The Summit Newsletter

THE VOTE IS ON: From Nomination to the Finals – Your Next Move Starts Now

The dust has settled, the deadline has passed, and the paperwork is in. The nomination period for the 2026 ISSA Awards Show officially closed on March 31.



To everyone who received a nomination **Congratulations.** You have achieved something remarkable. In a sea of global talent, you stood out. You have earned your spot on the official nominee list, and we could not be more proud to celebrate your dedication to the craft of songwriting.

The Challenge: Get Creative & Rally Your Fanbase
But now, the *real* fun begins. From now until April 30, the power shifts entirely to the people who love your music the most: your fans. The Public Voting period is officially open, and this is where you prove that your community is the strongest.

Remember, fans can vote once per day, per device (laptop, tablet, cellphone, desktop). That means every single share, every story, and every email matters.

The challenge to you, the nominees, is this: **Show us your creativity.** Don't just ask for a vote once. Get energetic. Go live. Offer a behind-the-scenes look for daily voters. Turn this into a movement. You worked hard to build your fanbase—now give them the mission to carry you to the finals. The artists who advance on May 2 will be the ones who worked their networks the hardest.

To the Fans & Fellow Artists: Be the Wind Beneath Their Wings
If you didn't receive a nomination this year, this message is for you. You are not out of the game. In fact, you are more important than ever. We need you to support your favorite artists. Share their links. Vote for them daily. The independent music ecosystem survives on mutual respect, and there is no greater honor than helping a friend reach the finals. Go to https://issasongwriters.com/2026-vote/ and make your voice heard.

The Final Word: Don't Despair, Just Be There
Finally, let's talk about the future. When the voting ends on April 30 and we announce the Finalists on May 2, some of you will advance, and some of you will not. If you do not see your name on that Finalist list, I am ***telling*** you to hold your head high, you are still a winner!

Do Not Skip The Summit
The 2026 ISSA Awards Show & Summit in Atlanta is not just a trophy ceremony; it is a business class for your career. Even if you aren't a finalist, you need to be in Atlanta. Where else can you network with past winners, industry specialists, and PR pros? Where else can you sit in a seminar taught by Gold Winners (and judges) about *what* they look for when they vote?

That seminar alone is worth the trip to the Atlanta. The price of admission? Free. The value of the connections you will make? Priceless.

Come watch the winners. Learn from the finalists. Shake hands with the executives. You will leave Atlanta with the tools you need to ensure that in 2027, it is *your* name on that ballot.

Vote now through April 30. View the nominees and cast your daily ballot at ISSAsongwriters.com.

Let's make this the loudest April in ISSA history.

Here's a snapshot of what's ahead in the coming months:

- **Fan Voting for the 2026 ISSA Awards Show Nominees**
- **Reserve your hotel rooms** (We will make a special announcement when the ISSA Host Hotel room block is available)
- **Make your travel plans** (March)
- **Fan Voting** (April)
- **Finalists Announced** (May)
- **Judging Round begins** (May)



The Grind Month: How to Turn Your 2026 ISSA Nomination Into a Victory (Without Burning Out)

As a 2026 ISSA Awards Show nominee, welcome to the most important month of your career—*so far*.

Let's not sugarcoat it. April is where the winners are separated from the "wannabes." This is the month we separate the wheat from the chaff. You've already done the hard part—you wrote the songs, recorded the tracks, and earned the nomination. But that nomination is just a backstage pass. The trophy? That requires a whole different kind of performance.

Here's the brutal truth: **The artists with the most creative campaign (not the most fans) usually advance to be a Finalist.**

From now to April 30th, your job isn't just to be a singer-songwriter. It's to be a campaign manager, a content creator, and a community leader. You need to mobilize everyone—fans, family, friends, co-workers, even your barista (basically anyone with a device that connects to the internet) to vote for you daily.

The Golden Rule (You know it, but here's the reminder): One vote, per device, per day. No cheating. No bots. Just pure, creative hustle.

So, how do you get those votes without annoying everyone you know? You're an artist. You create emotion for a living. Now, use that same creativity to motivate your fan base.

Here is your **April Action Plan**.

1. Stop Saying "Vote for Me" (That's a Lullaby, Not a Hook)

The fastest way to get ignored is to post a static graphic that says "Click here to vote." That's not marketing; that's wallpaper.

