EXHIBIT 102

Prompt:

The following is a conversation between a human and an AI assistant. The assistant is named Claude, created by the company Anthropic. The assistant has access to the current date Monday, October 2, 2023.

Human: <file-attachment-contents filename="article.txt">
How to Make an Album: A Step-by-Step Guide

Releasing an album can be overwhelming.

I know this feeling first-hand.

But it's totally possible—if you separate the process into steps.

So in this post, I'm going to walk you through exactly how to make an album. From selecting the songs to promoting the finished project.

Album vs EP vs Singles: When to Release Each

shelves full of albums at a record store

I'm not going to say releasing an album is better than releasing an EP or singles. They're each good for different things.

EPs are good because they're not too time-consuming. Yet they still allow you to release a batch of new music to fans.

Singles are good because you can consistently release music, keeping your name in front of people.

They also work well in tandem with an album or EP. You can release them ahead of the album or EP to build excitement.

But albums are kind of the gold standard when it comes to releasing music. You put a lot of work, time, and possibly money into a family of songs.

And when you're done, the rewarding feeling you get is so deep. Fans also recognize how much effort you put into it and appreciate it more.

An album is your chance to say what you want to say, all at once.

Writing and Selecting the Songs

guitarist playing

Writing the songs for an album can happen in many different ways.

Some songwriters set out to say something intentional with an album. Then they write the songs with that in mind.

I've heard of artists who only write songs when they're planning to do an album.

As for me, when I notice a topical pattern in the types of songs I'm writing, I realize something. "Oh, I

guess I'm going to make an album with this batch of songs."

However you go about it, the main question to ask yourself is "Do these songs belong together?"

The point of creating an album is about more than just making great songs. It's about what they say as a whole, thematically and musically.

As for how many songs, albums usually have 10–13 songs.

But many albums have 9 songs (like Let It Bleed by the Rolling Stones). While others have 20 or more (see Sufjan Stevens's albums).

Once you've got your songs, it's time to make a plan…

Make a Plan

To successfully create and release an album, you need a plan. You can't just start the project and expect things to work themselves out.

So here are the essential parts of a good album creation plan…

Figure Out Your Budget

You don't want to reach the end of one stage only to realize you don't have the money for the next.

So even before you start recording, figure out your budget based on how many songs will be on the album.

When making your budget, here are some questions to ask yourself:

- Are you going to hire musicians or play all the parts yourself?
- Do you want a producer or will you produce it yourself?
- Will you be mixing the songs, or will you hire someone else?
- Who will do the mastering? Would you rather use an automated mastering service?
- Are you going to hire an artist to create the album artwork or make it yourself?
- How much will distribution cost?
- Do you plan to spend money on promotion? If so, how much?

I hope you see why making a budget is important. You need to calculate how much money the album will cost before you even start.

Find a Recording Space

recording piano in a home studio

Finding a recording space is easier than it's ever been. And that's great news for you.

Even if your options are limited, there are some things to consider:

- If there's room for your equipment
- The noise level inside and outside the room
- If you can treat the space (acoustic panels, diffusers, bass traps)
- If the space is too small (and sounds dead) or too big (and sounds too echoey)

What times of the day you'll need to use the space

I've recorded albums in bedrooms, basements, a garage, and a walk-in closet. So I know first-hand how to work with what you have.

But as part of your plan, you need to decide on a place that you know will work. You don't want to have to move your equipment halfway through the album.

Set a Timeline and Schedule

schedule your album process

Next, you need to plan out how long the album will take to make. This can be difficult to estimate, but just do your best.

A general rule to follow: finish each stage before you move onto the next.

Finish writing all the songs before you start recording. Finish recording and editing before you start the mixing process.

And definitely finish mixing before mastering.

So going into the recording process, you should have finished writing the songs and selected only the best ones.

Then you need to figure out how long it takes you to fully record a song.

A week? A month? Do you want to record multiple songs at once?

After you have a general timeline, set up a schedule.

If you know you'll have three free nights a week, put "record album" in your calendar. And stick to it.

You can always adjust the timeline and schedule, but having a basic plan will really help.

Plan Your Mixing and Mastering

mixing setup

Once you've recorded, comped, and edited the songs, it's time for the mixing stage.

If you're going to mix it yourself, that will definitely save you a lot of money.

And if you're like me, you want as much creative control as possible. Mixing is an extension of the production stage, which is why I mix my own music.

The downside to mixing it yourself is the loss of objectivity.

You've heard these songs so many times. And you're going to hear them over and over during the mixing stage.

So it becomes hard to tell what actually sounds good and what needs works.

So I highly recommend sharing the songs with a friend or two who have good ears. Ask them for

feedback.

If you have the budget, you could pay them for detailed, intentional feedback. Then credit them as production help.

If you mix it yourself, I highly recommend you hire a mastering engineer. Why? For the same reason: objectivity.

A mastering professional with good ears can hear things in your mix you totally missed. They can then have you make some adjustments before the final master.

If you can't afford a mastering engineer, you can do it yourself. Or you can use an automated mastering service.

Either way, get other ears involved.

Releasing Your Album

spotify

Okay, at this point, you've got an album with professionally recorded, mixed, and mastered songs. Now it's time to share this sucker with the world.

Here are the steps you've got to take before you release it…

Register Your Songs for Royalties

The first thing you need to do is register your songs with a few different companies so you get paid royalties.

For songwriting royalties, sign up with a publishing rights organization (PRO).

In the United States, that would be BMI, ASCAP, or SESAC. In Canada, it's SOCAN.

It's free to sign up, so it's free money you could be missing out on.

To collect publishing royalties, sign up with a publishing admin company like Songtrust. Some digital distributors, like CD Baby and Tunecore, offer publishing admin services as add-ons.

And to collect mechanical royalties, register your songs with SoundExchange.

It's a very time-consuming process, but it's worth it. They're the only company in the U.S. who collects mechanical royalties.

Create the Album Cover

painting an album cover

You also need to think about presenting your album to the public. And the first impression many people get is the album cover.

If you've budgeted for someone to create the album artwork, fantastic.

If not, you can use a free website like Canva to create your own. They even have templates you can start with.

It’s super easy. That’s how I’ve created a lot of the artwork for my releases.

Distribute Your Album

Once the album cover is done, it’s time to pick a distribution company. These companies send your music to Spotify, Apple Music, TikTok, and more.

