

Song Talk Radio DIY Release Outline

There are so many outlets that digital distributors, such as CD Baby, DistroKid and so on, don't reach; such as pirate radio stations, local community stations and college stations.

I want to give some of the experience I had with learning about DIY distribution, along with traditional digital distribution.

There is a lot of detailed information and I left out many details because of the time we have and information overload. Listeners will have to do some of their own research to fill in the gaps.

This is not a 10 steps to success process!

Here is an outline to start.

Pre-Recording Steps

Recording Essentials

Organization, Codes and Further Registration

Metadata and Distribution Prep

Distribution Strategy

The main idea detail detail, detail and to be as organized as possible. There is a lot of diverse information to be gathered and put together.

The Song

- What needs to be done with the song even before recording.
- If you have co-writers you must get an agreement with every co-writer that allows you to record the song. Otherwise there could be legal implications if one of the co-writes does not want you to record the song or disagrees with any changes you consider in the song.
- When you have the agreement and have even the roughest demo recording of the song, **register it with SOCAN** (Society of Composers, Authors and Music

Publishers of Canada) both in Performing and Reproduction Rights. The organization collects license fees through a music licensing program approved by the Copyright Board of Canada. If you are not a member - JOIN and get your co-writers to JOIN. It's free.

- Make sure you have the Song title correct and you have the full legal name of the co-writers.
- Eventually, if the song title or the length of the song changes when you record it, that can be revised with SOCAN.

Recording the Song

- Basic things to consider on the quality of the recording even before details of arrangement, mixing or mastering.
- If you record it yourself or use a producer make sure you are recording at the highest quality. Minimum should be WAV 48kHz and 24 bit. This will be the base for other formats you will need for distribution.
- What type of files you want to end up with and why.
- Make sure you have an agreement with the producer that they will provide Mixed and Mastered Audio Files for each song: (1)WAV 48kHz-24 bit (2) WAV 41,1kHz-16 bit, (3) MP3-320 kbps. There are other files you can get the producer to supply and that's not part of this discussion.
- Make notes of the BPM and the KEY of each song. You will use it later.
- Make sure you are completely satisfied with the mixed and mastered recording because this is what you will be using for distribution. Any changes after the process is started are complex to deal with and will not be covered here.
- **NOTE:** if there are explicit lyrics you will need a "Clean" or "Radio Edit" version without the explicit lyrics.

Pro Tip

Make sure there is no silence at the beginning or the end (after the fade- out). Check all the Mastered files for the length. You can check by clicking once on the audio file and look at Get Info. It will tell you the length of the audio file. Make sure all the files are the same length or within one second.

Immediately After Recording and before anything else

Organizing Audio files to ensure easy access during distribution

- Having different Folders and files for different purposes
- Have a separate folder for each song and sub folders for the various audio file formats, master recording, lyrics and much more. The idea is to be as organized as possible because the process can get complex.
- At least have a Master Folder for the master recordings and a Distribution Folder

- The Distribution Folder will contain the audio files for distribution and also all the other things you will need like cover art, biographies, song descriptions and other data. Good idea to have one sub-folder for audio files with meta data and another sub-folder for audio files without meta data. It will become clear later.
- Consider making a template folder with the subfolders to use for all your songs.

- File naming is important.
- For your own Master file consider a naming convention of [Artist Name] - [Song Title] - [Version] - [Tech Spec].[ext]`
- Paul Gallagher Express - Holiday Song - Radio Edit - 48 24.WAV
- For distribution - Paul Gallagher Express - Holiday Song - Radio Edit.wav`

(ONLY use “Radio Edit” if the song is a distinct single, if it is the “Clean” or a shorter version, for radio play)

- Make sure to use exactly the same spelling (and spaces) on all the files, otherwise rights collection agencies won’t recognize the song.

- What to do with the song audio files
- Audio file registration with appropriate rights organizations and codes you will need.

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- When you registered the song with SOCAN you got two important codes an IPI code that identifies you as a person registered with SOCAN and an ISWC which identifies the work or song as registered with SOCAN.
- Next you need an ISRC code that identifies the recording, itself. You can get this if you distribute the song through CD Baby or DistroKid, or you can get one yourself by requesting one through **Connect Music Licensing** <https://connectmusic.ca/isrc/>

Pro TIP - whenever you input the ISRC code, make sure you capitalize all letters in the code. The code is letters and numbers. Even if you get a code from a source that does not capitalize the letters, capitalize them. That is the International Standard.

- **UPC Code** Another code you will need if you are doing a commercial release and hope to collect royalties on the recording itself. The best way to get that is releasing your song(s) through CD Baby, DistroKid or other distributors, otherwise you can buy it and it’s a little expensive.

Registering with Mediadata

ASAP, when you have the ISRC code, register the song with Mediadata. They monitor any radio play and streaming and report back to SOCAN.

