audience.

Finally, the artist works according to a system. They no longer chase every platform or allow each algorithm change to redefine the entire strategy. They know where the home is, how works are documented, how they communicate and which activity finances the next one.

At this stage, the career is not certain.

It is cumulative.

Not Every Work Needs to Succeed in the Same Way

A track may receive few plays and no direct income while strengthening the identity, reactivating part of the catalogue or creating a lasting professional relationship.

Within this system, it may be strategically successful.

Another may generate millions of plays without leading listeners towards later works. That success remains real. It can bring income, recognition or proof capable of opening a door later. But it does not automatically transform the entire career.

The method does not ask every track to accomplish the same mission.

It asks the artist to recognise what the work truly left behind.

Nor does every release require the same promotional intensity. Independent artists have limited resources. Not every track needs radio servicing, a campaign or the same budget.

Promotion remains important, but it must be targeted. Resources can be concentrated on flagship works, those that best represent a period or have the greatest potential to open a door. Others can enrich the catalogue, serve the existing audience or wait until a new context brings them back into the light.

Every work deserves to be released properly. Not every work requires the same force of launch.

Some will become main entrances. Others will consolidate a period. Some will remain isolated stones until a new structure gives them meaning. Others may have served only to show the artist where to go next.

A sustainable career removes neither failure nor uncertainty.

It turns what every experience leaves behind into material for continuing.

Stay at the Helm

Remaining in control does not mean doing everything alone.

The artist can work with a label, publisher, distributor, producer, agent or musicians. They can delegate what others do better, change territory and allow a partner to develop a precise right.

But decisions defining the artist's identity, narrative and the deepest direction of the work must continue to belong to the artist.

A partner can illuminate the path.

They cannot walk it in the artist's place. If they do, the project becomes theirs and tells a different story.

The true objective is not maximum popularity. It is maximum artistic freedom, continuity and capacity to decide.

A musician who sufficiently controls the catalogue, knows the audience and can wake each morning to create the music they believe in has already built something extraordinary.

Fame may arrive.

It will be a consequence, never the direction.

To Be or Not to Be: Be Before You Have

Building a system must never become another reason to postpone creation.

Many artists tell themselves:

'When I have better musicians, I can make that sound.'

'When I own that new equipment, I will begin the project.'

'If only I had a drummer, a real studio or more money...'

My doctrine is simpler: **make something with what you have.**

When I moved from Tokyo to London, I left a world in which studios and musicians possessed the latest equipment and entered a scene where young artists sometimes arrived with an old synthesiser and a half-broken drum machine.

Yet they created sounds I had never heard before.

They did not ask their equipment for permission to become the artists they wanted to be. They used its limitations to invent something else.

Limited means may prevent you from making exactly the sound you imagined. They do not excuse a lack of creativity.

If I have no drummer, I can wait indefinitely to meet one or find another way to make the rhythm live. That unexpected solution may one day become part of my signature.

Making do with what you have does not mean refusing progress or pretending tools are useless. Technique, equipment and collaboration can express a thought more faithfully. When a limitation genuinely weakens the work, learn, collaborate or invest.

But the dreamed-of tool must never become an excuse not to begin. A constraint does more than dictate what an artist cannot do. It may force them to discover what no one else would have thought of doing in that way.

The same applies to attitude. The Sex Pistols did not wait for commercial success before embodying the Sex Pistols. Their identity, energy and way of occupying space existed before market validation.

Being before having does not mean pretending to be a star or inventing success. It means adopting now the standards, courage, language and discipline of the artist already living within you.

Even if fame never comes, the journey will have been lived rather than continually postponed.

This book has built the ecosystem that must protect the work. The next journey begins here: in the workshop, before the tools already available, at the precise moment when the artist must stop waiting and create.

Plant the Next Tree

My first objective remains to create the most beautiful catalogue I can.

My second is to transmit what nearly forty years of music, travel, contracts, successes and mistakes have taught me.

These objectives are not separate. The catalogue is itself an experience to pass on. And transmission has value only if I continue doing the work I describe.

If someone can one day rest in the shade of a tree, it is because another person planted it long before.

Building a catalogue means planting that tree.

It may generate income, accompany a life, comfort someone, inspire another artist or reveal its true value long after the release of the track from which it grew.

The journey is not about reaching one definitive number.

It is about leaving behind something that continues to live while retaining enough freedom to plant the next tree.

**You will never entirely control the destiny of a track.
But you can build what remains after it passes. Create
the work. Build the system. Stay at the helm.**

THE WORKSHOP

Test Your System

This final section gathers the optional exercises associated with the units of *Be the Dream*.

The book can be read in full without using these tools. The Workshop is for readers who want to examine their own situation, identify a weakness or explore a particular principle in practical terms.