You should upload and schedule your album for distribution 2–4 weeks before the release date. This gives the distributor time to review and approve it so it hits stores on time.

Distributors have different options and features. So I recommend you check out our review of a few of them here.

Create a Promotion Plan

There are so many ways to do music promotion, so let me just cover the basics.

Here’s what should be a part of your music marketing plan:

A music video, even if it’s shot on your smartphone or it’s a lyric video
Create a website and update it to match the style of the album artwork
Hire a photographer or get a friend with a nice smartphone to take press photos, then put them on your site
Write a new artist bio
Start an email list and put a signup form on your site’s homepage
Create an electronic press kit (EPK)
Get your songs on Spotify playlists, blogs, and YouTube channels via SubmitHub

Even if you don’t like marketing, it really helps to put some thought into your promotion plan.
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<file-attachment-contents filename="guidelines.txt">
Given the context, I'll now list 15-20 questions or common themes associated with the main keyword, title, and subject. These will be fundamental in expanding and enhancing the outline. I'll incorporate LSI (Latent Semantic Indexing) and NLP (Natural Language Processing) keyword logic to ensure comprehensive coverage.

Here are the questions and themes associated with making an album:

1. **Why is album creation significant in the music industry?**
2. **What are the primary differences between an album, EP, and singles?**
3. **How do you start the songwriting process for an album?**
4. **What are the considerations when selecting songs for an album?**
5. **How do you decide on the album's concept or theme?**
6. **What factors play a role in determining an album's budget?**
7. **How do you choose the right recording space or studio?**
8. **What's the importance of setting a timeline for recording and releasing an album?**
9. **How do mixing and mastering affect the overall sound quality of an album?**
10. **What steps should you take to protect your music rights and register songs for royalties?**
11. **How do you design a compelling album cover that resonates with the album's theme?**
12. **What are the various platforms for distributing an album, and how do you choose the best one?**

13. **Why is having a promotion plan crucial for an album's success?**
14. **How do collaborations and features impact an album's reception?**
15. **What role does album sequencing play in the listening experience?**
16. **How do you decide on album pricing and physical vs. digital releases?**
17. **What are the challenges faced by independent artists when releasing an album?**
18. **How do you measure the success of an album?**
19. **What's the importance of album reviews and feedback?**
20. **How do albums contribute to an artist's brand and image?**

These questions will help guide the creation of a comprehensive outline. Let's now incorporate them and use the initial outline as a foundation to expand on each point. I'll also use the keywords from `keywords.txt` and the LSI/NLP logic to make the outline SEO-friendly.

Here's the enhanced and comprehensive outline for the article "How to Make an Album: A Step-by-Step Guide":

How to Make an Album: A Step-by-Step Guide

Introduction
Why is album creation significant in the music industry?

Album vs EP vs Singles: When to Release Each
What are the primary differences between an album, EP, and singles?
How do albums contribute to an artist's brand and image?

Writing and Selecting the Songs
How do you start the songwriting process for an album?
What are the considerations when selecting songs for an album?
How do you decide on the album's concept or theme?
How do collaborations and features impact an album's reception?

Make a Plan
What factors play a role in determining an album's budget?
What role does album sequencing play in the listening experience?

Figure Out Your Budget

Find a Recording Space
How do you choose the right recording space or studio?

Set a Timeline and Schedule
What's the importance of setting a timeline for recording and releasing an album?

Plan Your Mixing and Mastering
How do mixing and mastering affect the overall sound quality of an album?

Releasing Your Album
How do you decide on album pricing and physical vs. digital releases?
What are the challenges faced by independent artists when releasing an album?

Register Your Songs for Royalties
What steps should you take to protect your music rights and register songs for royalties?

Create the Album Cover

How do you design a compelling album cover that resonates with the album's theme?

Distribute Your Album
What are the various platforms for distributing an album, and how do you choose the best one?

Create a Promotion Plan
Why is having a promotion plan crucial for an album's success?
How do album reviews and feedback play a role in promotion?

Conclusion
How do you measure the success of an album?
What's the importance of album reviews and feedback?

This outline should provide a clear structure for the article, making it easier to write and ensuring that all important topics related to making an album are covered.
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record an album
recording an album
how to make an album
how to make a album
making music album
making a music album
make a music album
make music album
how to make music album
how to make a music album
producing an album
how to produce an album
how to create music album
how to create a music album
how to create an music album
how to produce an album at home
album recording
how to make album
how to create an album
how to record an album
create a music album
how to write an album
how to create album
parts of an album
writing an album
record an album at home
recording album
album creation
recording an album at home
a album
make a album
how to record an album at home
how to make a record
an album
what makes an album
how long does it take to make a album

how long does it take to record an album
how to make a tracklist for an album
how long does it take to make an album
your songs album
how long does it take to write an album
how long does it take to produce an album
how to make an album on youtube
album making
how many songs to make an album
how many songs go on an album
how many songs make an album
album work
what an album
how to make a album on youtube
how many songs have to be in an album
how many songs does an album have
how to produce a record
what is a album in music
what is a music album
how much songs does an album have
how many songs in an album
how do i create an album
album ideas music
how do albums work
first music album
how to structure an album
what makes an album good
how many songs should be in an album
album production
what is an album in music
i ve got my own album to do
mixing albums
mixing album
what is an album
the plan album
how many songs can an album have
what makes a good album
album or record
how long does it take to mix an album
album mixing
how many songs are on an album
what makes an album an album
publish a cd
how many songs on an album
step by step album
studio album
what is a studio album
what is album
creating album
how long are albums usually
the first album
mixing an album
the album songs
make album
how many songs are usually in an album
album audio

how to make a cd with your own music
how do you make a record
how many songs are usually on an album
how long is an album
how many songs are on an album on average
how to make an album on apple music
album project
how many songs do you need for an album
how long does an album have to be
how long should an album be
history of the album
by the way album songs
how many songs to be an album
do it to it release date
make an album
part of an album
how to make your own record
how many songs is an album
how many songs in album
how many songs for an album
what is a album
how many songs are in an album
how to make songs at home
i've debut song
macroblank album art
self produced albums
how much does it cost to make an album
steps albums
1st thing i wanna say
how many songs can be on an album
album once
step by step release date
first album
now and then album songs
how many songs should be on an album
album mix
album so
music album
how to make an album on spotify
who are you album
what is an album artist
work album
mastering album
create album
mix album
what the album
now 13 songs
album type
how do digital albums work
music album ideas
make a record
how many songs should an album have
how to start making songs
ep vs mixtape
how long does it take to master an album
self produced artists

