

The Final Countdown: We're Ready for You, Atlanta!



We are officially **weeks away** from the 8th Annual ISSA Awards Show & Summit, taking place **August 20–22** in Atlanta.

After ten months of planning—literally since the days following last year's event—all the major preparations are complete. The stages are set, the sessions are locked in, and we cannot wait to greet you at the Courtyard by Marriott in Dunwoody for the Summit (Aug 20–21) and the Sandy Springs Performing Arts Center for the Awards Show (Aug 22).

A quick but urgent heads-up: If you haven't finalized your travel, hotel, or Awards Show tickets, please do so immediately. And if you're planning to attend the **free Summit**, now is the time to register—we have only a handful of seats left, and we'd hate for you to miss out!



This Event Belongs to All of Us

Over the past year, we've engaged with so many of you to help shape this year's Summit. From session topics to speaker suggestions, your voices guided everything we built. The response has been truly overwhelming, and that's exactly why we are so excited. Between the incredible speaker lineup, the Swag Bags, the 24/7 video promotion screens, Alexx Antaeus's one-on-one sessions, Linda Marks' Mentoring Program, and Chad Rivette's Karaoke by the pool—we are expecting this to be our **best event yet**.

But we also want to take a moment to share *how* this all happens, because we think it's important for everyone to understand the heart behind the ISSA.

Everything you see—the Swag Bags and their contents, the conference room rentals, the speaker sessions—was either **paid for out-of-pocket by our staff** or generously **donated by our sponsors and volunteers**. Our session speakers donated their time to prepare and present. Alexx Antaeus donated all proceeds from his one-on-one sessions directly back into funding the Summit. Rick Landstrom (The Rick Spins Show) went above and beyond, not only promoting the Awards Show and purchasing video ads for ISSA artists but also buying one-on-one sessions with Alexx Antaeus for a few of his lucky listeners.

And here is the truth we don't often broadcast, but one we feel you should know: ***Not a single ISSA member or staff person gets paid for the planning, presenting, or production of the Summit and Awards Show.*** In fact, many of us have pulled money from our own wallets to make this happen—simply because we believe in this community and want to keep the Summit **free** for all our members.

We aren't sharing this for sympathy; we're sharing it so you know just how deeply this family cares about you. Your presence, your music, and your energy in that room are the only rewards we need.

What's Inside This Month's Newsletter

Since this is our final newsletter before the big weekend, we are dedicating this issue to **everything you need to know** about the upcoming events.

Inside, you'll find all the latest updates on:

- **The Summit** (August 20–21)
- **The Pre-Party** (Friday, August 21)
- **The Awards Show & Post-Party** (August 22)

So grab your calendar, double-check your checklist, and get ready to make unforgettable memories. We'll see you in Atlanta!

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YOUR OFFICIAL ISSA WEEKEND PROGRAM: THE FINAL COUNTDOWN

This is it. The one you've been waiting for.

With just weeks to go until we descend upon Atlanta, the 8th Annual International Singer Songwriters Association (ISSA) Awards Show & Summit is officially upon us—and this is your **final newsletter** before the magic happens. Consider this your printable, fold-it-up, keep-it-in-your-back-pocket program for the entire weekend. Over the next few pages, we're laying out **everything** you need to know, from Tamanie's keynote on Thursday morning to the last late-night jam in the courtyard on Saturday.

So grab a highlighter, clear your calendar, and get ready. Because August 20–22 is about to become the most inspiring three days of your year.

THE BIG PICTURE: THREE DAYS, ONE UNFORGETTABLE JOURNEY

The ISSA Awards Week kicks off **Thursday morning** with the Summit—a full slate of educational sessions led by working professionals who know the music business from the inside out. These aren't theory-speakers; they're battle-tested veterans who have written the songs, booked the tours, and navigated the industry's highs and lows.

Friday continues the learning with another powerhouse day of sessions, capped off by the official ISSA Pre-Party—your first chance to let loose and connect with fellow songwriters before the big night.

And then comes **Saturday**—the main event. The Red Carpet. The Awards Show. The After-Party. Everything builds to this moment, and we're going to celebrate every writer, every song, and every story that got us here.

THE LEGENDARY COURTYARD

Throughout it all, you'll have the chance to connect with fellow songwriters, share stories, and maybe even write a few new songs together. Every evening, our Host Hotel's courtyard (The Courtyard by Marriott) transforms into something special—it has become **legendary** for its late-night jam sessions, impromptu collaborations, and the kind of spontaneous creative energy that simply cannot be manufactured. Expect the unexpected. Bring your instrument. Bring your voice. Bring your stories. The best moments of the weekend often happen after the official schedule ends.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 20 — SUMMIT DAY ONE

The first day of the summit is your warm-up lap and your deep dive all at once. We kick off with opening remarks and roll straight into a full schedule of sessions designed to give you **actionable tools** you can use in your career *immediately*. Whether you're a seasoned writer or just finding your footing, Thursday is packed with firepower.

And don't worry—we didn't forget about the fun. Thursday evening is your chance to ease into the weekend, absorb everything from the day's presenters, and then let loose with karaoke and live jams under the Atlanta sky. Our very own **Chad Rivette** will be hosting the evening festivities, keeping the energy sky-high. So bring your beverage of choice, warm up those vocal cords, and get ready to make some noise.

Here is your complete Thursday lineup:

Time	Session
9:00 – 10:00	**Tamanie Dove** – *Opening Remarks*
10:00 – 11:00	**Angela Marie Eidenmiller** ⭐ *NEW ADDITION*
11:15 – 12:15	**John Pineiro**
1:00 – 2:00	**Linda Marks**
2:15 – 3:15	**Katherine Lynn Nemeth** ⭐ *NEW ADDITION*
3:30 – ???	**Emily Finke**
7:00 – ???	**Karaoke & Live Jam Sessions** – Host hotel Courtyard, hosted by **Chad Rivette**

THURSDAY SESSION BREAKDOWNS

9:00 AM – Tamanie Dove
Opening Remarks & Social Media Hacks
ISSA's CEO and Founder kicks off the Summit with her legendary annual welcome. Expect a blend of fiery inspiration and straight-talk practical advice—she'll share her latest social media strategies and song registration tips to protect your work. History says: buckle up.

10:00 AM – Angela Marie Eidenmiller ⭐ *New Addition*
The Music Business Blueprint
You've written the song. Now what? Angela, ISSA's Associate Director of Artist Relations, delivers a no-fluff roadmap for building a *career* around your finished tracks. This session is for every artist who's ever asked, "What do I do *after* the recording is done?"

11:15 AM – John Pineiro
Nashville Studio Secrets
A veteran of Music City's top studios, John pulls back the curtain on getting the most from a recording session, working with elite session players, and sustaining a long-term career. If you've ever dreamed of tracking in Nashville, this insider knowledge is gold.

1:00 PM – Linda Marks
The Power of Mentorship
Linda shares her personal journey—from a self-taught, dyslexic songwriter at Yale to a seasoned professional—and reveals how mentors at every stage shaped her path. Expect honest stories, actionable advice, and a compelling case for why none of us succeeds alone. Linda will also be paring up "Mentor's" and "Mentee's" for one on one sessions.

2:15 PM – Katherine Lynna Nemeth ⭐ *New Addition*
Sync Licensing 101
Want your music in Film & TV? Katherine, a Recording Academy member with placements in *Project Runway* and *Music City Mistletoe*, breaks down the sync licensing process. Learn what it takes to get your songs placed—and how to start pitching like a pro.

3:30 PM – Emily E. Finke *(Two Sessions in One)*
3:30 – Audio Engineering as Creative Discovery
ISSA's 2025 Sound Engineer of the Year proves that the mixing board is not a barrier—it's an extension of your songwriting. She'll show you how experimentation in the studio can spark new creative ideas, regardless of your skill level.

5:15 – Troubleshooting Your Music Business (Q&A Panel)
Emily hosts an open-forum panel with ISSA Award winners Candy Carpenter, DerrickBrandon, Angela Marie Eidenmiller, and Charu Suri. Bring your burning questions about distribution, promotion, royalties, or anything else—this is your no-judgment zone to get real answers.

7:00 PM – Karaoke & Live Jams with Chad Rivette
Host Hotel Courtyard
The formal sessions end, but the magic begins. Chad Rivette brings his karaoke setup for a night of unplugged (well, amped-up!) fun. Grab your beverage of choice, warm up those pipes, and bond with fellow songwriters over shared laughs and belted-out classics. It's the perfect way to close Day One.

That's Thursday in a nutshell. Every session is designed to give you tools you can use *immediately*—and the evening is all about connection. Keep this handy, and get ready for an inspiring first day.



Karaoke Night Reminder – Don't Miss Out!

Just a quick reminder: our **Karaoke Under the Stars** is officially happening at the ISSA Summit! Join us in the Marriott Courtyard on **Thursday at 7:00 PM** for a night of singing, laughter, and good vibes. No guitar required—just bring your voice and your favorite drink.

Your host is the talented **Chad Rivette** (check him out at **chadrivette.com**), who's more than a karaoke DJ—he's a seasoned performer who knows how to keep the energy high and the shyest singers feeling like stars. The mic is open, the backing tracks are ready, and the fun goes until the last song. See you there!

FRIDAY, AUGUST 21 — SUMMIT DAY TWO

Day Two brings another powerhouse lineup of sessions designed to arm you with actionable tools for your career. We're thrilled to announce that **Jeremy Edmond** and his team from Unlikely Places Radio will lead off the morning, followed by a full roster of industry experts who are ready to share their hard-won wisdom.

The learning builds toward the centerpiece of the day: **Sam George's can't-miss Keynote Speech** from 1:00–3:00 PM. This is a rare opportunity to hear from one of the industry's most respected voices—mark your calendars and don't be late.

But Friday isn't all work. At **5:00 PM**, the official **ISSA Pre-Party** kicks off at **Wild Wing Cafe in Alpharetta, GA**, featuring live music from **four incredible ISSA artists**. It's the perfect chance to relax, grab a drink, sink your teeth into some legendary chicken wings, and enjoy a laid-back evening with your fellow artists before the big awards show on Saturday.