Think about your own scrolling habits. What makes *you* stop? A funny face? A raw confession? A behind-the-scenes disaster? Use those tactics.

- **The "Surfing" Test:** For 10 minutes a day, watch TikToks or Reels without sound. What visuals stop your thumb? That's your template.
- **The Golden Rule:** 80% value / 20% ask. Entertain or educate four times. *Then* ask for the vote once.

2. Platform-by-Platform: Where Your Fans Actually Live

Don’t post the same thing everywhere. Each platform is a different venue.

- **TikTok & Instagram Reels (The Discovery Engines):** Speed is everything. Post 15-30 second videos. Show the mess—the cracked vocal take, the coffee spill on your lyric sheet, the face you make when you hit a bad note. Authentic chaos wins.
- **YouTube (The Deep Dive):** Post a 60-second “Vote for Me” clip as a Short. Then, in the description, put the direct voting link. Tell people why this award would change your trajectory.
- **Facebook (The Home Team):** This is for your aunts, old bandmates, and local fans. Use Facebook Stories for quick reminders. In groups, don't just drop a link—start a conversation. *“Hey Nashville songwriters, I need your help. Which of these two choruses is stronger? (Oh, and by the way, voting link in comments.)”*
- **X (Twitter):** Use text-only hooks. *“Today’s goal: (*insert your daily goal here*). Every RT is a high-five. Let’s go.”*

3. The Secret Weapon: Schedule Your Sanity

Some of you don’t know this, but most platforms (Meta Business Suite, Later, Buffer, even TikTok’s native scheduler) let you plan posts *days* in advance.

You don’t need to live on your phone. You need to work smarter.

How to find your “Goldilocks Zone”:

- Go to your Instagram or Facebook **Professional Dashboard**.
- Look at “Total Followers” → “Most Active Times.”
- Schedule your posts for 7:00 AM (coffee votes), 12:00 PM (lunch scroll), and 7:00 PM (wind-down votes).
- T*ip:* The highest engagement for voting links is usually **Tuesday–Thursday, 8-9 PM**.
- TikTok has even better tools for analytics.



4. Keep It Fresh: The Monotony Killer

By April 15th, your fans will be numb if you post the same video every day. You need a **Content Calendar Theme**.

Here's a weekly template idea to keep things varied:

- **Motivation Monday:** *"Why this award would mean the world to me…"* (Raw, emotional video).
- **Tool Tip Tuesday:** Teach a 15-second trick about guitar, vocal runs, or songwriting. *Then* ask for a vote.
- **Behind-the-Scenes Wednesday:** Show the ugly demo, the messy notebook, the failed recording take.
- **Throwback Thursday:** Post a clip of you playing a dive bar 3 years ago vs. a clip from a recent show. *"We've come this far. One more vote gets us to Atlanta."*
- **Fan Appreciation Friday:** Repost a fan's story of them voting. Shout them out by name.
- **Saturday Silliness:** A 5-second blooper. You spilling water. Your cat walking on the keyboard. Humor is underrated.
- **Sunday Reset:** A calm, acoustic 60-second performance. No ask. Just music. Let them feel why they support you.

5. Entice the Tribe: Giveaways That Actually Work

You don't need a budget. You need creativity. Reward the people who vote daily.

- **The "Top Voter" VIP Session:** At the end of April, pick the 5 fans who screen-grabbed their daily votes (have them DM you proof). Host a private 20-minute Zoom: play an unreleased song, answer questions, or just say thank you.
- **The Merch Lottery:** Every vote = an entry to win a signed CD, a hat, or a free ticket to your next local show.
- **The "Vote 10 Days" Challenge:** If someone votes for 10 consecutive days and posts proof, they get a free digital download of your upcoming single before it drops.
- **The Ultimate Prize:** A "Producer for an Hour" session where you'll write a custom 4-bar jingle for *their* business or pet. It's weird. It's memorable. It works.

6. The Long Game: This Isn't Just About April

Here's the secret the that many past winners know: **The April voting grind is a free masterclass in music marketing.**

Even if you don't win, you will have learned:

- What time your fans actually engage.
- Which video style gets the most shares.
- How to ask for something without feeling icky.
- And you might just grow your mailing list by 200 people.

Those who work hard *and* creatively in April don't just win awards. They build the muscle to sell tickets, merch, and streams for the rest of the year.