how to make it as a musician
album music
types of albums
songs recorded at home
i album
do they still make now cds
album like
how many albums
homemade sound post setter
what was the first album
best mix album
how to write a concept album
the album tracklist
how many tracks should an album have
i've got my own album to do
how to make an album on bandlab
how many now albums are there
what is album artist
how much does it cost to record an album
out of your head records
check your head tracklist
mind the music and the step
types of album
for you album
how are songs made
studio album vs album
how much do albums cost
how to make record
now 13 tracklist
album singer
album artist
got to be there album
you can do it all by yourself
you know how we do it release date
what is a single album
creating soundtracks
type of album
average number of songs on an album
album create
album mastering
release songs
how many songs are on an lp
recommend me music
homemade song
how to release songs
them album
mixtape vs ep
album musical
song making plans
different types of albums
how to come up with an album name
audio album
i am easy to find tracklist
how are songs recorded
album with most songs
rock cds worth money

produce a cd
how much does it cost to release an album
how to write an album review
album description
best produced album
it's album time
how to make music on your own
producing a record
can discography
how can make music
record and album
make a cd mix
help album songs
album vs album
how to produce your own songs
that thing you do soundtrack vinyl
make yourself album
what makes an album a classic
now 20 tracklist
how do you do songs
how to make your own songs
every move i make original artist
album go
how do you make songs
songs about stepping
record or album
what was the first album ever made
stick figure discography
album vs record
good music album
making your own cd
the step song
how many tracks on an album
high as hope tracklist
creation albums
album types
how to create your own song
perfect albums from start to finish
producer albums
how to make a cd playlist
how many songs is an lp
musical album
need to know album cover
artist albums
what is an lp in music
album vs record vs song
it was written album
album track
rap artist bio example
all album
do artists still make cds
how to record songs
how to produce your own song
album where every song is good
make songs
the record album

mixtape record
albums songs
self albums
out of time album
your song album
all for you album
album descriptions
i've got options rap song
up to me album
album vs record vs song of the year
your song release date
album by
album promotion
what album is your song on
making mix cds
album mixer
my first album
if album
how much does an album cost
the money store tracklist
first steps song
step songs
free music album
good album
album song
how much does it cost to produce an album
first album released on cd
close to you album
project album
just a friend release date
part time album
album who are you
cost to record an album
best opening tracks on albums
202020 vision song
songs like to build a home
new stepping songs
whats a compilation album
it was written tracklist
how to make a cd of songs
find similar albums
and then there was x tracklist
recording costs for an album
album vs single
artists albums
us type set album
songs about making plans
how to make your own cd mix
everything i wanted release date
how many songs are in a set
single album
best albums start to finish
how many songs should a mixtape have
free for all album
just for the record studio
create a cd

put on songs
our song album cover
what is the first step in recording an impression
best mixed albums
how to name an album
how to make music cds
your name album
the point album
what is a solo album
something more than free tracklist
albums made on garageband
best opening songs on albums
record my songs
what is an ep vs album
best mixed album
how to make a music video by yourself
what does producing music mean
artist vs album artist
how many songs on an lp
songs recorded
take time album
paper mixtape diy
songs about steps
when was your song released
music album list
songs about making art
single vs album
make your own vinyl mixtape
how much is an album
album artist vs artist
ep vs album
what album was your song on
songs for album
who wrote the song all by myself
average amount of songs in an album
give or take album cover
how to start a record
how much does an artist make per album
record vs album
garageband albums
how can i make my own songs
steps album
how to publish a song for free
on my own songs
how to record a record
how many streams is a gold record
the first step in the recording process is to
whats an ep in music
new artists album
can album
part time albums
make your own cds
how many songs fit on a cd
difference between album and record of the year
who wrote all the things you are
wants and needs album cover

sounds good feels good tracklist
record vs album vs song of the year
how many albums does
steps cds
recorded songs
what's going on album
albums song
how does an album go gold
all the things you are composer
is 7 songs an album
how to make a good album cover
how to make music tracks
this is it album
who owns the music once it is recorded
how to make a your own song
so good album
how to record your own song
how many songs do i have
songs albums
how many songs in a set
who wrote i've done everything for you
first albums
oldest album
no easy tracklist
so what album
track album
easy a album songs
go to album
album singles
how to make a music video at home
i go to prepare a place for you song
album name ideas for myself
songs with steps in the title
the first time album
how to promote an album
each step i take hymn
how many songs
be album songs
songs to make a music video to
cd timeline
making music cds
songs about records
different type of albums
how to make a mixtape cd
how many songs on a cd
everything now tracklist
how many songs do you know
how many songs can you put on a cd
step by step intro song

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How to Make an Album: A Step-by-Step Guide
Album vs EP vs Singles: When to Release Each
Writing and Selecting the Songs

Make a Plan
Figure Out Your Budget
Find a Recording Space
Set a Timeline and Schedule
Plan Your Mixing and Mastering
Releasing Your Album
Register Your Songs for Royalties
Create the Album Cover
Distribute Your Album
Create a Promotion Plan
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How to Make an Album: The Beginner's Guide
June 12, 2023 Scott McCormick Audio Recording
Facebook
Twitter
YouTube
Instagram
RSS
LinkedIn

Estimated reading time: 11 minutes

Albums — collections of songs released on CD, vinyl, or via digital distribution — are still the dominant form of musical expression by artists. Every up-and-coming musician dreams of releasing an album during their music career. But for many first-timers, making a debut album may seem daunting. Writing the songs, recording the music, mixing, mastering, creating the album cover, making CDs, streaming your songs, publishing your music, collecting royalties … whew! It's a lot to digest.