WORKSHOP 1 — Your Rule of Priority

Associated unit: The Music Before the System

For one month, divide the time devoted to your career into four categories: creating or completing works; structuring and protecting the catalogue; nurturing the existing audience; and seeking new opportunities and listeners.

At the end of the month, examine the real distribution. If creation has disappeared behind communication, administration or visibility, the system has replaced its reason for existing.

There is no universal allocation, but one rule must remain visible:

the career must support creation; creation must not become the career's residual activity.

WORKSHOP 2 — Allow a Direction to Appear

Associated unit: Create Enough to See a Direction Emerge

Gather your ten most recent creations, released or not. Classify them without immediately seeking a genre: emotion, melodic character, energy, sound, instrumentation, audience response or pleasure experienced while creating.

Then identify what recurs across several works. Your direction may lie not in the category you chose, but in the relationship between those recurring elements.

WORKSHOP 3 — Remove the Genre

Associated unit: Build an Identity Stronger Than a Genre

Describe your identity without naming a genre, platform or another artist.

Look for what would remain recognisable if you changed instruments, tempo or style tomorrow: your relationship to melody, words, silence, groove, imagery or the world.

WORKSHOP 4 — Draw the Catalogue's Relationships

Associated unit: A Track Is an Event; a Catalogue Is a Legacy

Place your works on a timeline. Connect those sharing a period, emotion, search, story or audience.

If the links remain invisible, do not force musical coherence. Look for the thread in the artist's journey: what were you trying to understand, leave or build in each period?

WORKSHOP 5 — Examine the Back Catalogue

Associated unit: Organise, Maintain and Reactivate the Back Catalogue

Choose ten older works and check each one's availability, best master, cover, credits, metadata, story, rights, links and possible uses.

Rank problems by urgency. Repair first what prevents the work from existing, being identified or being exploited. Continue creating in parallel.

WORKSHOP 6 — Define a Visual Grammar

Associated unit: The Cover Is the First Visual Door

Look at all your covers together without listening to the music. Find the colours, typography, framing, textures or signs that could belong to the same world.

Define three elements capable of connecting future releases without making them identical.

WORKSHOP 7 — Audit the Visual Legacy

Associated unit: Build and Protect a Visual Legacy

For every important cover, locate the source file, creator's name, contract or licence, invoice and limits of use.

Any visual whose origin or rights remain uncertain belongs on a list for clarification. The objective is not to replace everything, but to know where the risk lies.

WORKSHOP 8 — Map the Roles

Associated unit: Understand the Different Families of Rights

Take one track and list separately: lyricist, composer, arranger, performers, record producer, phonogram producer, master owner or licensee, publisher or administrator.

For every name, record what the person created, what they own, their immediate payment and any future income. Every uncertain box reveals a missing conversation or document.

WORKSHOP 9 — Reconstruct a Release's Identity

Associated unit: Document the Work Before and After Release

Choose an existing release and try to gather within fifteen minutes its master, cover, ISRC, release UPC, credits, contracts, registrations and metadata.

Anything you cannot find quickly should enter the central register.

WORKSHOP 10 — Build the Neighbouring-Rights Map

Associated unit: Neighbouring Rights: the Catalogue's Invisible Money

List your capacities on each recording: principal artist, musician, other performer, phonogram producer or relevant rightsholder.

Then identify the organisations and mandates covering each capacity and territory. Check both gaps and overlaps.

WORKSHOP 11 — Test the Distributor's Strength

Associated unit: Choose a Distributor for the Next Twenty Years

Imagine that your catalogue contains two hundred tracks and that you cease all activity for a year.

Calculate the real cost, check permanence, correction options, data access, migration terms and who could solve a problem. Then ask whether you would still entrust your legacy to that system.

WORKSHOP 12 — Name the Door Opened by a Track

Associated unit: Every Track Should Open a Door into the Catalogue

For your next release, choose the principal value it should leave behind: entrance into the catalogue, proof of identity, direct relationship, professional contact, new use or future income.

After release, observe the door the audience actually chose. It may differ from the one you prepared.

WORKSHOP 13 — Reduce the Home to Its Essentials

Associated unit: Build Your Home

Imagine that every platform disappears tomorrow. In which space you still control could the public understand who you are, listen to your music and leave contact details?

Design a home of no more than three pages: entrance, music and relationship. Add a room only if it performs an indispensable function.

WORKSHOP 14 — Give Every Platform a Function

Associated unit: Choose Each Platform According to Its Function

List every platform used, the time it consumes and the concrete movement it creates: discovery, listening, sale, relationship, community, professional proof or archive.

A platform with no clear function should be corrected, reduced or abandoned in favour of a more useful channel.