And when the Pre-Party winds down? The celebration continues back at the host hotel courtyard (Courtyard by Marriott - Dunwoody), where the fire pit becomes the gathering spot for **impromptu jam sessions, spontaneous collaborations, and the kind of mayhem that has made ISSA evenings legendary.**

Here is your complete Friday lineup:

Time	Session
9:00 – 10:00	**Jeremy Edmond**
10:15 – 11:15	**Randie O'Neil & Emo LeBlanc**
11:30 – 12:30	**Alan Garmonsway**
1:00 – 3:00	**Sam George** – *KEYNOTE SPEECH*
5:00 – ???	**ISSA Pre-Party** – Wild Wing Cafe, Alpharetta, GA
??? – ???	**Impromptu fun and mayhem** – Host hotel Courtyard

Friday is the bridge between learning and celebration—a day that balances serious industry insight with the kind of connection and camaraderie that makes the ISSA experience truly special. Come ready to absorb knowledge in the morning, then let your hair down in the evening. You've earned it.

FRIDAY SESSION BREAKDOWNS

9:00 AM – Jeremy Edmond & Unlikely Places Radio
Building an Identity in Music While Managing Mental Illness
We are thrilled that Jeremy Edmond and his team from Unlikely Places Radio will lead off Friday's Summit with a powerful and necessary breakout presentation. In an era where artists are pressured to project polished perfection 24/7, this session offers a radical alternative: honesty.

10:15 AM – Randie O'Neil & Emo LeBlanc
Today I'm Great: Working Through the Highs and Lows of the Creative Process
The creative process is rarely a straight line—it's a winding road of brilliant highs and crushing lows. But what if those lows weren't a sign of failure, but simply your brain doing exactly what it's wired to do? That's the question at the heart of this powerful 45-minute session, led by Randie O'Neil, PhD and Emo LeBlanc.

11:30 AM – Alan Garmonsway
Inside the Judge's Panel
Alan Garmonsway—last year's International Album Gold Winner—leads a can't-miss session alongside fellow Gold winners Emily Judson (US Emerging Artist) and Caitlin Mae (US Single). Together, they offer a candid, behind-the-scenes look at what it truly takes to evaluate nearly 1,000 individual Finalists across 40 categories. This panel walks you through the entire journey—from locating the songs and artists to the fine margins that separate Gold from Silver.

1:00 PM – Sam George ⭐ *KEYNOTE SPEECH*
The Future Sounds Human
What if the greatest threat to your music isn't artificial intelligence... but sounding exactly like everyone else? That's the provocative question award-winning producer, songwriter, and Dolby Atmos engineer Sam George will pose when he takes the stage as the ISSA Summit's Keynote Speaker. As AI, algorithms, and automation rapidly reshape the music industry, artists everywhere are asking the same uneasy question: Where do I fit in? But Sam challenges us to consider that we've been asking the wrong question entirely. Rather than fixating on what AI is capable of, he turns the lens inward—exploring the qualities that remain uniquely and irreducibly human. His central argument is both bold and reassuring: technology doesn't diminish the need for artists; it raises the standard for what it means to be one. Trust us—his answer will reshape how you think about your art.

5:00 PM – ISSA Awards Show "Pre-Party"
Wild Wing Cafe – Alpharetta, GA
The Wild Wing Cafe becomes the place to be for great chicken wings, great beverages, great camaraderie, and really great music from five incredible ISSA artists providing the high-energy entertainment:

- **Steve Coughlin**
- **Rachel Dee Lynn**
- **Jared Daws**
- **Lexi Blue**
- **The Hungry and Dangerous**

Tickets for this amazing evening are available on the ISSA Website:
👉 https://issasongwriters.com/issa-awards/

After the Pre-Party – Impromptu Fun & Mayhem
Host Hotel Courtyard (Courtyard by Marriott – Dunwoody)
The celebration continues back at the host hotel courtyard, where the fire pit becomes the gathering spot for impromptu jam sessions, spontaneous collaborations, and the kind of mayhem that has made ISSA evenings legendary. Bring your instrument, bring your voice, and bring your stories—the best moments of the weekend often happen after the official schedule ends.







SATURDAY, AUGUST 22 — THE BIG DAY!

This is it. The moment everything has been building toward. The red carpet. The awards. The celebration of songwriting excellence. After months of anticipation, countless submissions, and two days of inspiring Summit sessions, Saturday is finally here—and it's going to be unforgettable.

Arrive early for the **Red Carpet Experience** (12:00–2:00 PM) at the beautiful Sandy Springs Performing Arts Center, where you'll have the chance to shine, snap photos, and soak in the glamour alongside your fellow artists. Then settle in for the main event—the **2026 ISSA Awards Show** (2:00–5:00 PM)—where we'll honor the best and brightest in the singer-songwriter community across 40 categories.

When the final trophy is handed out, the celebration doesn't stop. The party moves back to **Wild Wing Cafe** in Alpharetta for the official **After-Party** (5:00 PM – ???), featuring great food, great drinks, and even greater company. And yes—the courtyard at the host hotel will once again become the site of late-night celebrations, impromptu jam sessions, and the kind of spontaneous magic that makes ISSA weekends legendary.

Here is your complete Saturday lineup:

Time	Event
12:00 – 2:00	**2026 ISSA Awards Show Red Carpet Experience** – Sandy Springs Performing Arts Center, Sandy Springs
2:00 – 5:00	**2026 ISSA Awards Show** – Sandy Springs Performing Arts Center, Sandy Springs
5:00 – ???	**ISSA Awards Show After Party** – Wild Wing Cafe, Alpharetta, GA
??? – ???	**Fun and mayhem celebrating all the big wins** – Host hotel Courtyard

SATURDAY EVENT BREAKDOWNS

12:00 PM – Red Carpet Experience
Sandy Springs Performing Arts Center – Byers Theater
The 8th Annual ISSA Awards Show takes place at the beautiful Byers Theater in the Sandy Springs Performing Arts Center—home of The BMI Awards. The Red Carpet Experience kicks off at Noon with professional photographers and interviewers on hand to greet you and capture your moment in the spotlight. It's the perfect opportunity to meet and greet with your fellow artists, pose for photos, and soak in the glamour. And don't forget—the fan-favorite **360 video booth** will be available again this year, so strike your best pose and get ready to shine!

2:00 PM – The 8th Annual ISSA Awards Show
Byers Theater – Sandy Springs Performing Arts Center
The main event begins at 2:00 PM! In addition to presenting this year's awards across 40 categories to our incredible artists, we are honored to be graced with live performances from some of the best talent in the singer-songwriter community:

- **Angel Ocasio Jr.**
- **Birdy Young**
- **The Lowdown Dirty Heathens**
- **Brett Ryder**
- **Eleyet McConnell**

This prestigious, formal, recorded event is your time to shine. And don't forget—this year's Gold Winners, who will be sitting among you, are next year's judges. What better way to let them know who you are?





5:00 PM – The After Party
Wild Wing Cafe – Alpharetta, GA
Immediately following the show, the celebration moves to Wild Wing Cafe in Alpharetta for the official ISSA After Party. This more intimate gathering will feature live performances from an incredible lineup of ISSA artists:

Randie O'Neil	Alan Garmonsway	Meghanne Storey
Cliff & Garret Wheeler	Tay Bronson	Jak Fidler
Chad Rivette	Jason Cole	J. Edmond
Linda Boles	Angela Easley	Andrew Dean
Marie Norris	Carol Stevens	Brad Thomas
Sherise D'Souza	Re Mattei	Jennifer Emard
Rylee Nicholson	Jaycee Lynn	Linda Purrs

The After Party could go on into the wee hours as we suspect many ISSA members will enjoy the laid-back atmosphere and fabulous food at this well-established and favorite hangout. **Pre-purchased wristbands will be provided to members upon arrival.** Tickets are available on the ISSA Website:
👉 https://issasongwriters.com/issa-awards/

After the After Party – Fun & Mayhem
Host Hotel Courtyard (Courtyard by Marriott – Dunwoody)
And just when you think the big day is over... the celebration continues back at the host hotel courtyard! What's better than gathering around the fire pit with all your fellow artists, celebrating the day's earlier wins, and enjoying impromptu jam sessions, spontaneous collaborations, and the kind of mayhem that has made ISSA evenings legendary? Bring your instrument, bring your voice, and bring your energy—the magic of the weekend lives on long after the final trophy is handed out.

YOUR SATURDAY SURVIVAL GUIDE

- **Dress to impress** – This is a formal, recorded event. This is your night to shine!
- **Arrive early** – The Red Carpet opens at Noon. Give yourself plenty of time for photos, interviews, and the 360 video booth.
- **Network with purpose** – This year's Gold Winners are next year's judges. Make connections that matter.
- **Stay for the After Party** – With 22 artists performing and great food waiting, you won't want to miss it.
- **End the night at the Courtyard** – Some of the best moments of the weekend happen around the fire pit. Be there.

That's a wrap on our complete weekend program! *Print this out, keep it handy, and we'll see you in Atlanta for the most unforgettable three days of the year. Safe travels, and get ready to celebrate!*

FINAL CALL: GRAMMY WINNER ALEXX ANTAEUS – ONLY 3 SPOTS REMAINING!



If you've been on the fence about booking your private 30-minute session with Grammy Award-Winning Producer Alexx Antaeus (Antaeus Music Group / Monom Records), now is the time to act. Alexx will be at the Summit on Thursday and Friday offering exclusive one-on-one consultations, and we are down to our very **last 3 time slots**.

This is your rare chance to sit across from a producer who has shaped multi-platinum records and get his direct, unfiltered feedback on your current project, production choices, or overall career roadmap. As anyone who attended his keynote last year can attest, Alexx has an incredible gift for breaking down the industry in a way that indie artists can actually use.

At just $50, this is easily the highest-ROI investment you can make at the Summit. Don't let this window close—when these final 3 slots are gone, they are gone for good.

Email Todd Apfel immediately at issasongwriters.todd@gmail.com to claim one of the remaining spots. See you Thursday and Friday!



Lapel Pin Exchange – Final Call to Trade!

Atlanta, GA – With the 8th Annual ISSA Summit & Awards just around the corner (August 20–22), we're issuing one last reminder about our exciting brand-new tradition: the **First-Ever ISSA Summit Lapel Pin Exchange**!

As announced in last month's newsletter, this is your chance to create a custom pin that reflects your music, your brand, or your personality – and trade it with fellow artists and industry pros throughout the weekend.