The Bottom Line

You know the old saying: *Success doesn't just happen; it comes to those who work for it. But I'd add this:* ***Success comes to those who work creatively.***

You've got 30 days. You've got a voting link. You've got a phone in your pocket. And you've got the soul of an artist. Now go create the campaign that gets you on that stage in Atlanta.



YOUR STREAM, YOUR VOICE: A QUICK UPDATE ON FAIR PAY

(Please refer to the March Summit Newsletter for the full breakdown on the American Music Fairness Act and the Living Wage for Musicians Act.)

Since that article was published, both bills have seen important developments. Here is the latest:

American Music Fairness Act (AMFA): This bill to close the AM/FM radio loophole has advanced with key hearings. A Senate hearing in December featured Gene Simmons (KISS) testifying in support, and the House held its own hearing in February. The bill has also been re-introduced in the Senate by a bipartisan pair: Alex Padilla (D-CA) and Marsha Blackburn (R-TN).

Living Wage for Musicians Act (LWMA): The bill, which would create a penny-per-stream royalty, was re-introduced by Rep. Rashida Tlaib (D-MI) in September. While it has stalled in Congress, it's gaining significant grassroots momentum—the Detroit and New York City Councils have passed resolutions in support.

SO, WHERE DO WE STAND NOW?

The bad news is the path forward remains difficult. The radio industry is still fighting AMFA, and the major streaming platforms are still resisting the changes in the LWMA. But the bigger challenge is that both bills currently lack the strong, bipartisan support needed to force a vote.

A CALL TO ACTION: CHECKING IN WITH ISSA

Since we last spoke, the election cycle has only intensified. This is the moment when our collective voice is most powerful. So, let's take the temperature of our own community.

What have YOU done to advocate for these bills in the last month?
Have you contacted your representative? Have you organized with your ISSA State Rep? Have you asked the tough questions at a town hall or on social media?

Let's keep this momentum going.
Share your actions, big or small, in the ISSA Summit Facebook page or other social media groups. Use the hashtag #ISSAFairPay. Let's show Washington that this is a voting issue for musicians across the country.

Stay tuned to the ISSA Summit Newsletter for future coordinated action dates. Together, our voices can be a powerful chord.



Have You Seen This?

Stogie Joe Cigar Box Guitars is making this cool custom cigar box guitar for our friends

Stogie Joe
Cigar Box Guitars
Handcrafted by David Plekkenpol
stogiejoeguitars.com

Josh & Candy Carpenter from “The Band Wanted”. Have you ordered yours yet? Contact Dave at stogiejoeguitars.com

Following Up: Have You Claimed Your IMDb Credit?



Last month, we shared exciting news: the **ISSA Awards are now officially listed on IMDb** — and that means many of our members are eligible to receive their own professional credit or even create a brand new IMDb page.

In case you missed it, the article explained how being part of the ISSA Awards show (as a winner, finalist, performer, presenter, host, or production contributor) can now become a verified entertainment credit on the world's largest film and TV database. We also provided a step-by-step guide to submitting your name through IMDb's "Edit Page" feature.

So we want to ask: **Have you gone ahead and signed up?**

If you've successfully added your ISSA Awards credit to IMDb — or if you created your very first IMDb page because of it — we'd love to see it! **Please share your IMDb link on the ISSA Summit Facebook page.** Let's celebrate your achievement and inspire other members to take this simple but powerful step for their careers.

Not yet submitted? It's not too late. Visit the ISSA Awards IMDb page and follow last month's instructions:

👉 https://www.imdb.com/title/tt40140082/



Let's fill that credits list and put the ISSA community on the map — one name at a time.



Karaoke at the Summit anyone? We have so many great guitar players that entertain us in the "Courtyard" after hours, but not everyone is a gifted guitar player. But all of us like to sing (especially after an adult beverage or two). Chad Rivette has offered to bring along his Karaoke set up if we are interested. So… let Todd know via email whether or not if you would like this to happen.
issasongwriters.todd@gmail.com

Get Ready to Be Inspired! Our 2026 Summit Breakout Sessions Are Here!