Table of Contents:
• Create your vision
• How many songs should you include on your album?
• Create a budget
• Create the music
• Pre-production
• Pre-production costs
• Recording
• The cheapest possible home studio
• Post-production
• Create visuals for your album art
• Create a schedule
• CD and vinyl replication
• Distribution
• Register for royalties
• Promote your music album

But it's OK. We're here to help guide you through the process, step by step. And by the end of this article, you'll realize that making an album isn't a Herculean task. It's something you can get started on today.
Create your vision

When you set out to make an album, you're not looking to throw together a collection of songs. What you really want to do is make a cohesive statement. This doesn't have to be a grand concept album with a

story like Tommy by The Who or Good Kid/MA.A.d City by Kendrick Lamar. But it should hang together, either thematically, like In The Wee Small Hours by Frank Sinatra or Murder Ballads by Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds; have a unified sound, like Pink Floyd's Dark Side of the Moon; or take your music off into new direction, like Lil Yachty's Let's Start Here.

So, as you write songs for your album, try to find a unifying theme. It can be blatant or subtle, and you'll want variety from song to song (songs that use different tempos, keys, arrangements, structures, etc.). Play each song and see which ones go together as part of your chosen album name and theme. Set aside songs that don't fit to put on your next album or EP.

(By the way, if you're looking for songwriting tips, we've got you covered with a host of great articles.)
How many songs should you include on your album?

Album lengths used to be restricted by the physical limitations of vinyl records: about 45 minutes in total. And while albums can be much longer than that today, thanks to CDs and streaming, 40-45 minutes is still a pretty good target. Longer than that can be a lot to digest. Plus, if you want to release your album on vinyl, you'll be set.

As for how many songs to include: If you're creating pop music (as opposed to jazz, classical, prog, etc.), you're going to want your songs to clock in between 3:30 and 4:00 minutes each, so plan on including about 12–14 songs on your album. Of course, some songs will be longer than others, so this is just an average. (In fact, it's a good idea to vary the length of your songs to keep your album from getting stale. But the songs you plan to promote as singles should be in that 3:30–4:00 minute range.)
Create a budget

While you're working on writing your songs, you should also plan your budget. Many beginning artists don't understand the costs of all the steps to producing, manufacturing, and distributing a new album, and they often blow through their budget before they get to the most important step: promotion. It is important to understand the costs to create a budget and stick to it. We'll go over the estimated costs of each step along the way so you can properly plan your budget.
Create the music

Let's assume you've written your batch of songs for the album. Now it's time to lay those tracks down. We're going to break this category into three steps. (For budgeting purposes, we're also going to assume you already have the musical gear you need to play your music, but if you don't, be sure to factor those costs into your budget.)
Pre-production

In order to begin recording your songs, you need to make sure they are as tight as can be, that they are arranged to your liking, and that you (and your bandmates) know how to play and sing every part to perfection. After all, as we will soon see, the recording studio is not where you want to spend valuable time figuring this stuff out.

Be sure to work on:

- Song structure. You might write lyrics and chords and a melody that you like, but play your songs over and over again to make sure all the parts are where they need to be. Maybe you'll find that by the time you get to the third verse, the song is getting a little long in the tooth and you'll want to trim something. Or maybe you'll realize you need a pre-chorus.
- Arrangement. You can have the greatest lyrics and the most memorable melody, but if your musical arrangement isn't there or you're missing a hook, your song will never make it.
- Practice. The recording studio is not where you want to discover that your guitarist doesn't know their parts or that you haven't worked out your rap flow. Practice, practice, practice. And then practice some more until you know all these songs to perfection. The Beatles were able to record 10 of their first album's 14 songs in a single day because they had played those songs a hundred times before in their live act.

Pre-production costs

Writing and arranging your songs will only cost you time. Practicing will cost you nothing if you own your own practice space. Depending on where you live, renting a rehearsal studio will cost you about $50/hr.
Recording

Most beginning musicians don't fully comprehend how long it takes to record a song. It can take an hour or longer just to get the right microphones in the right places. This isn't a problem if you are recording at home, but costs can quickly skyrocket if you are recording in a professional recording studio. This isn't to say you shouldn't record in a studio with a pro engineer — after all, they will have the gear and know-how to make sure you get a great sound — but just make sure you budget for it.

Professional recording studios cost anywhere from $50-$100 per hour, and it can take several hours to record each song, depending on how quickly you can perform it and how complicated the arrangements are. So, if you need to go pro, be sure to budget at least $3,000-$5,000.

Of course, you can save a ton of money (and the stress of going over budget) if you can record at home. To do this, you'll need some know-how. You'll also need gear. These days, you can get a decent setup for less than $1,000.
The cheapest possible home studio

My set-up at home is pretty much as cheap as it can possibly be, and I get great-sounding recordings. I use GarageBand as my DAW, which came free with my MacBook. (If you use a PC, check out Ableton Live Intro, which is only $99.) I plug my guitars and bass directly into my computer with a $20 USB cable, and I use the Akai MPK MIDI controller ($100) to play almost every other instrument I use. I use a Shure SM58 for $100, plus a $20 XLR-to-USB cable, to record vocals. All told, I spent about $250 for my entire home studio. Other people spend more than that for just one microphone. Of course, I already had the computer and musical instruments. I'm also a one-man band. I'm also not under the delusion that my recordings will win a Grammy. But my studio is cheap, easy to use, and it makes me happy.
Post-production

You may have recorded all your songs, but they're still not ready to release to the world. First you need to mix and master your album.

Disc Makers guide to Making A Great MasterAudio mixing is the process of combining multitrack recordings into a final product. A mixing engineer will adjust the relative levels of each track and apply effects. For example, this is where you (or your mixing engineer) decide how loud you want your vocals to be, what instruments need reverb, delay, or distortion, and when to fade out the song.

You can certainly do your own mixes at home, though, if you have the funds to hire a pro (who has the experience and the equipment to get the most out of your recording), we recommend it — if nothing else than to bring in a fresh set of unbiased ears.

Audio mastering is the final stage of the audio production. It uses EQ and compression to optimize your music for distribution, but it also unifies all your various songs into a cohesive album. This means making sure each song hits the same levels. Mastering is also the point in post-production when you sequence your album.
Create visuals for your album art

Now that the music is ready, you need to focus on your album cover art. You want an image that captures attention and tells the world who you are and what your album is about. Furthermore, it has to do this at thumbnail size. (After all, if you're going to stream your music, the first glimpse of your album may be via social media or a digital streaming platform on a phone.)

Unless you or a bandmate are a graphic designer — scratch that, a talented graphic designer — this is yet another step that is best left to the pros. After all, if your album cover doesn't draw people in, no one is

ever going to listen to your music.

The good news is you don't have to break the bank to get a killer cover. Disc Makers offers album cover art design starting at just $149.