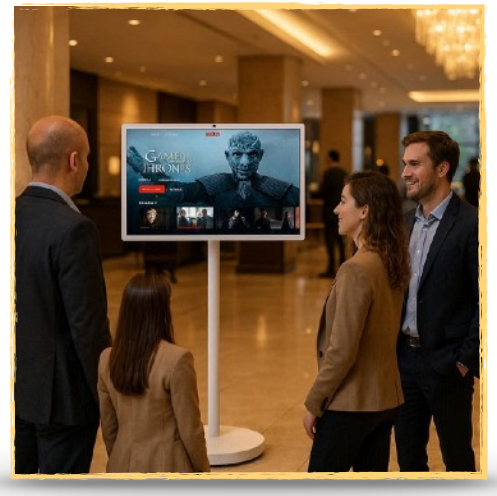
Here's the quick recap:

- Design and bring your own custom lapel pins to Atlanta.
- Every trade is a conversation starter, a new connection, and potentially the beginning of a collaboration.
- When you RSVP'd for the Summit, you secured a complimentary Swag Bag with a lanyard and **two starter pins** to kick off your collection.

This is your final opportunity to prepare your pins and pack them for the trip. If you haven't designed yours yet, don't worry – there's still time! Check the **July newsletter** for a full breakdown of the rules, design tips, and an affordable vendor option to get your pins made quickly.

We can't wait to see everyone trading, talking, and connecting in Atlanta. Who's ready?

Video Promo Loop – Last Chance for Spotlight Exposure!



Atlanta, GA – The countdown to August 20–22 is on, and so is your **final chance** to secure a spot in the ISSA Summit's highly popular Video & Promo Loop!

As detailed in last month's issue, ISSA members can have their music video, artist photo, logo, or 30-second promotional ad featured on **two continuous-loop screens** at the host hotel all weekend long – all for just **$25**.

Quick summary:

- Choose between a **Music Video Showcase** (up to 6 minutes) or an **Artist/Business Promo Loop** (photo, logo, album art, or 30-sec ad).
- With two screens running in heavy rotation, your content gets seen by every VIP, attendee, and industry guest repeatedly.

Spaces are extremely limited and have been filling on a first-come, first-served basis. If you haven't locked in your spot yet, this is your absolute last call. *Send an email to issasongwriters.todd@gmail.com with the words "Video Promo" to receive a free "Summit Raffle Coupon"* For complete details on content specs and submission instructions, please refer back to the **July newsletter**.

To inquire about any remaining openings, contact **Angela Marie Eidenmiller** immediately at **ISSAsongwriters.angela@gmail.com** – but don't delay, as availability is nearly gone.

Make sure you're Seen, Heard, and Remembered at this year's Summit – even if you can't attend!

For full coverage of both opportunities – including how to design pins, where to order them, RSVP instructions, and video submission deadlines – please revisit your **July ISSA Summit Newsletter**. We'll see you all in Atlanta from **August 20–22** for an unforgettable weekend!



FINAL CALL! The 2026 Summit Raffle – Win Big & Help Keep the Summit Free!

The countdown is officially on! With the **ISSA Awards Show & Summit just around the corner (August 20–22 in Atlanta!)**, we are bursting with excitement to welcome you. As we put the finishing touches on this incredible weekend, we want to give you one *final* reminder about our **Annual Summit Raffle**—and trust us, you won't want to miss this.

Here's the beautiful truth: The Summit Raffle isn't just about walking away with amazing loot (though that's a huge perk!). The funds raised through your ticket purchases play a **massive** role in offsetting the costs of the Summit. By grabbing a handful of tickets, you are directly helping us **keep the Summit free in future years**, ensuring that this vibrant, supportive community stays accessible to every songwriter who needs it. You become a true **Patron of the Arts** for our songwriting tribe—and we simply cannot thank you enough for that!

But Wait… What Can You Win?

Oh, we are so glad you asked! Thanks to the jaw-dropping generosity of our sponsors, partners, and staff, currently we have a whopping **21 spectacular prizes** lined up for you this year. All you need is the winning ticket!

Check out this incredible lineup:

- **1 Handmade Cigar Box Guitar** from *Stogie Joe Guitars* – A truly one-of-a-kind instrument!
- **3 Audio Plugins** from *Polyverse* – We know you've been eyeing these!
- **1 Pair of Wireless Professional Headphones** from *AIAIAI Audio* – Studio quality, cable-free!
- **3 Audio Plugins** from *PSP Audioware* – Give your mixes that professional sheen!
- **1 CD Duplication Package (200 CDs)** from *Atomic Disc* – Get your music ready for the world!
- **5 Box Sets of Skin Care Products** from *Tamanie Dove & SkinSessed* – Stay glowing on the road!
- **5 Thermal Back-Packs** – Filled with fun items to keep you geared up!
- **1 Handmade Guitar String Bracelet** – A stylish keepsake for any musician!
- **1 Pair of Cool Designer Sunglasses** – Because every songwriter needs a little shade!

That's right—21 chances to win, and we are adding even more excitement to the mix!



This Year, We're Making It Easier Than Ever!

Buy Your Raffle Tickets in Advance – No Need to Wait Until Atlanta!

For the first time ever, you can get ahead of the game and purchase your Raffle Tickets *before* you even pack your bags! Use **PayPal** or **Venmo** to secure your chances at these amazing prizes right now.

Just send an email to our very own **Todd Apfel** at **issasongwriters.todd@gmail.com**, and he will reply with his payment information.

Here are the sweet raffle ticket packages available:

- **$1 for 1 ticket** – It's a no-brainer!
- **$5 for 7 tickets** – Great value!
- **$10 for 15 tickets** – Double your fun!
- **$20 for 40 tickets** – This is the sweet spot!
- **$50 for 125 tickets** – Go big or go home!

Don't wait until you get to Atlanta! Buying ahead helps us plan better, saves you time at the door, and ensures you don't miss out on these incredible bundles.

And remember—keep your eyes peeled, because there may still be hidden keywords popping up that could net you extra entries!

This is it, songwriters. Let's make this the biggest, most memorable Summit yet. Buy your tickets, support our amazing sponsors, and help us keep the ISSA Summit thriving for years to come!

We'll see you in Atlanta—get ready to write, network, and celebrate!



The 2026 ISSA Summit Swag Bags – They're Worth The Price Of Admission, Oh Wait It's Free!

We are *days* away from the most inspiring Summit yet (August 20–22 in Atlanta!), and we simply cannot contain our excitement! While we're dotting the i's and crossing the t's on workshops and showcases, we have to shine a spotlight on one of the most beloved Summit traditions: **The ISSA Summit Swag Bags!**

Let's Talk About the Bags Themselves!

First, a massive round of applause for **T-Mobile**, who has generously donated our stunning thermal swag bags! These aren't your average flimsy totes—these beauties measure a spacious **12" x 15" x 8"**, making them roomy enough to haul your personal band gear, merch, or even your pedals.

But here's the kicker: *they're thermal!* That means they're perfect for keeping your picnic lunches chilled or holding a 12-pack of your favorite beverages while you soak up the Atlanta sunshine between sessions. Talk about form meeting function!

What's Inside? A Treasure Trove of Goodies!

But we didn't stop at the bag itself—oh no! We've packed these babies to the brim with *doozies*! When you snag yours, you'll dig into a stash of Summit swag including:

- **Koozies** to keep your drinks cool while you network!
- **Guitar Picks** so you're always ready for an impromptu jam!
- **Notebooks** for capturing those lightning-bolt song ideas!
- **Tumblers** (perfect for your morning coffee or afternoon tea!)
- **Stickers** to slap on your laptop, guitar case, or that new tumbler!
- **Lapel Pins** to wear your ISSA pride loud and proud!

And that's just the start—we've tossed in even more surprises to make your Summit experience unforgettable!

Let's Start a Trading Tradition!

We believe these bags are more than just free stuff—they're **connection starters**. That's why we're issuing a fun challenge to all of you:

- **Bring your own stickers!** We want to see you trading custom designs with fellow songwriters. Stick 'em on your new tumbler, your notebook, or swap them like baseball cards—it's an instant conversation starter!
- **Bring your own lapel pins!** Let's start a brand-new ISSA tradition—the **Pin Exchange**! Whether it's a pin from your hometown, your band's logo, or a past music festival, trade them with new friends and walk away with a wearable memory of the bonds you made here in Atlanta.

It's a fantastic way to break the ice, share a piece of your story, and take home a little piece of someone else's journey.



Want to Contribute to the Swag Bags? (Last Call!)

If you're a last-minute hero with a product, promo item, or fun goodies you'd love to see in these bags—any quantity is welcome!—we'd love to hear from you! Reach out to:

- **Todd Apfel – issasongwriters.todd@gmail.com**
- **Angela Marie Eidenmiller – issasongwriters.angela@gmail.com**

Let's make these bags as unforgettable as the music we're about to create together!

This is it, songwriters. Pack your bags, pack your stickers and pins, and get ready for a weekend of connection, creativity, and community. *Send an email to issasongwriters.todd@gmail.com with the words "Lapel Pins" to receive a free "Summit Raffle Coupon"* We can't wait to hand you your swag bag and see those smiles in person!

See you in Atlanta!

AUGUST 20 & 21 – ISSA SUMMIT REGISTRATION

Your response to this year's Summit has been overwhelmingly awesome—and we couldn't be more grateful for the excitement! However, because of this incredible turnout, we have officially hit a critical capacity wall.

As of this publication, we are down to LESS THAN 10 SEATS REMAINING for the Summit.

We actually went back to the hotel and successfully negotiated adding a few extra chairs to the conference room to squeeze in as many of you as possible. Unfortunately, we have now reached the absolute maximum allowed by hotel fire-code regulations. We literally **cannot** add one more seat beyond this.

If you are planning on attending the Summit on August 20 & 21 and have not yet registered, you must email Todd Apfel IMMEDIATELY at **issasongwriters.todd@gmail.com** with the full names of everyone in your party who plans to attend.



Remember: Registration is **100% FREE**, but seating is strictly first-come, first-served. Once these last few spots are claimed, the doors are closed for good.

