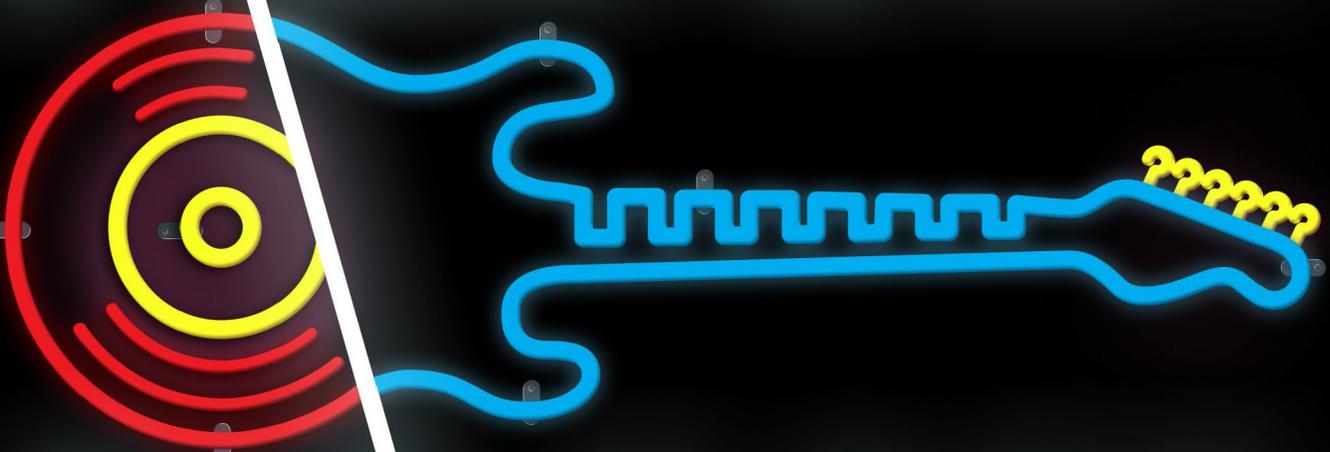




THE GUIDE TO A
SUCCESSFUL

ALBUM



RELEASE

The complete guide for bands releasing an album

Album production can seem a daunting task but with correct planning it doesn't have to be. We've created this guide using our years of experience in copying CD's to help you avoid the common problems that we see.

Who is your album aimed at?

Who your CD album aimed at will have an influence on quantity, the type of packaging, the quality of the print and also the master.

1. CDs to sell at Gigs
2. Promo CDs for radio stations / record labels
3. CDs to give away just so people hear your music.



CDs to sell at gigs

If you are selling your CDs then you will want them to look good and sound good. Jewel cases are the traditional packaging for CD albums but card digipaks often have a perceived higher value. If you are selling your CDs at gigs then the size of the packaging may be something to consider, a CD in a simple card wallet takes up a lot less space than a jewel case.

Plastic Jewel cases can be quite fragile and easily damaged, a card pack is more durable and could be a better option if the disc will be transported frequently.



Promo CDs for radio stations / record labels

When designing the artwork you should consider including all of your contact and social media details on the disc itself. Often the packaging can be discarded or lost so having it on the disc will mean it's always at hand. Make sure it's easy read, having a beautiful disc may make it stand out but what's really important to a radio station or record label, the artwork or the music?

If you are sending your discs in the post its best to avoid Jewel cases – they are easily damaged in the post and they also cost more to send due to the thickness. A simple plastic or card wallet will keep your postage costs down. You should also consider having ISRC codes embedded into the tracks. ISRC codes help track royalty payments form radio play. You can register ISRC codes at <http://www.ppluk.com> and then they are embedded into the discs when the master CD is made, usually by the recording studio.

CDs to give away just so people hear your music.

If you are just looking to give away discs so people hear your music then there are some low cost options available like plastic or paper wallets.



Getting ready for your release

If you're planning an album release on a specific date or to coincide with an event, you can't wait until the last minute to get organized. Planning a release date means working backwards to organize your rehearsals, recording, mixing, mastering, design and manufacturing as well as promotions well in advance of your release date. There are a number of things you need to have on your CD checklist, including:

1. Copyrighting

As soon as you produce a copy of a song — an audio recording, written transcription, or print-out of lyrics your work is copyrighted. Still, it's a good idea to [register your work](#) with PRS to protect and earn Royalties due to you.



2. Clearing all samples

If your audio master contains any loops or samples of previously recorded work, you are required to purchase a [MCPS License](#). Discus Group cannot begin manufacturing without the proper licenses. If you are performing covers on your CD, see [Part II](#).