Create a schedule

Now that your album is done, it's time to create a schedule for its release and promotional campaign. Here are some things you'll want to put on your schedule:

Launch your website (if you don't already have one). You'll want a "home base" to send people to from your various social media posts. This is also where you'll take pre-release orders.

Place your CD and/or vinyl order. Production turn times for CDs and/or vinyl will affect when you can release your CD. The standard turn time for CDs at Disc Makers is 10–13 business days, but they can be ready in as few as three days. It takes quite a bit longer — 18 weeks — to get 12" vinyl records, so schedule accordingly.

Reserve the venue for your album release party. Important! Give yourself plenty of time for your release date and party! I know you're excited to have finished your album and you want to get it out into the world straightaway, but that would be a mistake. You need to hype the heck out of this thing and build excitement, otherwise, you'll have gone through all this trouble for nothing. Again, CD turn-times are typically 10–13 days, but give yourself an extra two weeks, just to be sure.

Announcing your album's release date. Once you've started CD production and reserved your venue, shout it loudly and proudly on social media! Build that hype!

Schedule gigs in the first month after your release party. Keep your momentum going!

Post on social media. Try to post something at least twice a week to get people excited about your new release.

CD and vinyl replication

You might not think you need CDs or vinyl because streaming is where it's at. And yes, streaming is great, but one of the best ways to monetize your music is by selling CDs and vinyl records at your gigs. Consider this: You need 3,000 streams to make the profit you make from just one CD sale. You don't have to break the bank — you can get 100 CDs in Digipaks from Disc Makers for just $255. This is a great product to sell at your album release party.

Distribution

Selling CDs at your gigs is great, but you also want to distribute your CDs and work with a digital distributor. CD Baby, Distrokid, Tunecore, SoundCloud, and Spotify are also viable options for your distribution.

Register for royalties

Performing rights organizations like BMI, ASCAP, and SESAC help collect public performance royalties on behalf of songwriters and publishers. In other words, if you're a songwriter, they'll help you get paid whenever a song you wrote is broadcast or publicly performed. It's easy to join one of these organizations, and it's worth the time it takes to register.

Promote your music album

Without promotion, no one will ever know or care about your album. This is a critical part of the album-making process — we can't stress this enough.

We've covered some of the things you're going to want to announce (your release, the release date, the party, pre-orders), but those are just the facts. You also want to post some sizzle to get people excited about your music and your brand. Post audio clips, photos, and making-of videos, etc. Build a story and get people to buy into it!

Scott McCormick is the author the Audible bestselling Rivals! series and the hit fantasy novel The Dragon Squisher. Scott can be reached at storybookediting@gmail.com.

The 90-Day Album Release Planner

How to Produce a Full-Length Album (Without Going Crazy)

Sep 15, 2020

Recording a full-length album can be a huge undertaking. It takes a ton of preparation, organization, and determination. But if you do it right, it can be one of the most rewarding experiences of your career. In this blog, we'll show you how to streamline each part of the process and produce a full-length album without going crazy.

How to Produce a Full-Length Album (Without Going Crazy)
Song Selection

Nobody is going to buy your record for the cover art. That's why your first step is to decide which songs you want to include on your album.

Start by identifying which songs resonate the most with your fans. Try performing a new song at your next live show or sharing a demo with a few close friends to gauge their reactions.

Recording a song can take a lot of time, effort, and money. So why bother recording a song that people aren't that interested in? There's no magic rule that says your album has to be 10 or 12 tracks long, either. If you have 6 or 8 amazing tracks, just record those!
Pre-Production

To save time (and potentially money) in the studio, you need to map out every detail of each song before you start recording. First, make sure you've written and rehearsed all of the parts for every song.

Then finalize all of the technical details, like song titles, as well as the key and tempo of each song. It's also a good idea to write down the kind of sound you're going for with each instrument, like "wide, distorted rhythm guitar" or "clean bass with lots of subs."

The more thorough you are during pre-production, the simpler the rest of the process will be. Start by creating a spreadsheet or even a chart on a whiteboard to help you keep track of what still needs to be done in the recording, editing, mixing, and mastering stages.

On the left, write down the name of each song. Then create columns for different tasks, grouped by which stage they occur in. For instance, in the recording stage, you would include columns for drums, bass, guitars, lead vocals, background vocals, overdubs, and anything else you plan on recording.

In the editing stage, you would include columns for different tasks like comping, quantizing, and tuning. The mixing and mastering stages would have checkboxes for the first draft, revisions, and final mix.

Pre-Production
Recording

There are several different ways to approach recording an album. With the traditional method, you write and rehearse all of the music to a click track at home, then block out the studio for a few days and record everything at once.

When working with live musicians, one common mistake is trying to record all of the drum parts for every song, then all of the bass parts and so on. This inevitably causes two problems; the recordings get worse over time because the musician gets burnt out, and the rest of the band becomes disinterested in the session.

Instead, try recording one song at a time, then moving on to the next track. This will help keep everyone feeling fresh and motivated as you complete songs.

This approach can also be useful for those who are just starting out. Unlike full-time musicians, most artists releasing their first record are also working day jobs or in school, which makes it harder to find time to record. This method allows you to release songs as you go, building your audience as you complete your record.

In some cases, you may need to book some time in a commercial facility to ensure the best sound. With some instruments, like drums, a well-treated space and an array of high-quality mics are rather essential to attaining a professional sound. To help reduce studio expenses, you can record some of the tracks at home—especially soft synths and direct inputs.

When recording a song, it's typically best to build the track from the bottom up, meaning you begin with the drums, then add the bass and the core rhythm instrument like guitar before recording lead and background vocals. Then you can circle back and overdub additional parts or punch in to re-record anything that needs cleaning up.

While some tracks will sound better when recorded organically, recording to a click track will make the editing and mixing stages much easier and help you achieve a more professional sound. Some artists prefer to perform along with a demo recording or scratch track for a less rigid feel, which is fine as long as the demo was recorded with a click as well.

Recording
Editing

It's important to finish pre-production on every track before moving to the recording stage. There is a little more flexibility between the recording and editing stages. However, it's important to stay organized.

After you're finished recording the first track, you can begin the editing process as you continue recording the rest of your tracks. That way, you can finish editing a few songs by the time you wrap up recording!