FOR THOSE ALREADY REGISTERED:
Congratulations—you're all set! When you arrive, simply head to the registration table to pick up your personalized **badge and lanyard**. You will also receive an exclusive **T-Mobile Swag Bag**, packed to the brim with cool goodies like koozies, stickers, trading lapel pins, and other promotional treasures. (If you haven't registered yet, you're missing out on these!)

DON'T FORGET THE AWARDS SHOW (AUGUST 22):
The Summit is just the beginning! Make sure you've secured your tickets for the main ISSA Awards Show on August 22 to cap off this incredible week in Atlanta.

But first things first—**do not let these final Summit seats slip through your fingers.** Email Todd right now before they vanish!

We can't wait to see you all in Atlanta for this unforgettable finale!



The Final Countdown: 6 Must-Do's Before August 22nd!

We are under 3 weeks out from the **8th Annual ISSA Awards Show**, being held **August 22nd** at the Sandy Springs Performing Arts Center.

The excitement is officially at an all-time high. The finalists are set, the stage is being prepped, and Atlanta is waiting. But before you start packing your bags, let's make sure you've checked off these critical to-dos. Do them now, and your trip will be smooth sailing!

1. Finalists: Send Us Your Walk-Up Song (ASAP!)

If you're a finalist and haven't sent us your Walk-Up song yet... **we need it ASAP!** As you prepare for your potential moment on stage, we want your entrance to be unforgettable.

Please send a **30-second MP3 audio clip** of your nominated song—or the song you'd love playing as you walk up to accept your award.

Send to: **ISSAawards@yahoo.com** *(Don't delay—we're building the show finalist playlist now!)*

2. Buy Your Ticket & Plan Your Red Carpet Experience

Have you purchased your Awards Show Tickets? If not, **why not**? Over the past few months, we've shared countless testimonials showing exactly what it means to attend in person: networking with fellow artists, judges, and industry pros, collaborating on new music, and learning the business at our Summit.



To put it bluntly: **next year's judges will be attending *this* year's show.** How will they know who you are, recognize your face, or connect your name to your music if you're not in the room?

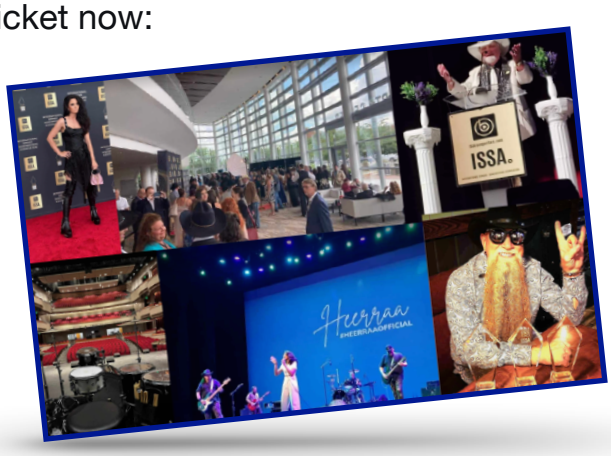
And speaking of making an entrance—let's talk about the Red Carpet!

- **Doors open at 12 noon** for the full **Red Carpet Experience**. The Awards Show itself starts **promptly at 2:00 pm**—so arrive early to soak it all in.
- **Michael Botte** is back to do his legendary Red Carpet interviews!
- We're thrilled to welcome **WHIN (Nashville) on-air personality Jeff Shannon** to the carpet this year—he'll be conducting interviews alongside Michael.
- Our famous **360 Video Booth** is returning, so you can create unforgettable, shareable videos before you even take your seat.

Don't miss your moment in the spotlight. Grab your ticket now:

https://issasongwriters.com/tickets/





3. Book Your Travel – Flights Are Filling Up!



Whether you're driving, flying, or hitching a ride, this is one of the easiest and most overlooked tasks. Don't put it off!

If you're flying, remember that **Atlanta Hartsfield-Jackson is the world's busiest airport**—over 290,000 passengers and nearly 2,000 flights *per day*. Yes, that means lots of options, but it also means flights book up fast. Secure your favorite arrival and departure flights now before they fill up.

4. Reserve Your Host Hotel Room (Urgent! Free Perks Added!)

Have you made your hotel reservations yet? There are plenty [illegible] the Sandy Springs Performing Arts Center, but our official **Ho[illegible]by Marriott**—and we have a very important update!

Sorry The Host Hotel Rooms Are:

SOLD OUT

Urgency: Our block[illegible]k paying full price or staying fu[illegible]

New Perks: For tho[illegible] Marriott is throwing in **FREE breakfast e[illegible]** $10/night)! That's a huge savings.

IMPORTANT: You mu[illegible]**wards Show Ticket** to receive the discount code for the hotel. So, if you ha[illegible]grabbed your ticket yet (see Item #2!), do that first, then lock in your room immediately to secure these free perks.





5. Register for the FREE Summit (Yes, Even if You Saw It Earlier!)

Yes, we've told you about this earlier in the newsletter, but we *really* want to make sure you register for the **FREE Summit**!

The Summit is completely free to attend, and this year we're asking you to register ahead of time. We're almost full, so don't assume there will be space at the door.

To register: Email Todd Apfel at **issasongwriters.todd@gmail.com** with how many people are in your party and their names.

REMEMBER: Only those **registered** are guaranteed a **T-Mobile Thermal Cooler Swag Bag**—so don't sleep on this!

6. Grab Your 2026 Commemorative Gear

Before you leave for Atlanta, make sure you have your commemorative Awards Show & Summit memorabilia—from T-shirts to keepsakes you'll treasure for years. These always sell out fast, so order ahead and wear your ISSA pride all weekend long.

🔗 **https://issasongwriters.com/store/**

That's it, ISSA family! Knock these 6 items off your list this July, and you'll be free to focus on what really matters when you hit Atlanta: celebrating your music, connecting with your ISSA family, and making memories that will last a lifetime.



ISSA Awards 2026 Tee Shirt



Embroidered 2026 Summit Cap



2026 ISSA Summit Tee Shirt

Tips From Our Members

One of the great benefits of being a member of the ISSA is that we have so many members that are here to help you out with industry questions. This month's featured articles are from Angela Marie Eidenmiller (ISSA Associate Director of Artist Relations), and Michael Botte (ISSA Philadelphia Representative).

Michael Botte's Just One Tip



Welcome to this Month's edition of "Just One Tip", presented by "ON THE MIC WITH MICHAEL BOTTE" in partnership with Sound Foundation Studios, where I post a "TIP" I have learned either through experimentation or from observing others smarter than me!

From the Songwriter's Bench to the Red Carpet: The Story Behind "On the Mic with Michael Botte"

In 2020, at the age of 50, I took a leap of faith. I finally stepped into the booth to start recording my own music—songs that had been patiently waiting, some written twenty years prior, others just twenty days fresh. It was a complete reinvention, giving me the chance to step into my true identity as a music maker.

But as I immersed myself deeper into the independent music world, I realized that writing and recording my own tunes was only one piece of the puzzle. I felt a strong pull to give back and play a bigger part in uplifting the incredible community around me.

In a moment of boldness, I reached out to ISSA founder Tamanie Dove and simply asked: How can I get more involved?

That single question opened the door to an unforgettable opportunity—hosting the red carpet interviews at the annual ISSA Awards in Atlanta. In that moment, "On the Mic with Michael Botte" was officially born.

For me, stepping behind the microphone on the red carpet isn't about standing in the spotlight; it's a humbling chance to intentionally dim my own light so that other artists can truly shine. The ISSA family is overflowing with extraordinary talent, and so many shining stars deserve—and require—the recognition they've worked so hard for.

I can’t wait to welcome this year’s nominees and performers to the red carpet in Atlanta this August. See you on the mic!

Catch Michael Botte on the Red Carpet!

Be sure to look for Michael at the ISSA Awards Ceremony in Atlanta this August as he chats with the bright lights of our indie music community.



Angela’s Artist Advice

Angela Marie Eidenmiller is the ISSA Associate Director of Artist Relations. Over the past few years many of our Award Winning Artists have benefited from Angela’s sage advice.

One of the greatest gifts ISSA gives its members isn't an award, a trophy, or even a stage—it's access to people who have already walked the road you're traveling.

That's the real power of this organization. It's a community where experience is shared, wisdom is freely given, and success isn't measured by how much you achieve alone, but by how many people you help along the way.

I know that because I've lived it. I'm still living it!

There are distinct moments in this business that change everything. For me, one of those moments happened in the parking lot of a Nashville recording studio. I was overwhelmed. I had questions, uncertainty, and no clear roadmap. So I did what ISSA has taught so many of us to do —I reached out. I literally phoned a friend from our ISSA community during a full-fledged freak out, hoping they might have a few minutes to point me in the right direction.

What I received was far more valuable than I expected. The advice was simple. ***"Take a deep breath, brew a pot of coffee, build a team, then get to work.”*** At first, I smiled. Then I realized those four sentences contained one of the greatest lessons I've ever learned about succeeding in the music business- success isn't achieved alone.

Today, years later, I can honestly say that advice still anchors me in this wonderfully unpredictable industry. Whenever things become overwhelming, I remember those words and that's why I believe my own journey is a true testament to the power of ISSA and its members.

Organizations don't change lives. People do! ISSA has never been just another music organization or awards show. It's a family of artists, songwriters, producers, promoters, radio personalities, photographers, managers, venue owners, publishers, and industry professionals who genuinely want to see one another succeed. When someone asks for help, someone answers. When someone celebrates a victory, we all celebrate. When someone stumbles, there is always someone willing to help them back up. That kind of community is priceless.

As I've grown in this industry, I've realized that success isn't built on one giant breakthrough. It's built through hundreds of intentional daily decisions made consistently over time. Which brings me to something I'm incredibly excited to begin sharing with all of you…

THE MUSIC BUSINESS BLUEPRINT

The song is finished. You've poured your heart into the lyrics. You've found the melody. You've spent countless hours writing, recording, mixing, mastering, and finally releasing your music into the world. Now what?

For many independent artists, this is exactly where the journey unexpectedly comes to a halt. They believe the hardest part is over, when in reality, an entirely different job is just beginning. *The Music Business Blueprint* is a roadmap for building your business after the song is complete.