3. CD design

Your CD represents all the hard work you've put into your music and career. Unless you, someone on your team, or someone you are hiring is a [professional designer](#), don't try to do it on your own! If you do have a designer working with you, make sure you use our [CD design templates](#)





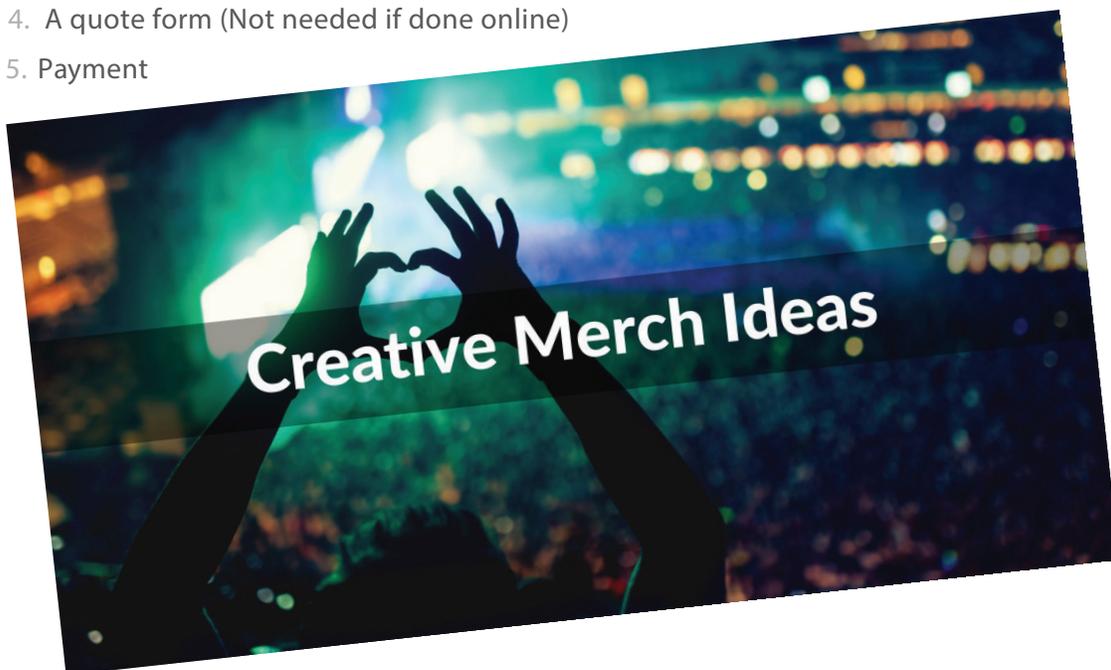
4. Mastering

Your album isn't ready for release until it has been [professionally mastered](#). You've poured your heart into your music and recording, so why stop short of making your album sound the best that it can?

5. Collecting all your materials

You need five things when you [send us your CD order](#)

1. Your audio master ready to upload as a DDP2.0 file with MD5 checksum or on a CD-R
2. Your design files ready to upload or email in
3. If Applicable Limited Manufacture licence (LM) (documentation) if you are doing covers
4. A quote form (Not needed if done online)
5. Payment



6. Promo materials

Printed [promotional materials](#) like stickers, flyers, full-color posters, and postcards can help you spread the word at gigs and on the street. Plan ahead and make sure your promotional materials match your album in style, voice, and visual appeal.

7. CD packaging

Every [CD package](#) has a list of benefits and features that sets it apart. [Digipaks](#) offer a great opportunity to integrate interesting cover art, and are a “greener” alternative to [Jewel Cases](#), the industry standard. Digipaks can have as many as eight panels, and both packages can offer printed booklets of up to 32 pages. [Eco-Wallets](#) also afford plenty of design and booklet options, and the [CD Wallet](#) is a lightweight recycled stock slip sleeve that can still deliver a graphic punch. Take the time to pick the best one for your album.



PART TWO

Licenses and copyrights for CD's and digital downloads

Answers to questions about mechanical licenses

If you plan to record a cover song for your release then you're going to need to make some choices. Any composition not written by you requires a mechanical license before you can record and release it as an album track, single, or download.



1. What is a mechanical license?

Copyright Law requires artists and labels to obtain a mechanical license before distributing a recording containing any song or composition you didn't write. Any time you reproduce and distribute a recording of a composition you do not control — through both physical and digital means — you need a mechanical license. Mechanical licenses are issued by the owner or controller of the composition. Typically, these are publishers acting on behalf of songwriters or composers. [MCPS](#) is a central body representing artists and responsible for this

2. How does this work for physical CDs?

The publishing royalty is calculated based on number of copies, track profile and duration.