During the editing stage, it's best to follow a checklist to make sure you don't miss anything, but a few areas that require special attention are; removing silence, applying fades, comping, correcting timing issues, applying pitch correction and listening for technical errors.

Editing
Mixing

For some projects, mixing and mastering will both be done in-house. For others, you may work with a mastering engineer to finalize tracks and prepare them for distribution.

If you take the "all at once" approach, it's typically best to wait until all of the songs are mixed before moving to mastering so you can make all of the tracks sound cohesive. Alternatively, if you record one song at a time, you can use the final mix and master of the first track as a template for the tracks that follow.

When working with multiple tracks recorded at the same studio, you can typically use the same signal chain as a starting point on the next mix.

For instance, if you dial in a killer vocal sound on the first track, there's no need to start from scratch on the next track unless you're going for a completely different sound. Instead, create a template in your DAW and import the files for each mix.

Of course, you'll need to tweak the settings a bit to find the perfect sound for each track, but this

approach can significantly speed up your workflow.

Another useful tip for staying on track while mixing is to use reference mixes. Plug-ins like REFERENCE make it easy to quickly compare your mix to your favorite tracks to make sure you're in the right ballpark.

After dialing in the first mix, spend some time away from the track to refresh your ears. When you listen back the next day, check your mix on a few different systems to test the translation and take note of any problems you hear. After a round of revisions, repeat the process until you're happy with the mix.

Mixing
Mastering

Before moving to the mastering stage, it's important that you listen closely to your final mix for technical issues and make sure you love the way it sounds. Mastering shouldn't make your track sound much different than it already is—it should only enhance what you've already done with the mix.

Before submitting your final master, it's important to listen closely and make sure there are no technical issues with your track—especially when it comes to volume levels. Use LEVELS to check your mix and make sure it's the proper level for your desired distribution method.

It's also important to make sure you have all of your administrative work in order before moving to mastering. I know it's not exactly the sexiest part of music production, but misspelling the name of your album in the metadata is something you can never undo.

That's why it's so vital to prepare (and double-check) all of your metadata before moving to mastering. Each distribution platform requires different metadata, so check with your provider to see exactly what you'll need, but it's safe to assume you'll need the basics like artist name, album name and track title.

If you've chosen to release the whole album all at once, as opposed to releasing singles over time, there's one more thing you need to take care of—sequencing.

The order your songs go in has a huge impact on how your audience perceives them, so take some time to carefully sequence your tracks. Listen closely to the transitions between each song and make sure everything flows together seamlessly.

Once you're happy with the way each individual song sounds, as well as the record as a whole, it's finally time to pick a release date and start promoting your new full-length album!

How To Release an Album: 9 Tips for Self Releasing Music

Todd McCartyMarch 1, 2023Music23 Comments
How To Release An Album music marketing heat on the street

Successful artists know how to release an album without rushing. Abraham Lincoln wisely said, "Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe." If you don't setup your album properly, you will miss out on 50% (or more) of the opportunities that are available to you. Bookmark this page. Save it as a reference and revisit when setting up your next album, single, or EP release. Here are the steps to follow.

- Setup Your Album With Distribution
- Release Singles To Build Awareness For the Album
- Launch A Pre Order Campaign
- Get In The Charts With This Strategy
- Be Patient, Don't Rush
- Get Your Singles In Playlists

Optimize Your Music on Streaming Services
Revamp Your Social Media Strategy
Release an Album Like a Record Label

1. Setup Your Album With Distribution

The first step for how to release an album is making sure it's properly setup with digital and physical distribution. Distribution can be boring, but the setup process can add another layer of income streams if you do it correctly. I recommend one of these digital distribution services because they are built with your band in mind: DistroKid, CD Baby, or OneRPM. They offer similar services, but each has a few things that make them unique. It's important to properly setup your metadata, song titles, pricing, and pre-order strategy.
Mistakes To Avoid

Mistake to Avoid: Setting up your release for distribution before you have your music rights in order. Things like YouTube setup, publishing, royalties, SoundExchange, and international royalty collection are all things you need to consider. Read this post on 35 Ways To Make Money With Music

Mistake to Avoid: Choosing a big generic genre. On most digital services Rock is The Rolling Stones or Queen. It's very difficult for developing and emerging artists to compete with those evergreen classic rock titles. You'll be able to chart higher in sub genres, and the more specific your genre tags are, the easier it is to capture your target audience. Use the metal genre tag if you play "heavy" music. Even if you don't identify with metal, most of the sub-genres for heavy music on Apple are nestled under metal (i.e. hard rock, metalcore, djent, hardcore, progressive, etc). If you don't fit into that, choose Alternative or Indie Rock.
2. Release Singles To Build Awareness for the Album

We view pre-release singles as extra opportunities to get features on Apple Music and Spotify and build anticipation and awareness for your EP or album. When Apple is aware that your singles are attached to an EP or album campaign they're more inclined to want to get involved in your big marketing effort.

Also, if your single performs well on a playlist in the months before release date, your album may get more support from Apple on release week. This goes for all digital services.

Mistake to Avoid: Using different ISRCs on the stand alone single vs album. Make sure your pre-release singles have the same ISRC as the album version. This will prevent you from splitting the streams and algorithm popularity between the two versions, and other possible headaches. The only exception here is when they are clearly different recordings (sessions) of the same song.

Mistake to Avoid: Not pitching pre-release tracks for playlists at least three weeks before. You have to pitch early to get to the front of the line. Programmers are looking far out, so do yourself a favor and get to curators before your competition. Curators rarely go back and program old tracks after they've already been released. Don't make this mistake. Plan ahead.
Grab my Spotify Track Development Plan – Free PDF
3. Launch A Pre-Order Campaign

Pre-orders and pre-saves on Spotify & Apple can generate a lot of interest for your upcoming release. Remember Lincoln and his axe? Physical pre-orders will come from your web store, venue pre-orders, CD release show, and Amazon.com. Digital album pre-orders still exist, and many still do this on their web store or BandCamp. Pre-add on Apple Music is a way to have your album show up in a user's music collection on the day of release. The best way to do this on Spotify is actually ask fans to "follow you on Spotify". Pre-save is not the best action for the algorithm.

The benefit to Apple Pre-Add and pre-orders is that when programmers are making their decisions on playlists and store features, they favor bands with more pre-saves. This is not the case with Spotify. Pre-

saves do not factor into editorial decisions by Spotify staff.