It isn't about writing songs. It's about building a career around the songs you've already written. Think of it as the map that begins where the creative process of your product ends and your business entrepreneur skills engage full steam ahead. Your great song is your product. Every successful product needs a business strategy behind it. It needs branding. Marketing. Relationships. Distribution. Live performance opportunities. Licensing. Merchandise. Fan engagement. Media outreach. Social media. Email marketing. Multiple revenue streams. Most importantly, it needs a team that believes in the vision.
Without a blueprint, it's easy to spend years working hard without making meaningful progress.

With one, every decision has purpose. Every relationship has value. Every opportunity becomes part of a larger strategy. As many of you know, I've had the privilege of wearing several hats throughout my career—artist manager, promoter, marketer, campaign manager, fundraiser, copywriter, photographer and so on, which led me here to serving you as Associate Director of Artist Relations for ISSA.

Every role has reinforced one simple truth: Nobody succeeds alone! Every successful artist has people who believe in them, challenge them, encourage them, and open doors they could never have opened by themselves. That's the real blueprint. It’s community. It's collaboration. It's showing up. It's doing the work. And sometimes…

It all starts with one phone call from a recording studio parking lot. *PASSING IT FORWARD.*

Why This Happens

When your music is delivered to streaming services and social media platforms through your distributor or Fingerprinting Service Provider (FSP), it's added to a massive content identification system.

Think of it as a digital fingerprint.

Every time someone uploads content using your music, platforms like Facebook and Instagram compare that audio against their fingerprint database. If there's a match, the system checks whether that use is authorized. The problem is that the system doesn't automatically know you're the owner.

It simply recognizes that someone uploaded copyrighted music. That "someone" just happens to be you.

The Good News

Believe it or not, this is actually good news. It means your music is being protected. Without these fingerprinting systems, anyone could upload your music, monetize videos with it, or claim it as their own without your permission.

The copyright match tells you your FSP is actively watching for unauthorized uses of your recordings. In other words, the security system is working. It just doesn't recognize the homeowner standing at the front door.

So... What Is Whitelisting?

Whitelisting is simply giving permission in advance for certain accounts to use your protected music without triggering copyright claims. Once your Facebook Page, Instagram account, YouTube channel, or TikTok profile is whitelisted, those accounts are essentially placed on the "approved users" list. The fingerprinting system sees the match, checks the approved list, and allows your content to stay online without interruption.

How Do You Get Whitelisted?

Every distributor and rights management company handles this a little differently, but the process usually looks something like this:
* Log into your distributor or rights management dashboard.
* Look for sections labeled Rights Management, Content ID, Social Media Monetization, or Whitelisting.
* Add the URLs or usernames of your official social media accounts.
* Save your changes before posting new promotional content.

Some companies process whitelist requests immediately, while others may take a day or two to update across platforms.

The Music Business Blueprint will continue to grow beyond the Summit into a learning community for independent artists, a book, a masterclass program, and a value-growing, resourceful, affordable subscription service in September. But at this year's ISSA Summit, it is simply my gift to the ISSA community. It's the collection of lessons, strategies, mistakes, victories, and practical knowledge I've gathered throughout my journey in this incredible industry—much of it made possible because someone in the ISSA community was willing to answer a phone call from a nervous promoter in a recording studio parking lot.

Everything I'm sharing was freely given to me by people who believed in me.
At the ISSA Summit, I'm simply returning that gift to the ISSA family and feel honored to present *The Music Business Blueprint* as a complimentary casual session for every attendee who wants to learn what comes next after the song is finished.

We'll explore practical topics like building the right team, developing your brand, creating a marketing strategy, building meaningful industry relationships, identifying revenue opportunities, and making intentional decisions that move your career forward.

My hope is that you'll walk away with ideas you can begin putting into action immediately—whether you're releasing your very first single or your fiftieth album.

This Summit session isn't about selling you anything. It's about serving you.
It's about sharing what I've learned in hopes that you find the value you're looking for as an independent artist. If one idea sparks a new opportunity…. If one strategy helps you avoid a costly mistake…. If one conversation leads to your next breakthrough…

...then every minute we've spent together will have been worth it. That's what ISSA has always been about. Artists helping artists. Professionals encouraging professionals. A community that believes success is even sweeter when it's shared.

This is where I'd remind everyone why choosing to attend the Summit, the Pre-Party, 8th Annual Awards Show, and After-Party isn't for Awards Finalists alone—there's massive value in every hour for everyone throughout those four days!
I can't wait to see you all in Atlanta to continue this conversation in person and spend time investing in your journey just as others once invested in mine. Because that's what ISSA does. We celebrate one another. We encourage one another. We teach one another. And together, we build something far greater than careers. We build a community.

So if you're joining us at this year's Summit, I hope you'll pull up a chair, ask questions, share your own experiences, and leave inspired and empowered.
You bring the dream. I'll bring the blueprint. The coffee will be hot. The conversation will be real. The blueprint is a map. Because finishing the song...
is where the business begins!

Until then, keep crushing goals, keep creating, keep connecting, and keep contributing! The world needs you and what only you can create.

Highest vibes
Your ISSA Sis,

Angela

P.S. This will be my fifth ISSA Atlanta year, and every year after your first honestly feels like a grand family reunion! It's not too late to make your plans to get there—your career will thank you and we can't wait to welcome you to the ISSA family.
Just sayin'.



Guest Article From Katherine Lynn Nemeth

Katherine Lynn Nemeth is a songwriter with placements in Film and TV. In this article she offers advice on Sync Licensing.

3 Steps to Get Your Music in Film and TV

Synchronization means matching songs to picture in movies, TV, and Ads. Truly, any song can be used to synchronize with video. Great songs are used in sync! However, there are things that you can do to increase your chances.

1) Consider sync themes when you are writing:

Lyric themes in shows

- Certain themes come up over and over again in sync. Some examples are “New Day”, “Turning Point”, “Hero”, and “I Can Do This”. Watch your favorite show, and after a song has played, pause it and ask yourself some questions. What did that song do for the scene? What was the song about? Can you use Shazam and discover who created it? Another way to find what songs are being used in a certain show is to go to Tunefind and look up your favorite shows.

Lyric themes in Ads.

- Analyze ads just like you analyze shows. One of my friends hid the remote from his wife so she could not skip the commercials. IspotTV and Adtunes are great ways to look up songs in commercials. Let’s Go and Having Fun are themes often used in ads.

2) Avoid Specific Details:

Avoid specifics

- A song about Park Avenue in New York City may be just right for one scene in a movie set in New York. However, a Sync agent is more likely to choose a song that could fit many scenes and media. They are less likely to select songs that have specific names of people and places in the song.

Avoid narrative storytelling

- They are less likely to choose storytelling songs. So many great songs that tell a story, and you can see it unfold in your mind. However, in a show, movie, or ad, what is being conveyed on the screen is the leading role. Your music must take the supporting role. The story in your song is not the focus.

3) Do these instead:

Set a vibe

- Think of one of your favorite movies. The music often sets a tone of suspense, action, or overcoming. It could be stripped back, spooky, or anthemic. *Send an email to issasongwriters.todd@gmail.com with the words "Sync Licensing" to receive a free "Summit Raffle Coupon"* Find a movie you think your song would fit, then turn down the music and play yours instead. Does it help tell the story? When your music is being produced make sure what vibe you are trying to convey

Have your paperwork in order

If you want to get your music placed in a show, writing a great song and building your portfolio is just the first step. You must also be registered with a PRO and understand the paperwork. You need to know where your music fits and look for opportunities. Establish relationships within the industry and with sync agents and music supervisors. Have the appropriate metadata tags on your songs. Close the deals and follow up on royalties. If it is so much work, why try? A great sync placement can be a career-changing event, but even if it is not, it can provide another source of income for an artist.

Quick Sync-Ready Checklist:

- Register your songs with a PRO (ASCAP, BMI, or SESAC)
- Have high-quality instrumental and clean (non-explicit) versions of every track
- Ensure your metadata is accurate—mood, genre, tempo, and keywords
- Know and document all ownership splits for publishing and master recordings

*__(Katherine Lynn Nemeth will be presenting a session on Sync Licensing at the ISSA 2026 Summit. Don't miss this opportunity to learn from someone who has successfully placed music in Project Runway, Music City Mistletoe, and more!)__ *



From the Listeners of The Rick Spins Radio Show

The Hidden Danger in Your Recording Budget: Are You Paying for AI Without Knowing It?

August's "Question of The Month": I was told by a radio station that I had submitted to that my music was flagged for AI and they won't play it. I wrote and recorded the song on my smart phone and then sent it to a Producer in Nashville to finish. So I don't understand how it got flagged for AI.

The independent music landscape has never been more accessible. With today's technology, artists can write a song on their guitar or piano, send a rough smartphone recording to a producer across the country, and receive a fully produced track within days. It sounds like a dream come true—and for many, it has been.

But there's a shadow creeping into this modern workflow, and it's one that every independent artist needs to take seriously.

The Way It's Supposed to Work

Let's start with the standard process many independent artists follow when they don't have home studios:

1. You write your song on guitar or piano
2. You contact a recording studio or producer
3. They ask for a rough draft recording (usually from your smartphone) along with chord charts
4. They tell you their studio musicians will record the instrumental tracks
5. You come in to record your vocals (and possibly your instrumentation)
6. In some cases, they may offer a professional singer for the vocals
7. A few days or a week later, you receive your finished product

Variations exist, of course. Some artists have home studios and have recorded multiple parts themselves but believe a producer needs to add that "professional touch." Others book a studio for a day or two—sometimes traveling from out of state—and cram as much recording as possible into that precious time. Some producers even ask artists to record vocals at home and send the files digitally.

For years, this system has worked. It's been a win for studios adapting to changing technology and a win for independent artists who can essentially "phone in" their songs for production.

The Warning

But here's where the story takes a dark turn.

With every reputable studio following this model, there is now a new breed of producers using AI to finish your songs—and they're not telling you.

Instead of hiring studio musicians (which you paid for), they're using AI to create the instrumental track. In some cases, they're even plugging your vocals into an AI generator to "enhance" them. And they're pocketing the difference.

What We're Seeing at ISSA Radio

Over the past few weeks, **The Rick Spins Show** on ISSA Radio has received numerous tracks from reputable ISSA artists that were flagged by our AI detection software as "Hybrid AI"—meaning either the instrumental track was created by AI technology, or the vocals were augmented by AI, or both.

