



TURN YOUR MUSIC INTO
MONEY THIS CHRISTMAS



www.DiscusGroup.co.uk

'TIS THE SEASON (TO SELL CDs)

The Christmas season is the biggest retail quarter of the year, so take advantage of it.

The Christmas season, especially the golden month between halloween and Christmas, is the most lucrative time of the year for retail sales. As an independent musician, it can be a time for you to move a ton of product — CDs, merch, and more. There are many ways to take advantage of this time of the year, and recording your own versions of Christmas carols and holiday favorites might be the perfect way to add something different to your catalog, catch the attention

of new listeners, or thank your existing fan base with a free download or limited-edition CD.

If you're planning a release to coincide with the holidays, you can't wait until the last minute to get things organized. As with any CD project, planning a release date means working backwards and rehearsing, recording, and organizing your promotions well in advance of your release date.



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THERE ARE A NUMBER OF THINGS YOU NEED TO HAVE ON YOUR CD CHECKLIST, INCLUDING:

1. COPYWRITING

As soon as you produce a copy of a song — a recording, written transcription, or print-out of lyrics — your work is copyrighted. Still, it's a good idea to register your work with a MCPS License.

2. CLEARING ALL SAMPLES

If your audio master contains any loops or samples of previously recorded work, you are required to purchase a master use License.

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 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 on CD-R or ready to send
2. Your design files ready to mail in or upload/email
3. Payment
4. MCPS License
5. A signed order form

6. PROMO MATERIALS

Printed Materials like stickers, flyers, full-color posters, and post cards 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 and voice.

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 — which remain 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.



CREATE SOME CHRISTMAS MAGIC

Find creative ways to turn your CDs and merch into Christmas joy!

1. ADD A CHRISTMAS OR SEASONAL SONG TO YOUR UPCOMING RELEASE

Find a holiday favorite that you can inject your personality and musical style into. Whether it be a creative arrangement, a total reengineering, a genre-fied reimagining, or a faithful interpretation of a classic, adding a holiday tune can be the bow on the package of your CD. If you're feeling really inventive, write your own holiday song — it worked for The Waitresses (you'll be hearing "Christmas Wrapping" before you know it).

2. RE-RELEASE A CD FROM YOUR BACK CATALOG

One way to breathe new life into an older album is to re-release a CD from your back catalog with the addition of a holiday track, live tracks, or new cover song. Or you can gather some live tracks, outtakes, greatest hits, or acoustic recordings and include a holiday song or two to round off the album. This special limited-edition CD compilation can be a stand-alone sales item or serve as a bonus to a merch bundle or CD sale at a gig.

3. RECORD A 2-SONG CHRISTMAS/HOLIDAY CD

This could be a way to make a quick sale, thank your fans with a free disc, or include as a special holiday add-on with the purchase of another CD in your catalog. Or you can make this a special 2-song download that gives you a good excuse to email your list and boost sales of your other CDs and merch. Non-holiday cover songs work great for this idea as well.

4. SEND ECO-WALLET CHRISTMAS CARDS

Eco-wallets can be self-mailers and can make a great gift for your best fans and family or serve as a teaser with a track or two that links to your full-length CDs for sale online.

5. SELL OR GIVE AWAY DOWNLOAD CARDS

Download cards can be for a full-length release as a gift, a new song or two, or a new compilation of songs (including holiday tunes!) from different releases. Sell your music with these cards or gift them in the hopes of driving larger sales.

6. CREATE "GIFT BUNDLES" FOR SALE ONLINE & AT GIGS

These can be discount purchases of multiple albums or bundles of items like CD's, T-shirts, posters and stickers.

7. CREATE A GIG!

Approach a shop manager or store owner in town and ask if there's a place where you can set up your band, keyboard, or acoustic guitar and offer to play for free. Play Christmas songs, covers, and originals and sell your CDs and special seasonal releases while you're at it (make sure you make that part of the agreement).