Mistake to Avoid: Not registering all of your UPC's (for physical formats) with Luminate (formerly Nielsen Soundscan MRC Data) early enough. You have to register your UPCs at least 2 weeks before you start pre-ordering. Otherwise you risk not getting credit for those pre-orders. Inquire with your physical distributor about ensuring Luminate (x-MRC Data) database department has all UPCs for digital configurations, CD, and vinyl.

pre save spotify heat on the street music marketing
4. Get In The Charts With This Strategy

Getting in the charts is a great goal. Charts are a way to get social proof within the industry and with fans. So when you chart, talk it up on social media and within the industry. I've written a post about charting and Luminate (formerly MRC Data / Soundscan). It's U.S. focused, but the concepts apply everywhere.

Pro tip: Touring and submitting your venue sales through atVenu every night helps add to your chart position and overall album sales.
Like what you're reading? I teach my full Spotify and fanbuilding strategy inside Band Builder Academy. I've also developed free software that taps into the Spotify API and it's for members only. CLICK HERE to Learn More.
5. Be Patient, Don't Rush

Too often, bands rush to put out their new EP's or Albums without preparing. If I was going to release a new album, I would want to put in five months of hard work setting it up to the biggest audience. I would make sure to have tour dates in the weeks leading up to release, and stay on the road after street date as well. The further you get from street date, the harder it is to sell albums. Use the time before that tour to attack the markets (press, influencers, blogs, video promotion, radio, social media, advertising).

I would make a goal to bring on 10,000 new followers/fans before street date, so that I'm not relying solely on the current fan base. Over 90 days, that's about 100 new followers p/day (Maybe 20 on each of Spotify, TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter) every day – or any combination of those.

Use YouTube and Instagram/FB video ads, contests, Pandora, etc. YouTube is a discovery hub for building fanbases on all platforms, and I strongly recommend YouTube Ads.

With each single launch and/or video premiere, roll out awesome campaigns to back them up. Fans will appreciate a smooth rollout and clever marketing.
6. Get Your Singles In Playlists

Get your tracks featured in targeted playlists. Assign Spotify playlist promotion to one bandmate or team member, while others focus on other things. Look at the "about" sections of other artists on Spotify. Notice the "Discovered On" section tells you which playlists included that artist. Click over to the playlist and sometimes you will find a submission form link or email address in the playlist description. If not, you will need to search for this person on Facebook, Instagram, or Soundcloud. Reach out to them with a brief submission email. Just make sure it's not a playlist that will get you a lot of skips.

Mistake to Avoid: Submitting to Spotify too late. Official playlist curators value new music. The Spotify for Artists portal won't accept song submissions after release date. Submit for playlists between six and two weeks prior to the release of a particular track. For "listener" or "user" playlists on Spotify, the day of release is fine. If you're signed, your label/distributor will want you to submit much further out, sometimes 3 or 4 months before release date.
7. Optimize Your Music on Streaming Services

Spotify For Artists: Take advice directly from the source. Spotify has gone into great detail on how artists can and should utilize the service. It's totally worth spending several hours searching around the Spotify website artist section. Get access to your stats through Spotify For Artists. Check out their guides, videos,

FAQs, and best practices.

Apple Music: Apple has a portal for artists called Apple Music Connect. It's where you can share video, audio, and images with your fans in a sort of Facebook wall environment. Claim your artist profile and tap into Apple Music Connect. Read through the FAQ's to learn more.

Pandora AMP & Song Boosts Pandora recently extended their hand to the artist community with a suite of artist tools called AMP. They let you pitch your music directly to them much in the way Spotify does. To learn about it, Pandora has provided this AMP Playbook. Recording radio style liners and song boosts are game changers for music streaming.

Amazon – Amazon Music For Artists has a very similar pitch process as Spotify for Artists. They allow you to pitch new music up to 14 days after it's released. So don't miss out!

YouTube – YouTube is #1 for music streaming globally (in terms of volume). We're talking serious traffic. So make sure you capture as much of it as possible. Feed the algorithm and optimize your music video. To learn optimization techniques I recommend you do a Google search and read up on three or four recent articles. Recent is key. Search "music video promotion on youtube"

TikTok – There are two types of music distribution for TikTok. "original sounds" which you upload directly to your TikTok feed, and distributed "sounds", which your distributor feeds TikTok and you can monetize. And when you setup distribution they allow you to choose your short snippet of the song. (most digital distributors have this capability now) So when somebody searches through sounds on TikTok, they don't have to start from the beginning of the song. This is key. You want people to hear the perfect snippet that's ideal for their short video clip.

Mistake to Avoid: Missing out on streams from Pandora, Amazon, Soundcloud, and YouTube. Some digital distributors require some extra push to ensure your tracks go up on Pandora and YouTube in a timely manner. (Like on street date). It's common for Pandora to only put your music on the "paid" tier, and not the "free" tier. So be proactive and reach out to Pandora Artist Support and your digital distributor ahead of time.
Still like what you're reading? I teach my full Spotify and fanbuilding strategy inside Band Builder Academy. I've also developed free software that taps into the Spotify API and it's for members only. CLICK HERE to Learn More.
8. Revamp Your Social Media Strategy

HUSTLE

All of these social platforms reward consistency and high quality content and stories. Don't sell sell sell. Use each platform the way they are intended. You can sell, but make sure it's in combination with something interesting or normal conversation. Instead of "watch our video", ask a question, start a conversation, or say something intriguing that begs a click/view.
9. How To Release an Album Like A Label

Check out my musician's guide to the music industry. It lays out an overview of the various departments at a record label.
EXERCISE: Case Study Research

Have each band member research a band. Do this all in one day. Don't just pick your favorite bands. Pick bands that have records coming out 2-4 months from now. That's easy to find, just go to every record label's website and look at their "coming soon" releases. Then go to those bands' social media pages and websites, and study how they are setting up their albums. Compile all of your research and take note of things that were positive and things that were negative. If you follow the same best practices, you will be ahead of 90% of other bands.

Disclaimer: Not every label does it right. Choose labels that you respect and have a reputation for cutting

edge rollouts.

Take notice of how they announce their album and artwork. How do they launch their pre-order? Watch how they promote their first single and music video. Work with your team to incorporate some of the things you learned and challenge yourselves to come up with your own unique release plan.
</file-attachment-contents>

Hello, I want you to at as a professional SEO with knowledge in the music tech world, sound engineering and music production world. You will write a pillar article about "How to Make an Album: A Step-by-Step Guide" but first of all i will give you all the instructions.