AI detection software has evolved significantly in recent months. New tools like Modulate's AI Music Detection API can now identify AI-generated vocals and instrumentals directly from audio. RTM Audio's UAI system runs separate measurements on production and vocals, flagging a recording as AI only when both agree. Deezer reports that **34% of all new music submitted to its platform is now AI-generated**—over 50,000 AI-made tracks uploaded every single day.

The technology is here, and it's getting harder to detect—but not impossible.

The Artist's Dilemma

Here's the conundrum: **has the artist done anything wrong?**

Technically, no. You wrote the song. You recorded your vocals. In your mind, the studio provided the backing instrumentation. You paid for studio musicians. You trusted the producer.

But now, because that producer took shortcuts without your knowledge, **your song won't be played on radio and could be flagged by streaming platforms as AI-generated content**.

Spotify has already removed over 75 million "spammy" tracks from its platform—many of them AI-generated. They've introduced new AI disclosure agreements forcing artists to disclose whether AI was used in the creation process. **iHeartRadio has issued a company-wide ban on AI-generated music** across its network of 850 stations worldwide. **Traxsource now labels tracks as either "Human-Made" or "AI-Assisted"** and removes fully AI-generated music. **Deezer excludes AI music from algorithmic and editorial recommendations**.

The industry is drawing a line. And if your song crosses it without your knowledge, **you're the one who pays the price**.

The Stakes Are Higher Than You Think

Having your song flagged as AI-generated doesn't just mean it won't get radio play. It could:

- **Kill sync licensing opportunities** — music supervisors want human-created work
- **Prevent you from selling songs to other artists** — buyers need clean provenance
- **Get your entire catalog removed from streaming services**
- **Damage your reputation as an artist** — once flagged, it's hard to rebuild trust

How to Protect Yourself

If you don't have a longstanding relationship with your producer—one where you can absolutely trust them—**take these steps**:

1. Be present when the "studio musicians" record your song
It's your song. Wouldn't you want to be there for the creative process? If the producer doesn't want you present for that session—**red flag**.

2. Be present during mixing and mastering
If the producer doesn't want you there—**red flag**.

3. Ask directly: "Are you using AI in any part of this process?"
Demand that they don't. **It's your song and your reputation on the line, not theirs.**

4. Trust your ears
If your finished song sounds totally different from what you recorded when you were there, **ask questions**. Remember the old adage: **if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.**

Your Song, Your Reputation

This is your song. Your baby. Your reputation.

Don't take shortcuts with your art. **If AI is involved without your knowledge, it will be detected.** And when it is, the consequences fall on you—not the producer who cut corners.

Be present. Ask questions. Protect your work.

Your music is too important to leave in the wrong hands.

The Rick Spins Show airs regularly on ISSA Radio.



The Rick Spins Show
Hosted by legendary radio personality Rick Landstrom, The Rick Spins Show is a unique opportunity available exclusively on ISSA Radio. Rick hosts two live shows every week:

- **Monday at 8 PM Eastern:** *Fun In The Front Show* – "Making Mondays Great Again"
- **Thursday at 8 PM Eastern:** *Rick Spins Top 15 Show* – featuring the top 15 songs from ISSA artists

Submit Your Music
Want to be featured? Send your properly meta-tagged files to **issaradio.rick@gmail.com**. Proper tagging makes Rick's job much easier and helps get your music on air faster!

Instead of Spotlighting one of our Sponsor's, this month we're showing all of our great partners who have helped make having the Summit possible!

















Music Industry News!

News From Around The World That Affects All Of Us

The 30-Day Summary

What Happened In July

July was a whirlwind month for independent artists. The AI debate moved from courtroom arguments to actual policy changes, a major distributor changed hands, and the industry finally started putting concrete rules in place. Here's what you need to know.

What You Need To Know This Month

- **DistroKid Sold to Private Equity Giant CVC Capital Partners**

The headline: On July 6, private equity firm CVC Capital Partners announced it had agreed to acquire a **majority stake** in DistroKid.

The details: DistroKid—which distributes roughly **40% of all new music in the world** and serves around **4 million artists**—was reportedly exploring a sale at a **valuation of around $2 billion**. The transaction is expected to close in the third quarter of 2026.

What stays the same: Phil Bauer will continue to lead DistroKid as President alongside the existing leadership team. Insight Partners, a longtime investor, will retain a "significant minority stake."

What to watch: CVC has deep pockets (€209 billion / $239 billion in assets under management) and experience in music, having invested in festival giant Superstruct Entertainment. Keep an eye on whether terms of service change or new fees appear.

• Suno Loses Landmark Copyright Case in Germany

The headline: On July 31, the Munich Regional Court ruled that AI music generator **Suno violated copyright law** by training its AI on music without a license or payment.

The details: German collecting society GEMA sued Suno in January 2025, alleging the company used, stored, and reproduced copyrighted music to train its AI models without permission. The court found Suno was not entitled to use music represented by GEMA and ordered the company to **disclose revenue information and pay damages**—the amount has not yet been set.

Key takeaway for artists: This is one of the first major legal blows against an AI music company worldwide. GEMA's CEO called it a "seminal victory," stating: "AI models based on the theft of intellectual property are not protected by law."

What's next: Suno says it disagrees with the ruling and is "evaluating all available options, including an appeal." The judgment is not yet final.

Why this matters for you: The court also ruled that **offshore training is no safe harbor**—even though Suno trained its models in the U.S., it can still be held liable in European courts. This sets a powerful precedent for artists everywhere.

• RIAA & IFPI Propose Global AI Labeling System

The headline: On July 10, a coalition of eight major music organizations—including IFPI, RIAA, A2IM, WIN, IMPALA, The Grammys, SAG-AFTRA, and the Human Artistry Campaign—announced a unified approach to voluntary AI track labeling.

The two proposed labels:

- **"AI-Generated"** (black tile with white "AI") – For tracks where AI produced the entirety or primary creative elements, such as an AI-generated lead vocal, key instrumental, or entirely prompt-generated music.
- **"AI-Assisted"** (white tile with lowercase "ai") – For tracks created substantially by humans that express human creativity but use AI for some expressive elements, with humans performing lead vocals and primary instruments.

Why this matters: According to the coalition, "Fans want to know whether and how generative AI has been used in the music to which they listen." With Deezer reporting that **44% of all daily uploads are now fully AI-generated** and Apple Music saying more than one-third of uploaded tracks are "100% AI", transparency has never been more critical.

What this means for you: The labels are voluntary for now, but the expectation is they'll become standard across streaming platforms. If you use AI in any capacity, be prepared to disclose it. Honesty protects you.

Suno's response: The AI company said, "We believe transparency is important," adding they're "investing in watermarking, audio fingerprinting and other tools."

Caveat: Some industry observers have raised concerns about the "AI-Assisted" tag specifically, worried about false positives from detection tools.

• Spotify Expands into Music Videos

The headline: Spotify launched full-length music video uploads directly through Spotify for Artists (still in beta) and introduced its first global Music Video Chart.

The details: Artists can now upload live performances, studio sessions, covers, and official music videos—**all royalty-bearing and chart-eligible**. The direct-upload option is being offered to "nearly 100,000 artists" at present.

Why this matters: This is a direct challenge to YouTube, which currently dominates music's visual output. More places to share your content means more opportunities to reach fans.

• IFPI Rolls Out AI Chart Eligibility Rules

The headline: On July 30, IFPI announced new global principles for whether AI-developed recordings can qualify for official music charts.

The three core criteria: A recording made with AI will only qualify for a chart if:

1. The AI service used is "properly authorized and lawful"
2. The track is "substantially human-made"
3. It does not "raise stream or chart manipulation concerns"

What this means for you: The industry is drawing a clear line—AI-generated music won't be competing with human-made music on the charts unless it meets strict criteria. This protects the value of human artistry at the highest levels of recognition.

• Artists Can Now Search AI Training Datasets

The headline: *The Atlantic* expanded its AI Watchdog project with a music-focused tool that allows artists to check whether their recordings appear in datasets used to train generative AI models.

The details: The tool draws on four large-scale datasets that have circulated within the AI development community, containing millions of copyrighted tracks. A search by artist name reveals whether their work is included.

Why this matters: For the first time, artists can see the truth. If your music is in these datasets, AI companies used it without permission. SZA recently discovered **238 of her songs** were used to train AI models—and called it "degenerate shit."

What you should do: Search your name. Document what you find. This is evidence you may need.

• 31 Artist Organizations Warn Labels About AI Deals

The headline: A coalition of 31 artist and songwriter organizations—including Irving Azoff's Music Artists Coalition—published an open letter in July accusing labels and publishers of "opting musicians into AI licensing deals without meaningfully consulting the artists and songwriters whose work makes those deals valuable."

The core argument: "Labels and publishers rightly argue that AI companies need permission to train on their music catalogue, but will not grant artists and songwriters the same rights."

Why this matters for you: Your voice, image, and likeness rights are not label assets to be licensed without your consent. The coalition is demanding that artists have a seat at the table in AI negotiations.

• Tidal's AI Policy Goes Into Effect

The headline: On July 15, Tidal's new AI policy went into full effect.

The policy: Music identified as "wholly AI-generated" will **no longer earn royalties** and will not be eligible for direct-to-fan sales. The tracks receive a dedicated AI label. Tidal's statement: "Our priority is ensuring royalties go to original works directly produced, written, and performed by people."

What this means for you: Tidal has taken the strongest stance of any major streaming platform. If you're a human artist, this protects your slice of the royalty pie.

• Suno Launches "Spark" Incubator Program

The headline: On June 25 (carrying into July), Suno launched **Spark**, an incubator program offering grants, mentorship, and marketing support for independent artists.

What Spark offers: Grants ranging from thousands to tens of thousands of dollars, marketing funding, invitations to writing camps with established artists, and early access to new features.

The catch(s):

- Artists must agree to **never criticize Suno**
- They must promote their music across social media—**highlighting that it was "made with Suno"**
- They must post a clear disclosure of their relationship with Suno using tags like "#SunoPartner"

Our take: This is a network marketing campaign. Suno is paying indie artists to legitimize their brand. The company recently closed a $400 million Series D funding round valuing it at $5.4 billion. Think carefully before accepting this money—you're not just getting a grant, you're becoming a spokesperson for AI.