CD manufactured that includes the cover song material, the royalties owed correspond to the rate MCPS quote IE 9.1p per pressing, per song. For instance, if you were to manufacture 1,000 CDs of an album containing two cover songs, the royalties owed would be £182 (1,000 CDs x 2 songs x 9.1p per song). [MCPS Licensing](#) has a one-stop online tool that allows you to clear cover songs quickly and easily. Note % can be claimed for promotional use

3. How does this work for digital?

The same statutory rate applies to digital downloads. For digital downloads, the royalties are calculated on the actual amount of downloads. For instance, if your album includes one cover song and is downloaded 500 times, the royalties owed are £45.50 (500 album downloads x 1 song x 9.1 per song). Additionally, if your cover songs are available as singles, the same rate applies to all downloaded single tracks of the song.

4. What is public domain?

In the UK, songs are in the public domain those which were recorded less than 50 or 70 - years ago. You will not need a licence for these works. <http://www.openmusicarchive.org> is a good starting point to see if a song is in the public domain.

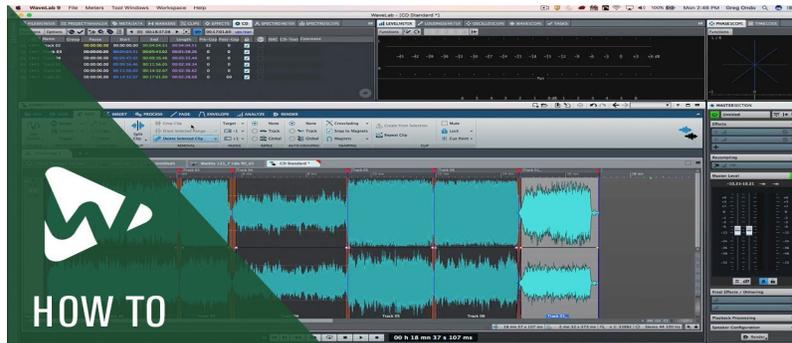


Producing The Master

Your recording studio may provide you with a physical CD (or a DDP master). If they only provide you with digital audio files (such as WAV or MP3) then these files will need to be made into an audio CD. Most computers have software that you can use to do this yourself, if not or you are not capable doing so then we can create the master for you and send you a proof for a small fee.

The quality of the copies is only as good as the CD master. It's no good using low quality MP3 files and expecting to receive top quality CDs so make sure you use have high quality audio files to work from.

There is an alternative to manufacturing from a physical audio CD and that is to use a DDP file. DDP files require specialist software so we would suggest you only use this option if you are familiar with them. DDP files need to be supplied with an MD5 checksum and for duplication projects we will supply a proof prior to manufacturing as DDP files were designed for replication rather than duplication to CD-R.



If you are producing the master yourself there are a few tip to ensure you produce a good quality master:

- . Burn at slow speed.
- . Always Verify.
- . Always use a good quality disc such as Falcon Media, Imation, Verbatim or Taiyo Yuden.
- . Always check the disc in and audio CD player (not just a computer).
- . Make sure there are no scratches on the data surface.
- . Always send in a strong protective case when posting your master

Other thing to consider when producing your audio master

Along with the audio there are 2 other important things to consider when you are creating the audio CD master. These needs to be embedded when the CD is burnt (or the DDP file is made).

CD Text

CD text can be added to you audio CD so compatible CD players can display information like the track title, artist and Album name.



Be aware that most computer programs do not read CD text from the audio CD. Instead they check an online database to get the information. You need to register your disc with these databases in order for programs such as Windows Media Player and iTunes to display track information.

Gracenotes is the largest online database and is used by iTunes – www.gracenote.com

Producing The Master



ISRC codes

International Standard Recording Codes (ISRCs) are an internationally recognised system to identify recorded music tracks and music videos. By embedding ISRC codes into your audio CDs it assists the PPL in collection of royalty payments on your behalf, this is particularly important if your CD is likely to get air play. You can apply for ISRC codes from PPL UK www.ppluk.com

Barcode

Not all projects will require a barcode, it will depend on where you are planning on selling your CDs. Some retailers insist a barcode is present. If you are selling the discs yourself then you do not need one.



EAN13 barcodes are the standard used in the UK, these have 13 digits. UPC barcodes have 12 digits and are a US standard. Some outlets will allow UPC barcodes in the UK but to be sure your barcode can be used by all retailers its best to use an EAN13 barcode. Be careful what you buy on the internet or contact us and we can support you. Discus Group are GS1 registered so can give you the best advice and stop you making mistakes. If you do make a mistake we can supply you a roll of new barcodes to stick on your product



PART THREE

Preparing your order

Details you need to know to get your project done right and done on time

The best way to ensure a stress-free manufacturing process and flawless finished product is to make sure all the elements of your project are in perfect shape when they arrive at our plant. The extra care and time you take in preparing your materials before production will be rewarded with meeting deadlines and lots of happy fans and bandmates. Here are some things to keep in mind when preparing your order.