8. CREATE A VIDEO

Put a video together of rehearsals and the recording process for a single, cover, or Christmas song; post it online; and link to it from emails, your website, and social networks. The video can add to the story of what you're doing behind the scenes, which always helps people relate to your music. Give your fans a glimpse into the creative process, and always give them an easy path to your online sales pages so they can buy your music on the spot!



LICENCES AND COPYRIGHTS FOR CDs AND DIGITAL DOWNLOADS

If you plan to record a cover song for your release, including Christmas songs, then you're going to need to make some choices. Choosing the right song and arrangement can take trial and error (and time). Any composition not written by

you — including many seasonal favorites — requires a mechanical license before you can record and release it as an album track, single, or download.

1. WHAT IS A MECHANICAL LICENCE?

Copyright Law requires artists and labels to obtain a mechanical licence 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 licence. Mechanical licences are issued by the owner or controller of the composition. Typically, these are publishers acting on behalf of songwriters or composers.

2. HOW DOES THIS WORK FOR PHYSICAL CDs?

The publishing royalty is calculated is based on number of copies, track profile and duration. CD manufactured which includes the cover song material, the royalties owned correspond to the rate MCPS quote IE 9.1p, per pressing, per song for instance. if you were to manufacture 1,000 CD's of an album containing two cover songs, the royalties owned would be £182 (1,000 CD's x 2 songs x 9.1p per song)

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 IF I'M DOING SHORT RUNS?

The minimum number of physical pressings that Licencing will license is 25. The same minimum applies to digital downloads

5. WHAT IF WE DON'T PLAN TO SELL THE CDs?

If you are giving away CDs, downloads, etc. you will still need a mechanical licence and will be required to pay mechanical royalties for all physical units manufactured and all digital units distributed.



“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 licence.”

6. 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.

7. WHAT CONSTITUTES A “COPYRIGHTED ARRANGEMENT?”

A copyrighted arrangement consists of a version of a public domain song that includes changes or alterations with at least a minimal amount of creative musical expression. Sometimes, this can be difficult to determine. *An excellent rule of thumb: if you used sheet music to learn it, you can find the copyright information there.*



DO YOU NEED A LICENCE?

Whenever you record a song that someone else wrote, you need to get permission from the copyright holders. This is true even if you are giving away your recording. Getting permission involves contacting the copyright holders for each song and it can be a real pain. Thankfully, MCPS will do all this for you



PREPARING YOUR ORDER

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

If you are going to do a new release for the Christmas, the best way to ensure a stress-free manufacturing process and a flawless finished product is to make sure all the elements of your project are in perfect shape when they arrive at our facility

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 band mates.

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 before sending it to us. 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. Remember, you should *always* make a safety copy of your master before you ship 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 for replication. Duplication we have different rules as the process is different - ask us.

2. YOUR DESIGN FILES

If you're providing completed graphics in a Discus Group CD Template, there is a lot you can do to ensure your finished product looks great and doesn't get delayed.

- **Check for typos on the finished product.** It's always a good idea to have someone else give it a critical look before sending it in.
- **Make sure all your images are 300 dpi.** Remember, this is getting printed — *high resolution images only!*
- **Make sure all your images are 300 dpi.** Small fonts can be very hard to read and print on discs gradients can sometimes print different on discs than you see on screen
- **Use a professional designer** and professional design program that allows you to design in CMYK.
- **If you're supplying graphics files on a CD-R,** enclose a physical printout of what the design will look like.

3. LIMITED MANUFACTURE LICENSE (LM) & MECHANICAL LICENSES

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 LM license, we cannot start your order.



DEADLINES AND PRODUCTION TIMES

Get your discs in time for Christmas

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 two-day shipping to your door-step.

IF YOU OPT FOR A 10-DAY (ECONOMY) PRODUCTION TIME, WHAT THAT ACTUALLY MEANS IS:

- 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) PRODUCTION TIME

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

1-5 DAY (PRIORITY) PRODUCTION TIME

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

HAVE YOUR CDs FOR CHRISTMAS!

