the planner

PLANNING YOUR STANDALONE SINGLE RELEASE.

FROM MASTER TO RELEASE DAY

So, you wrote a new song and you want to release it as a standalone single – maybe to come out with a new band, keep interest alive between bigger releases, or to announce a tour. If your past releases went down rather chaotic and without much impact, here's a good way to plan it: **backwards**. And once the plan stands, you simply execute it.

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1 PICK YOUR RELEASE DATE (A FRIDAY).

Open your planning sheet and pick a Friday. Friday is the global release day: DSPs refresh New Music Friday and Release Radar on Fridays, and the chart week runs Friday to Thursday. Avoid holidays, bridge days, December, and the first half of January – industry folks are most likely not at work, and listeners aren't on their regular listening schedule.

2 SET YOUR SPOTIFY PITCHING DEADLINE.

Spotify's hard deadline is 7 days before release – past that you risk missing your followers' Release Radar. Spotify itself recommends at least 2 weeks. But don't plan around that either: editors build playlists weeks ahead, so pitch as early as you can – ideally the moment your track's delivered, around 4 weeks out.

3 COUNT BACK FOR YOUR UPLOAD DATE.

Count back 6 weeks from your release date for the day you upload to your distributor. Distrokid's turnaround is only a few days, but count back 9–10 weeks if you work with a bigger distributor – some need 5–6 weeks. Your song has to be delivered (not released) to Spotify for Artists at least 4 weeks before release so you can pitch by that 4-week mark. **Check with your distributor for lead times!**

4 SET YOUR MASTER ASSET DELIVERY DEADLINE.

Set the deadline for your finished master assets one week before upload, so you can catch problems before they mess up your pretty plan.

MASTER ASSETS INCLUDE

- the streaming master (44.1 kHz)
- the cover artwork (3000×3000px)
- metadata (songwriter, performer, producer)
- photos
- the audio master for the video (48 kHz)
- proof-read lyrics
- video (needs 48 kHz audio!)

5 SET YOUR VENDOR MASTER ASSET DELIVERY DEADLINE.

Deadlines get hard to meet the moment more people are involved. Give them a date a week earlier than your real one. So you're holding 2 dates: the **vendor deadline** (padded, the one you tell them), and your **hard deadline** (your real need-by).

6 PLAN YOUR CONTENT CREATION & CHANNEL UPDATE TIME.

Your content is made from your finished master assets, so budget about a week of content creation once everything's delivered. Some of it should be done before you pitch:

- Avatar (profile picture)
- Banner
- Gallery image(s)
- Bio + links
- Spotify Canvas
- Full-length video
- Countdown videos
- Spotify pitch

Ideally, you refresh your whole online presence before you pitch, so it's current and cohesive when an editor – or anyone you want to impress – looks you up.

Your plan stands.

7 GIVE COLLABORATORS THE VENDOR DELIVERY DEADLINE.

Tell your mastering engineer, artwork designer, filmmaker, and photographer when you need everything finished.

8 BOOK YOUR SESSIONS EARLY.

Book the mixing and mastering sessions (if you're in the room for them), the photo and video shoots, the design calls – anything that needs scheduling. Get it on the books early so the deadlines can be met.

9 WRITE YOUR PITCH.

While the track's being mixed and mastered and the artwork, video, and photos come together, prepare your Spotify pitch: what the track's about, what's special about its songwriting, production, or collaboration, any live dates, your marketing plans, and which playlists could be a fit.

10 UPDATE YOUR BIO.

Since you're refreshing your channels before the pitch, prep a bio update to go live then too.

THE WHOLE THING ON ONE TIMELINE.

Everything counts back from your release Friday. Set these markers once and, from here, it's just executing the plan.

8 WKS BEFORE

VENDOR ASSET DEADLINE

The padded date you give collaborators – a week before your real need-by.

7 WKS BEFORE

HARD ASSET DEADLINE

Your real need-by for all finished master assets, so you can catch problems early.

6 WKS BEFORE

UPLOAD TO DISTRIBUTOR

DistroKid turns around in days; allow 9–10 weeks for bigger distributors.

5 WKS BEFORE

CONTENT CREATION WEEK

Avatar, banner, gallery, Spotify Canvas, videos, bio – all built from your masters.

4 WKS BEFORE

DELIVER & PITCH SPOTIFY

Track delivered to Spotify for Artists; the pitch window opens – pitch as early as you can.

1 WK BEFORE

SPOTIFY HARD DEADLINE

7 days out at the latest, or you risk missing your followers' Release Radar.

DAY 0 FRIDAY

RELEASE DAY

New Music Friday and Release Radar refresh; the chart week begins.

WHAT THIS DOESN'T COVER

PROMOTION

Planning gets your release out the door. Getting it heard is a separate job – the announcement, pre-save, content before, on, and after release day, ads, email sendouts and PR, DSP campaigns, a release show – that's a whole other guide (I'm on it!) – but with your master assets in place, you already have the foundation set.

RIGHTS MANAGEMENT

Rights management makes sure you own your release and get paid for it – songwriting and publishing splits, master revenue splits, registering the work with your PRO or publisher. It's its own world, but settle it before you release, not after. Money is much harder to untangle once it's moving.

FIRST RELEASE EVER? DO THIS NOW.

Here's a catch nobody warns you about: you can't claim your Spotify for Artists profile or pitch your debut single until you already have music on the platform – because the profile doesn't exist yet.

SOLUTION

1. Release a 1-minute teaser or intro ASAP, any day – this gets a profile created for you.
2. Claim and verify your profiles (Spotify for Artists, Apple Music for Artists, etc.).
3. Once verified, take the teaser down via your distributor, or just leave it up as an intro.

Do this early – the teaser still needs distributor + claim time – so your profile is verified before your real single's pitch window opens at the 4-week mark.

THAT'S THE PLANNING. WANT TO DO IT WITH SOMEONE WHO'S DONE IT A FEW HUNDRED TIMES?

WORK WITH ME

Here's how we can work together — sarahwohlfahrt.com