• Legislative Update: NO FAKES Act

The headline: The NO FAKES Act (S. 4591) continues moving through Congress, having passed the Senate Judiciary Committee unanimously in June.

What it does: Creates a federal intellectual property right to protect individuals from unauthorized digital replicas of their voice and visual likeness. Establishes a notice-and-takedown process for unauthorized digital replicas.

Status: The bill has broad industry support from UMG, Sony, Warner, Google, and OpenAI. It continues to draw meaningful legislative attention.

Full legislative analysis will be covered in a separate article in this newsletter.

• Artist-Led Class Actions Against Suno and Udio Gain Momentum

The class action lawsuits led by **Krystle Delgado** continue to gain serious traction. **Over 1,800 independent artists** are now supporting the cases against Suno and Udio. Meanwhile, the **Udio case is moving toward the discovery phase**—meaning the courts may soon compel the AI companies to reveal exactly what's in their training databases. Delgado has promised artists who join the plaintiff list: "*I will be searching Suno and Udio's databases for your songs*".

In other developments: The AFM (musicians' union) sued Universal and Warner over their AI licensing deals with Suno and Udio, arguing the labels licensed members' recordings without proper compensation. Warner has asked the court to dismiss the lawsuit. Meanwhile, Sony filed a **new, expanded lawsuit against Udio**—increasing the number of recordings at issue from **333 to more than 30,000**, ballooning Udio's potential damages from **$50 million to $4.5 billion**. Sony discovered the full scale of the infringement only after gaining access to Udio's training data through discovery.

The bottom line: The legal pressure on AI companies is mounting from all sides—independent artists, major labels, and the musicians' union. And for the first time, artists may soon get a clear view of whether their work was used without permission.

• The Bottom Line

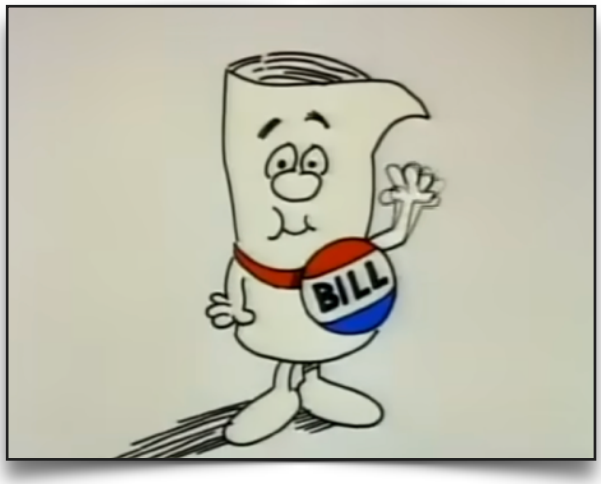
July proved that the music industry is finally moving from talk to action. Tidal stopped paying royalties on AI music. A German court ruled against Suno. The RIAA and IFPI proposed global AI labels. And DistroKid—the distributor 40% of independent artists rely on—was sold to private equity.

What you should do this month:

1. **Search your name** in AI Watchdog. See if your music is in training datasets.
2. **Read DistroKid's terms of service** carefully. Know what's changing.
3. **Stay informed** about the AI labels. Be ready to disclose your AI use honestly.
4. **Think twice** before applying for Suno's Spark grants. The money comes with strings attached.
5. **Keep making real music.** Your humanity is still your competitive advantage.

Have questions about anything in this update? Email us at issasongwriters.todd@gmail.com

YOUR STREAM, YOUR VOICE: THE SUMMER STALL AND THE $300 MILLION WAKE-UP CALL



For five months now, we have tracked the American Music Fairness Act, the Living Wage for Musicians Act, and the fight against AI exploitation. And if you've been following along, you know the refrain has become painfully familiar: **good intentions, great bills, and not nearly enough action.**

July was supposed to be different. Instead, it brought us a frustrating contradiction—**major developments that changed everything, and yet absolutely nothing happened on Capitol Hill.**

Let me explain.

The $300 Million Wake-Up Call

Here's what did happen in July—and it's big.

On July 8, a rare coalition spanning performers, independent labels, unions, songwriters, and the Recording Academy sent an urgent warning to U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer. The European Commission is preparing to **claw back nearly $300 million annually** in radio royalties from American artists.

Here's why: the U.S. is one of only a handful of countries—alongside Cuba, North Korea, and Iran—that does not pay performers when their music is broadcast on AM/FM radio. In 2020, the European Court of Justice ruled that EU radio stations had to start paying American performers. Now, the European Commission is moving to reverse that under "material reciprocity"—a fancy way of saying: **if American broadcasters won't pay European artists, Europe won't pay American artists**.

The irony is staggering. The very loophole that denies American performers compensation at home is now being used overseas to justify denying them compensation abroad.

Fifty-eight major artists—including Gene Simmons, Mariah Carey, Barbra Streisand, Pink, Celine Dion, Carole King, James Taylor, and Jelly Roll—sent a letter to congressional leaders urging immediate passage of the American Music Fairness Act. Gene Simmons put it bluntly in a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed: **"*If it becomes law, vital money will stop flowing to American artists.*"**

The AMFA would close the terrestrial radio loophole, requiring corporate broadcasters to pay performers—while protecting small and community stations with exemptions allowing qualifying stations to pay as little as $10 per year. It would unlock hundreds of millions in overseas royalties currently collected but never paid to American artists.

And yet...

What *Hasn't* Happened

The AMFA remains stalled. The markup that was scheduled back in April? Still hasn't happened. The House Judiciary Committee has taken no action.

NAB President Curtis LeGeyt told *Inside Radio* there has been **"no movement"** and that the recording industry **"hasn't been willing to come to the table"**. He also pointed out a brutal reality: the AMFA has only **roughly a dozen supporters** in Congress, while the radio industry's priority bill has over 370 co-sponsors.

The ***Living Wage for Musicians Act***? Still stalled. The ***TRAIN Act*** and ***CLEAR Act***? Still in committee.

Meanwhile, AI Moves Forward (Sort Of)

The NO FAKES Act, which would create federal protections against AI-generated deepfakes of your voice and likeness, passed the Senate Judiciary Committee in June and is now awaiting a full Senate vote. But even that faces headwinds—Senate Commerce Chair Ted Cruz recently cast doubt on whether it has the 60 votes needed to pass.

The **Protect Working Musicians Act**, which would allow independent artists to collectively negotiate with streaming platforms and AI companies, was introduced in June and is still in its early stages. *Send an email to issasongwriters.todd@gmail.com with the words "Living Wage" to receive a free "Summit Raffle Coupon"* The American Federation of Musicians is hosting a forum webinar with Rep. Deborah Ross on August 6th to build support.

Why This Matters Right Now

Here's the truth: **Congress is on vacation.** The August recess is in full swing. Your representatives are back in their districts, attending town halls, shaking hands, and asking for your vote.

This is our moment.

Every single member of the House is up for re-election this November. Quite a few senators are too. They are *listening* right now in a way they won't be in October. They want to know what matters to you.

And here's what matters: **$300 million in European royalties. Fair pay for streaming. Protection from AI. The ability to make a living from your art.**

Your August Action Plan

1. Show up at the ISSA Summit (August 20 & 21).

This is our chance to have side discussions with fellow artists. Talk to each other. Share what you've done. Plan what we'll do next. **Bring your stories, your frustrations, and your fire.** This isn't just a networking event—it's a organizing opportunity.

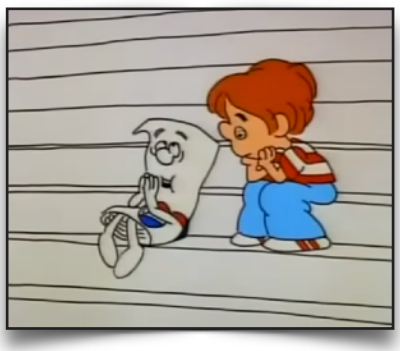
2. Contact your representatives—*now*.

They're home. They're available. Call their district office. Show up at a town hall. Send an email. Tell them:

*"I am a musician and a voter in your district. I want you to cosponsor and push for a vote on the American Music Fairness Act—**especially now that $300 million in European royalties is at stake.** I also want your support for the Living Wage for Musicians Act, the NO FAKES Act, and the Protect Working Musicians Act. This is a voting issue for me."*

3. Ask the tough questions.

At town halls, on social media, in emails: "*Where do you stand on fair pay for musicians? Will you fight to protect American artists from losing $300 million in European royalties?"*



The Bottom Line

Congress may be on vacation, but we can't be. The $300 million threat is real. The streaming injustice is real. The AI threat is real.

Just because they're not in Washington doesn't mean we should be silent.

The ISSA Summit is our chance to come together, share strategies, and build momentum. Let's make sure that when Congress returns in September, they hear from us—loud and clear.

Your voice is an instrument. It's time to play it loud.

See you at the Summit.

Hidden Word Winners!

Let's celebrate four of our eagle-eyed readers! We are pleased to announce that **Andy Smith, Emily Finke, Roseann Sureda and Linda Boles** each found some of the hidden sentences in last month's newsletter.

- **Linda Boles** discovered one of the keywords and earns **1 extra Raffle Ticket!**
- **Roseann Sureda** also found one of the keywords and will also be receiving 1 **extra Raffle Ticket!**
- **Emily Finke** found all 6 keywords - so she'll be receiving 6 **extra Raffle Tickets!**
- **Andy Smith** found all 6 keywords – so he receives 6 **extra Raffle Tickets!**





Every month we receive questions about various subject from our members. We have decided to share these questions and our answers as you might be asking the same questions!



This month's question has again come from numerous ISSA members. Question:

"What exactly does Spotify consider an artificial stream?

What Is an Artificial Stream? Understanding Spotify's Crackdown and How to Protect Your Music

Last month, we addressed the growing crisis of independent artists having their music removed from Spotify after being flagged for "artificial streams." The response was overwhelming—and one question came up repeatedly: *"What exactly does Spotify consider an artificial stream?"*

It's a fair question. The term gets thrown around a lot, but the definition isn't always clear. And with more ISSA members than ever receiving these alerts, understanding what constitutes artificial streaming—and how to avoid it—has never been more important.