To get the best price on your project, **order by Dec. 5th** and have your discs in hand for Christmas Eve.

Note: Turn times quoted are for CDs in jewel cases with 2- to 6-page inserts, Digipaks with 4 or 6 panels, and 4-panel Wallets. To get an exact deadline for your order (or if you don't see the package or options you're interested in), call your product specialist today at 0330 333 1090



SALES AND PROMOTION

Now that you've got your project completed, it's time to let the world know about it.

Timing your promotional efforts to create a synchronized sales cycle and maximize your sales potential requires a good deal of planning and execution. Effective social campaigns can take weeks to drum up the requisite excitement, and getting your digital distribution channels to go live simultaneously can be a challenge. One good piece of

advice is to decide which channels you want to use for sales, which channels you want to use for promotion, and build your campaign around them. By limiting your efforts to a manageable number of channels and tasks, you can be effective without overwhelming yourself.

HERE'S A LIST OF PROMOTIONAL IDEAS. IT'S BY NO MEANS EXHAUSTIVE, AND YOU DON'T NEED TO DO THEM ALL. PICK AND CHOOSE THE ONES THAT ARE RIGHT FOR YOU AND DO IT RIGHT!

1. MAKE YOUR MUSIC AVAILABLE FOR SALE

Finding the best venues for your album and download sales is the first step toward a successful Christmas sales season. distribution bundles take a lot of the stress of distribution away: get your music on iTunes, Amazon, CD Baby and a few other great retail stores just days after making your CDs with Discus Group

2. UPDATE YOUR WEBSITE AND WEB PRESENCES

Your website and social channels need to promote your new release and provide the means to purchase it. Your Facebook page is a great place to post song clips, outtakes, or special video messages leading up to the release. Your email alerts and tweets are great for building excitement and leading your fans to the places where they can dig deeper and learn more. Any videos on YouTube or Vimeo can help sell your album, too.

3. PROMOTE YOURSELF

Leverage any good press or reviews as they come in. Announce where you've been played (podcasts, blogs, websites, radio), through Twitter, Facebook, your email newsletters, etc.

4. KEEP YOUR BRANDING CONSISTENT

Make an effort to keep all your marketing and promotion efforts in the same voice, using color schemes and images that tie in to the new release.



“ get your music on iTunes, Amazon, CD Baby, and a few other great retail stores just days after making your CDs with Discus Group. ”

5. CREATE A TIMELINE

We touched on some potential teasers to draw your fans in and build anticipation for your release, which includes posting video clips, tweeting about the release, giving music away, and creating and promoting special gigs. All of these are great ways to drum up excitement and give your fans (and potential fans) something to look forward to. They also require a good amount of preparation before your release. Drawing up a timeline with all the specifics is necessary to make sure all your channels are working in tandem and to ensure you hit all the important deadlines.

6. UPSELL YOUR MUSIC

Gig sales should certainly be part of your plan, and bundling releases with each other and with other merch is one good way to upsell, as is including bonus content like your Christmas EP or a limited-edition t-shirt or special piece of merch as mentioned earlier. Make sure your table is manned by a personable salesperson and make sure the crowd knows you have goods for sale by announcing it from the stage. Doing a raffle on stage and finding creative ways to highlight your merch and CDs during the show is one way to integrate your sales pitch while making it a fun aside to your set.

7. ACCEPT DEBIT/CREDIT CARDS

One way to ensure you don't lose a sale is to accept cards. This can also help increase sales as cash on hand doesn't limit what the person can purchase. Try www.iZettle.com

8. CD RELEASE PARTY

If your gig is a CD release party or Christmas event, treat it like a special show. Go the extra mile to promote it and pull out all the stops to make it a memorable evening.

Happy Christmas! From Discus Group