WORKSHOP 15 — Look Behind the Counter

Associated unit: Understand What Lies Behind the Numbers

Choose one particularly successful track. Separate its listening by platform, territory, playlist, radio and period. Examine concentration and what followed: returning listeners, catalogue exploration, contacts or income.

Do not evaluate only the size of the movement. Evaluate its diversity and what it left behind.

WORKSHOP 16 — Inventory a Track's Doors

Associated unit: *Sirocco*: One Track, Several Career Doors

Take your strongest work and list every function it could perform without being assigned to one partner: licence, compilation, radio, live performance, synchronisation, proof of style, new commission, access to a territory or beginning of another catalogue.

Compare every offer with all the doors it might close.

WORKSHOP 17 — Test a Territory Remotely

Associated unit: Test Other Territories and Build a Multiplying Network

Choose a territory in which your difference may become more visible. Identify ten genuinely suitable contacts and study their preferred submission procedures.

The first objective is neither travel nor a contract. It is to discover whether a conversation begins and whether the first contact can lead to the next.

WORKSHOP 18 — Choose an Economic Engine

Associated unit: Choose the Economic Engine That Fits the Artist

Evaluate possible activities against four criteria: compatibility with your music, available skills, genuine desire to practise the activity and the existence of a credible first door.

Choose one principal engine to develop for a defined period. The others remain possibilities, not simultaneous obligations.

WORKSHOP 19 — Identify the Rights’ Centre of Gravity

Associated unit: Use the Master as Leverage and Protect Your Publishing

For every important part of the catalogue, record what you still control: master, composition, territory, duration, licence, administration and decision-making ability.

Check that no agreement simultaneously assigns every route through which the next stage could be built.

WORKSHOP 20 — Measure the Proposed Exchange

Associated unit: Exchange Rights for Genuinely Greater Value

Rewrite every proposal in two columns: rights and control given to the partner; resources, finance, access, obligations and expertise received in return.

Separate promises of results from verifiable commitments. If the exchange covers a long term or broad territory, have the contract reviewed under the applicable law.

WORKSHOP 21 — Test Economic Resilience

Associated unit: Build a Resilient Economy and Reinvest in Your Freedom

Classify income by source and by the company controlling it. Imagine the leading source disappearing for twelve months.

Then decide what share of future income will strengthen the reserve, works, tools, training, collaborators and direct assets.

WORKSHOP 22 — What Can No Longer Be Taken Away

Associated unit: Never Start from Zero Again

Write down what would remain if your principal platform closed tomorrow: works, rights, identity, website, mailing list, community, relationships, files, skills and independent income.

Repeat the inventory once a year. A sustainable career is measured not only by what has grown, but by what continues to exist when the scenery changes.

Glossary of Roles and Assets

These definitions support the reading of this manual. Their precise legal classification may vary between territories and contracts.

Lyricist — The person who creates the lyrics or text of a work.

Composer — The person who creates the music of the work.

Arranger — The person who organises and develops the musical form of a composition without automatically becoming a co-writer.

Performer — A person who sings, plays or otherwise performs the recorded or presented work.

Principal artist — The performer under whose name the recording is principally presented.

Record producer — The person guiding the artistic realisation of the recording. This role does not automatically create ownership of the master.

Phonogram producer — The person or entity taking the initiative and responsibility for the first sound fixation, according to the definition applicable in the territory.

Music publisher — A partner exploiting and developing works under the rights and obligations established by a publishing agreement.

Publishing administrator — A partner mandated to manage or collect certain rights without necessarily receiving ownership.

Sub-publisher — A partner entrusted with exploiting or administering a catalogue in a defined territory under an agreement with the publisher or rightsholders.

Work — The musical composition and, where applicable, lyrics. It may exist through several recordings.

Master — The final sound recording or reference version being exploited. In professional usage, the word may refer both to the file and to rights in the phonogram; the contract must specify what is meant.

Catalogue — An organised body of works, recordings and assets connected to the artist's journey.

Licence — Permission to exploit certain rights within a defined framework without necessarily transferring ownership.

Assignment — A transfer of rights within the limits established by the contract and applicable law.

Mandate — Authority granted to a partner to administer, represent or collect certain rights on the owner's behalf.

ISRC — The international identifier of a specific recording. It is neither proof of ownership nor a payment instruction.

UPC/EAN — The commercial identifier of a release such as a single, EP or album.

Neighbouring or related rights — Families of rights connected particularly to performances and phonograms, distinct from rights in the composition.

ISRC root or prefix — The part assigned to a registrant authorised to create ISRCs. It identifies the origin of the code's allocation, not necessarily the recording's current owner.

Content ID — YouTube's automated content-identification system, administered directly or through a partner holding the necessary rights and mandates.