What Spotify Says: The Official Definition

Spotify's definition is actually quite straightforward:

"An artificial stream is a stream that doesn't reflect genuine user listening intent, including any instance of attempting to manipulate streaming services like Spotify by using automated processes (like bots or scripts)."
In plain English: **if a stream doesn't come from a real person genuinely choosing to listen to your music, it's artificial.**

Spotify invests heavily in detecting, preventing, and removing the royalty impact of artificial streams. While the company claims artificial streaming accounts for less than 1% of all Spotify streams, the enforcement actions—and the collateral damage to independent artists—are significant.

What Counts as an Artificial Stream?

Spotify's detection systems look for patterns that don't match genuine human listening behavior. Here are the most common examples:

1. Bots and Automated Scripts

This is the most obvious form of artificial streaming. Bots are automated programs that play songs on repeat, often from thousands of accounts simultaneously. These streams don't come from real listeners—they come from code.

2. Paid Services That "Guarantee" Streams

Any third-party service that promises a specific number of streams in exchange for payment is violating Spotify's terms. These services often use bot networks or click farms to deliver the streams they promise. As Spotify makes clear: *"Any service that offers guaranteed playlist placement in exchange for money violates our terms and conditions and should not be used."*

3. Click Farms and Paid Listening

Some services pay real people to listen to songs on repeat. While these are technically "human" streams, they don't reflect genuine listening intent—and Spotify's algorithms can detect the unnatural patterns.

4. Playlists That Use Bot Activity

Bot playlists serve two purposes: they fraudulently collect streaming revenue and they scam artists into paying for fake streams. If your music is added to one of these playlists without your knowledge, you can still be flagged.

5. Leaving Content on Repeat

Extended, non-active listening—such as leaving a single track on loop for hours—can also trigger flags if the pattern appears unnatural.

6. Artificial Streams from Multiple Versions of the Same Song

Spotify's policy limits a single song to 20 streams per account per tracking period. Uploading multiple versions of the same track to bypass this limit is considered manipulation.

How Spotify Detects Artificial Streaming

Spotify doesn't share the full details of its detection algorithms—and for good reason. If the system were public, bad actors would find ways to evade it. However, we do know some of the signals they look for:

- **Sudden spikes in streams** from a specific location where you have no existing fanbase
- **Unusual listening patterns**, such as accounts that listen exclusively to one artist for hours on end
- **Streams originating from a single playlist** with suspicious characteristics
- **Metadata signals** like IP location, listening duration, and repeat patterns

When Spotify detects artificial streaming, **those streams do not earn royalties**. *Send an email to issasongwriters.todd@gmail.com with the word "Royalties" to receive a free "Summit Raffle Coupon"* Public metrics—including your monthly listener count and a track's all-time stream count—are adjusted to remove the artificial activity.

The Consequences: What Happens When You're Flagged

The penalties for artificial streaming are severe and escalating:

- **Royalties are withheld** for the flagged streams
- **Public stream counts are corrected** (meaning your numbers drop)
- **Spotify charges a penalty fee** of approximately **€10 per track per month** to labels and distributors when flagrant artificial streaming is detected
- **Your distributor may pass these fees directly to you**
- **In severe or repeated cases, your track or entire album is removed from Spotify**—and in some cases, your account may be suspended

And here's the kicker: **there is no direct appeal process for artists**. Your distributor can submit an appeal and provide additional context, but they cannot override Spotify's algorithmic determinations. The final decision rests entirely with Spotify.

How to Protect Yourself

The best defense against artificial streaming flags is **prevention**. Here's what every independent artist should be doing:

1. Vet Every Promotional Service Thoroughly

This is the single most important step. Before you pay for any promotion, ask hard questions:

- Do they guarantee a specific number of streams or playlist placements? **Red flag.**
- Do they charge for playlist placement? **Red flag.** Real promotional services do not sell Spotify placements.
- Can they explain exactly how they generate streams?
- Do they have verifiable testimonials from real artists?

As CD Baby advises: *"We strongly advise you to thoroughly vet any marketing or promotional services you're considering as part of your release campaign. If it seems too good to be true…"*

2. Never Pay for Guaranteed Streams or Playlist Placement

Spotify's policy is clear: *"Any third-party promotional service that advertises streams in exchange for payment violates our terms and conditions, and using such services may result in your music being removed from Spotify."*

If a service promises you a spot on a Spotify playlist in exchange for money, walk away.

3. Monitor Your Spotify for Artists Dashboard Regularly

Keep an eye on your streaming metrics. Look for:

- Sudden, unexplained spikes in streams
- Streams coming from unusual geographic locations
- A single playlist driving the majority of your streams

If you notice any of these patterns, investigate immediately. You can report suspicious playlists directly to Spotify using their **Playlist Reporter** tool at artists.spotify.com/c/playlist-reporter.

4. End Any Suspicious Promotions Immediately

If you suspect a service you're using might be generating artificial streams, end the promotion right away. The sooner you stop, the less damage can accumulate.

5. Educate Yourself

Spotify has launched educational resources—including a masterclass—to help artists understand artificial streaming and avoid falling for scams. Take advantage of these free resources.

6. Build Your Fanbase Organically

This is the long game, but it's the safest one. Editorial playlist pitching through Spotify for Artists is the primary sanctioned channel for playlist placement. Focus on:

- Engaging with your fans on social media
- Building an email list
- Playing live shows (virtual or in-person)
- Collaborating with other artists
- Creating content that drives genuine interest in your music

What If You've Already Been Flagged?

If you receive an artificial streaming alert, act quickly:

1. **Document everything**—screenshots of your dashboard, emails from Spotify and your distributor, and a timeline of your promotional activities
2. **Escalate within your distributor**—ask for a specialist or supervisor
3. **Pause all promotional activity** immediately
4. **Investigate the source** of the flagged streams
5. **Submit documentation** to your distributor for them to forward to Spotify

But be prepared: even with documentation, reinstatement is not guaranteed.

The Bottom Line

Artificial streaming isn't just about bots and click farms. It's about **any stream that doesn't come from a real person's genuine choice to listen to your music**. Spotify's enforcement is aggressive, the penalties are harsh, and the appeals process is virtually nonexistent.

The good news is that **you can protect yourself**. Vet every service you use. Never pay for guaranteed streams or playlist placements. Monitor your metrics. And above all, focus on building a real, engaged fanbase—one genuine listener at a time.

Your music deserves real listeners. Don't let shortcuts put your career at risk.

Have questions about artificial streaming? Share them in the ISSA Facebook group—we're all in this together.

Quick Reference: Red Flags to Watch For

Red Flag	What It Means
“Guaranteed” streams or followers	Likely uses bots or click farms
Paid playlist placement	Violates Spotify’s terms
Sudden spike in streams from one location	Could indicate bot activity
Single playlist driving most of your streams	May be a bot playlist
Service can’t explain how they generate streams	Likely using prohibited methods
Too good to be true pricing	It probably is





When Words Fail, Gratitude Takes Over



For those of you who know me, you know that being at a loss for words is about as rare as a snowstorm in July. I'm the guy who always has *something* floating around in the space between my ears—whether you asked for it or not! But today, as I sat down to write this closing article for our final newsletter before the big event, I have to admit… my brain is completely void of any new thoughts.

And you know what? I think that's okay.

After 11 months of planning for this year's Summit — I think I've finally earned a momentary blank slate. The well of clever quips and motivational speeches has run dry, but honestly? That's a good thing. It means we've done the work. It means the *action* has already spoken for itself.

So, instead of trying to manufacture some grand new idea, I'm going to do something far more important: I'm going to say *thank you*.

Because if there's one thing I've learned over these past 11 months, it's that this is *much more* than a one-man show. This is a community—a tribe of passionate believers—coming together with a shared mission to promote and grow the Indie Music Revolution. And I want to make sure every single one of you knows just how much you are appreciated.

To Our Incredible Sponsors—

You stepped up when we needed you most. Your belief in independent artists is what makes events like this possible. Thank you for putting your money where your heart is:

- **Stogie Joe Guitars** – David Plekkennpol
- **Polyverse Music** – Assaf Sagol & Adrian Dybowski
- **AIAIAI Audio** – Dave Hillel
- **Atomic Disc** – Silver
- **PSP Audioware** – Antoni Ozynski
- **SkinSessed** – Tamanie Dove

We literally could not have done this without you.

To Our Summit Session Leaders—

You are the heart of the educational experience. You are giving your time, your expertise, and your wisdom freely to help our members grow. Thank you to:

Tamanie Dove, Angela Marie Eidenmiller, John Pineiro, Linda Marks, Katherine Lynn Nemeth, Emily Finke, Jeremy Edmond, Randie O'Neil, Emo LeBlanc, and Alan Garmonsway.

And a special nod to **Chad Rivette**, for generously offering to run our Summit Karaoke Night—because even serious artists need to let loose and have some fun!

To Our KeyNote Speaker—

Sam George – thank you for bringing your vision and voice to our stage. We can't wait to hear what you have to share.

And Finally, My Extra Special Thanks—

There are a few people who go so far above and beyond that I simply cannot wrap up this article without giving them the spotlight they deserve.

- **Tamanie Dove** – Where do I even begin? For her passion, her knowledge, and her tireless hard work in creating and maintaining the International Singer Songwriters Association. Tamanie, without you, none of this would exist. We wouldn't be here today. Thank you for building this family.
- **Alexx Antaeus** – For generously donating his time to offer One-on-One Sessions with our ISSA artists. Your willingness to give back to the indie community is a gift we don't take lightly.
- **Rick Landstrom** – For all of his heartfelt donations to help out ISSA artists at the Summit. Your kindness will make a tangible difference in someone's career.
- **Jill Apfel** – For all the behind-the-scenes work that truly makes the Summit run smooth. While everyone else is in the spotlight, you're the one making sure the stage is set, the schedule is kept, and the chaos is managed. You are the engine that keeps this train on the tracks.

So, as I finally close out this article—and this pre-Summit newsletter season—I have just one last thing to say.

We hope to see you in a couple of weeks in Atlanta.

Whether you're a finalist, a first-time attendee, a seasoned veteran, or someone just curious about what this community is all about—there is a place for you here. Come be part of the Indie Music Revolution.

Until then, take care of yourselves, keep making incredible music, and know that you are part of something truly special.

See you in Atlanta.

Todd







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