Meta Data

- What is Meta Data? Information embedded in the audio file that has technical information like type of file, size etc. Also you will want to include information about the song, the artist, rights collection codes, mood/vibe, credits cover art, and lots of things a DJ or radio station will want to know.
- When to include it and where not.
- You will need two types of audio files for submitting
 - One set with NO Meta Data and One set with full Metadata
 - No meta data to Distributor (CD Baby), Mediabase, YouTube, BandCamp.
 - They will strip it anyway and that could cause problems
- **Meta Data app.** You will need to get an app to fill the metadata, some are free and some are a small cost. Anything you get is going to be a bit of a learning curve. The pay ones are usually easier. The one I use is called Meta, by Night Birds Evolve.
- **Spread Sheet** - Do research on the data you need and then make a spreadsheet to keep track of it especially if you release more than one track.

Some things you will need:

- Artist / Band Biographies - different types for different situations. Long ones short ones, sounds like, descriptive tags line, key words for tagging

Example

Paul Gallagher Express - Independent Toronto Songwriter. Crafting unfiltered stories and complex harmonies from a home studio. No trends, just honest experimentation and the sound of thought turning into song.

- Cover Artwork - there are specifications for size and content.
- Song descriptions - Long, short, vibe mood, sounds like, Key words for tagging

Long Description for "I Like it When it Snows"

It has an upbeat and simple hook that really captures the essence of R&B and Northern Soul, creating a cozy, introspective winter vibe. The song masterfully blends holiday cheer with a touch of subtle introspection. Its lyrics beautifully evoke the magic of snow while reflecting on feelings of shyness and solitude. 'I Like it When it Snows' harnesses those classic holiday harmonies to create a warm, yet melancholic atmosphere that's hard to resist.

Short Description - Joyful ode to snow's comforting embrace amid winter solitude and festive scenes.

Tag

Groovy walking meditation in the snow.

- Lyrics - research how Lyrics should be formatted for metadata
- Genres and Mood - **Pro Tip** - don't make them up - use industry standards as best as possible. Stations use these for programming.
- Tech specs: Song key, BPM, song length
- Personnel Credits - make sure the legal names are correctly spelled and that the name is the one that is registered to royalty collection organizations. Co-writers, producers, musicians, engineers, anyone else you want to include.
- Social Media Links

It's a bit tricky as not all Meta Data apps have all the categories that are expected and you have to put a lot of information in one category. I use a document or text editor to put the information together for a particular category then paste it into the right field in the app. It's too complex to explain here.

Example: This is what I would include in the Comments Field in the Meta Data app:

Comments: Paul Gallagher Express is an independent, non-performing songwriter who prioritizes storytelling and the sounds in his head. Based in Toronto, he operates from a DIY lab, free from signature styles and marketing pressures. This approach results in a diverse body of work characterized by sophisticated harmony and a unique, quirky perspective; Contact: (email address); Phone: XXX-XXX-XXXX; SOCAN IPI: XXXXXXXXX; Royalty: 100% (if co-writers include proper split); Attached in the email: PDF One-Sheet for file and social media links and other details.

Distribution Plan - things to get ready before a release

- What you do may depend on if this a commercial release, to make money, or not.
- Things you will need to do and have available when you send songs to outlets.
- Many of the things are already done for the Meta Data. Make sure it is organized.
- Prepare website, EPK and One-Pager

A One-Page is a single-page overview that gives a quick snapshot of who you are as an artist and the key details about your release—bio, highlights, links, and one or two focus tracks. It functions like a concise promo sheet so programmers and curators can quickly understand your sound, story, and how to access the music and credits. You may need two versions: one for Canadian distribution and one for international distribution - do research.

Distribution

- Establish a downloadable links folder. Some stations or platforms will not take direct files emailed to them and want a place to download from. You can create a folder on Google or Drop Box with links to either a folder for all the songs or individual songs. Make sure to keep it active for a couple of months so that stations and streamers have time to access the songs.
- Research alternate outlets, community and university radio stations, streaming, pirate stations, independent stations.
- Consider some paid distribution such **!earshot distro**. Some outlets have a subscription mode to upload more songs and have them played. Do research on the effectiveness of that.
- And then there is YouTube, SoundCloud, BandCamp, ReverbNation, etc.

“Wrapping up:

DIY distributing along with traditional distributing is a lot of work and can be worth it and fun. There are some creative parts, like the bios and the song descriptions, and it is still very administrative.

Remember the main point is details details; co-writer agreements, rights organization registration, correct Master Recording formats, clear file organization, metadata mastery, descriptions, bios, One-Sheets, and download folders. A producer could do a lot of the metadata input. You would still have to give the producer the information, so why not do it yourself and maybe see if you can get a reduced rate for doing some work yourself.