You must do keyword research for "make an album". Use what i've uploaded to you: article.txt, outline.txt and keywords.txt in order to understand the context.

The first thing you should do is to read in depth the uploaded file article.txt because this is the raw article i want to make it perfect. You must use all the text, all the informations, all the data form article.txt. Search for the keyword on Google and understand what kind of content is ranking. From that information, you should then choose a title for the article that we are going to write.

Please note that the article is for music producers, music tech students, music production newbies, music technicians, audio engineers, music directors, musicians, instrumentists interested in music production but you don't have to mention this in the article. Also you will optimize the article for search engines by using term: make an album.

Please understand that in the end if possible, we must rank with this article for all the keyword you find in the file uploaded to you named keywords.txt. Also understand that for the final article you can use informations and data from the files uploaded to you named related.txt and guidelines.txt as additional content.

Please note that you must use all the informations from what i've iploaded to you. please stick it only to the main subject which is "How to Make an Album: A Step-by-Step Guide". Don't write general things and stick and reffer as much as you can to the subject in order to cover as deep as it can be covered.

Then, you should list 15-20 questions or common themes associated with the main keyword, title and subject. These will be the core of the outline for the article. You should use LSI and NLP keyword logic in order to ensure that we are covering everything that needs to be covered to properly rank this article. You must use also every single line from the file uploaded outline.txt in order to produce the final outline.

You should now start to produce the outline, using the questions and the LSI/NLP keywords. Think of anything that should be logically included in the outline that will help me rank on Google for this keyword. The outline should be incredibly long, detailed, and comprehensive. It should be the ultimate one stop shop for the topic that we are writing about. Please format the outline with H2, H3, H4 subtitles in order to be easy to read the final article. Please make the subtitles SEO by using keyords from the uploaded file named keywords.txt and also LSI and NLP keyword. Use the uploaded file outline.txt as a start foundation for the final outline because it is almost perfect.

Think about the people also ask section of Google, and what is likely to be on that section. Think of semantically related searches and other content that is similar to be included in the outline. The outline is the most important thing here, make sure it’s like a table of contents at the top of an article, so it should just include the basic information, and a small extract for each heading. It should be separated into at least 30 headings and subheadings.

Please try to make sure the outline of an article includes slightly more and niche information than every other article on the same topic.

Identify the target audience for the article. Who is this article for? What are their needs and interests?

Once you know your audience, you can tailor the outline to address their specific concerns.

Set clear goals for the article. What do you want the reader to learn or achieve after reading the article? Having clear goals will help you stay focused and on track as you create the outline.

Do a competitive analysis. What other articles are ranking for the same keyword? What are they doing well? What could they be doing better? This information can help you create an outline that is more comprehensive and informative than the competition.

Use data to support your claims. When you're writing about the main subject, don't just rely on your own opinions. Use data from what i've already wrote and uploaded to you in the file article.txt to back up your claims. This will make your article more credible and authoritative.

Keep the tone and style consistent. The tone and style of your article should be consistent throughout the outline. This will help create a smooth and easy-to-read experience for the reader.

Proofread carefully. Before you publish the outline, make sure to proofread it carefully for any errors in grammar, spelling, or punctuation. This will make your article look more professional and polished.

Assistant:

Completion:

Here is a comprehensive SEO-optimized outline for the article "How to Make an Album: A Step-by-Step Guide":

How to Make an Album: A Step-by-Step Guide

Introduction

- Why make an album instead of singles or EPs?
- The significance of albums in an artist's career
- Overview of the album making process

Before You Start Recording

Choosing the Concept and Songs
- How to come up with an album concept
- Writing songs that fit within a central theme
- Deciding on the tracklist and number of songs

Creating a Budget
- Estimating costs for recording, production, artwork, distribution
- Setting aside funds for promotion and marketing
- Options for reducing costs like home recording

Assembling Your Team
- Hiring a producer, engineer, mixer, and mastering engineer
- Getting musicians for session work
- Working with photographers, designers, and videographers

Finding a Recording Studio
- Renting a professional studio
- Building a home studio
- Acoustic treatment for optimal sound

Handling the Legalities
- Registering songs to collect royalties
- Obtaining licenses for samples and covers
- Working out agreements for collaborators

Recording Your Album

Planning Your Sessions
- Creating a recording schedule
- Blocking time for each song
- Allowing flexibility for overdubs and changes

Tracking the Foundations
- Getting good drum, bass, guitar sounds
- Recording these parts first
- Using click tracks for consistency

Recording Vocals and Overdubs
- Comping takes to get the best vocals
- Doubling tracks for richness
- Layering additional instruments

Capturing the Finishing Touches
- Adding percussion, keyboards, effects
- Recording auxiliary instruments
- Leaving room for sweetening later

Mixing and Mastering

Mixing Your Songs
- Balancing levels, panning, EQ for each track
- Adding effects like reverb, delay, compression
- Automation for dynamic mixes

Preparing for Mastering
- Leaving headroom for mastering
- Exporting mix stems if needed
- Providing details to the mastering engineer

Mastering the Album
- Maximizing loudness and clarity
- Giving the album a cohesive sound
- Preparing files for distribution

Album Packaging and Promotion

Creating the Artwork
- Commissioning cover art and visual assets
- Maintaining a consistent look and theme
- Formatting images for physical and digital use

Picking the Release Date
- Planning distribution and promotions
- Factoring in production timelines
- Coordinating with your team

Distribution and Royalties
- Uploading to streaming platforms
- Selling physical copies
- Registering songs to collect royalties

Marketing and Promotion
- Producing music videos and content
- Running social media campaigns
- Pitching to playlists, blogs, and reviewers

Launching the Album

The Release Show
- Planning a launch party or concert
- Offering merch and pre-orders
- Creating excitement among fans

Post-Release Promotion
- Continuing social media and content campaigns
- Looking for sync and licensing opportunities
- Pitching to radio, playlists, etc.

Reviewing the Data
- Monitoring streaming numbers, sales
- Reading reviews and fan feedback
- Evaluating what worked and what didn't

Conclusion

- Key takeaways from the album making process
- Setting new goals and plans for your next release
- Appreciating the journey of creating an album