1. Your audio master

Make sure your audio master (the disc you're sending us of your finished recording — or the file you are uploading) sounds and functions exactly the way you want it to. The finished discs you get back from us will be an exact match of the master you send us (unless you're ordering post-production mastering), so it's important that your master sounds exactly the way you want it to, with all of the tracks in the correct order and the right amount of spacing between songs. Always make a safety copy of your master before you post or deliver it anywhere!

You don't need to send us a master disc if you opt to upload your audio files online. For audio CD orders, we accept replication-ready DDP files, but we also can accept and prepare individual audio files such as WAV and AIF for replication. Learn more about [preparing your master](#), note we charge a small amount for mastering if sending WAV's

2. Your design files

If you are providing completed graphics in a Discus Group [CD template](#), there is a lot you can do to ensure your finished product looks great and your project moves along as smoothly as possible.

1. Make sure that you leave the size of the template page as is

Simply place your art into the print area following the bleed, trim, and safety guides as shown. Don't copy the template elements into a new page of your own, crop the page, or move any of the template elements around. The page size and white space surrounding the template guides and crop marks is intentional. When preparing your





disc design, simply place your art into the square as shown, don't mask the art into a circle or punch out the center hole – we take care of that during production.

When you are happy with your design, export your file from your design program as a PDF/X-4 . Although this sounds complicated, this PDF export preset is a common industry-standard that's available in the "File" menu of every current professional layout program. It yields a high-resolution, press-ready file for the best possible results on your printed product. If you'd like to see how to export a PDF/X-4 from the design programs that we support, we've made [show you how it's done](https://www.discusgroup.co.uk/resources/artwork-templates/show-you-how-it's-done) . Go to <https://www.discusgroup.co.uk/resources/artwork-templates/> "Learn how to create & export a PDF" link near the bottom of the page. We've got a video for every program.

Before you export, make sure that the "Template Guides" layer is



hidden, or set to non-printing. If the Template Guides layer is left on, and printable, the guides are going to show up on your finished product. You can verify that you've exported your PDF properly without the guides by opening the PDF that you have exported and taking a quick look before you upload.

4. Make sure your images do not exceed 300 dpi at 100% output size, and that complex transparency effects are flattened before you export your PDF. If your file is taking a really long time to upload, it may be the result of unnecessarily high-resolution image files, or complex un-flattened artwork.

Some BONUS design items to be mindful of:

- Carefully check your design for typos. It's always a good idea to have someone else give it a critical look before sending it in. Then check again.
- Make sure all your images are 300 dpi. Remember, this is getting printed — high resolution images only!
- Avoid gradients on your on-disc design. Discs which are silk-screened, the gradients don't render well in the silk-screen process. We will offset print Gradients
- Use a professional designer and professional design program that allows you to design in CMYK.



3. Limited Manufacture licence (LM)

Before we can legally reproduce the product you're ordering, we need to know that you own the rights to the music. Without a completed MCPS form, we cannot start your order. [Click here for more information](#) about Limited Manufacture licence (LM) copyrights, and more.

4. Money Back Product Guarantee

Product Guarantee. We want your complete satisfaction on every order, and we back that up with a full money back guarantee. Discus Group's policy is either you love your final project and keep it, or we will replace or refund your money if there is a defect we have caused. Any production errors or flawed merchandise will be immediately replaced or refunded. Just return the product to us. [Get a quick quote online now for your next project.](#)



PART FOUR

Deadlines and production times

Get your discs in time for your release party or event.

About production times

Our [turn times](#) tell you how fast your job will get through our manufacturing plant once it's approved, but there are other steps you need to account for. There's the pre-approval process that includes prepping your art files and master (a process that can range from two to seven days), the time it takes for you to approve your proofs, and 1 or 2 day shipping to your doorstep.

10-day (Economy) replication time

- 4 business days of pre-approval time
- 10 business days of production time after you approve your proofs
- Total turn time is 14 business days
- Add time for shipping

5-day (Standard) duplication time

- 3 days of pre-approval time
- 5 days of production time
- Total turn time is 8 business days
- Add time for shipping



1 to 5 day (Priority) production time duplication and replication

- 2 days of pre-approval time
- 3 days of production time
- Total turn time is 5 business days
- Add time for shipping