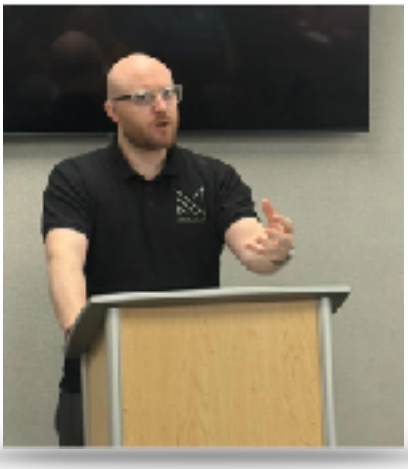
We're thrilled to announce that the Breakout Sessions for this year's ISSA Summit are officially finalized, and wow – do we have an incredible lineup in store for you! Mark your calendars for **August 20 & 21**, because these free sessions are not to be missed.

Thursday, August 20 kicks off with a burst of energy as **Tamanie Dove** delivers her always-inspiring opening remarks and insider tips to set the perfect tone for the Summit. Then, we dive straight into the wisdom:

- **Linda Marks** explores the power of **Mentoring**
- **Miranda Raine** tackles the real and raw topic of **Adversity in the Music Industry**
- **Emily E. Finke** takes us deep into **Audio Engineering and Creativity**, followed by a must-attend Q&A on **Troubleshooting Your Music Business**

Friday, August 21 keeps the momentum soaring:

- **Jeremy Edmonds** shares a deeply meaningful session on **Building an Identity in Music While Managing Your Mental Health.**
- **Randie O'Neal & Emo LeBlanc** team up to help us navigate **Riding the Highs and Lows of the Creative Process**
- **Alan Garmonsway** hosts a powerful panel of ISSA Gold Winners and Judges revealing **What They Look For From Finalists Submissions**



And we're saving a very special moment for last – **Sam George** from **Mammoth Sound Studio** will deliver our closing Keynote Speech: **"The Future Sounds Human: Creativity in the Age of Machines."** Trust us – you'll leave feeling fired up and future-ready.

Over the next couple of months, the Summit Newsletter will feature deeper dives into each of these amazing speakers and their topics. But for now – save the dates, spread the word, and get ready to learn, connect, and grow. These sessions are **free for all ISSA members**, and they just might change everything for your music journey.

See you there! 🎶

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!

This month is all about creating your own artist **VISUAL IDENTITY** (something I am trying to improve).

Developing a strong visual identity is crucial for musicians in today's visually driven world. Here's a breakdown of how to approach it:

1️⃣ Define Your Artistic Vision:
Reflect Your Music:
Your visuals should align with the mood, genre, and themes of your music. A dark, moody aesthetic might suit a metal band, while bright, vibrant colors could work for a pop artist. Consider the emotions your music evokes and translate them into visual elements.
Tell Your Story:
Your visual identity can be a powerful tool for storytelling. It can convey your background, values, and artistic journey.

2️⃣ Key Visual Elements:
Logo:
A memorable logo is a cornerstone of your visual identity. It should be simple, recognizable, and reflect your artistic style.
Color Palette:
Choose a consistent color palette and use these colors across all your visual materials, including album artwork, social media, and website.
Typography:
Select fonts that align with your artistic style and are easy to read.

Imagery:
Develop a consistent photographic style for your promotional photos and music videos.
Consider the use of recurring visual motifs or symbols that represent your artistic identity.
Album Artwork:
Album covers are a crucial part of your visual presentation. They should be eye-catching and reflect the music within. Think of album artwork as a visual representation of the audio experience.
Social Media:
Maintain a consistent visual aesthetic across all your social media platforms.
Use high-quality images and videos that reflect your brand.
Merchandise:
Extend your visual identity to your merchandise, such as t-shirts, posters, and other items.

So COOL!!!! As an ISSA Representative, I must ensure I am serving my 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.

Reclaim Your Feed: The Art of the Intentional Reset

Is your social media feed feeling a bit stale—or worse, totally out of alignment with where you're actually headed?

We often talk about algorithms as if they're mysterious, uncontrollable weather patterns, but it's time to stop fearing the math. At its core, an algorithm isn't a sentient being trying to bury your work; it's a mirror. If you don't like the reflection, it's time to change the variables in the formula.

Honestly, some days my feed acts like that one relative who still thinks I'm obsessed with a hobby I dropped in 2014. No, TikTok, I do not need more "extreme pallet project" tutorials. I've moved on. We've all moved on.

The Five-Word Rule
The most underutilized tool in your digital arsenal is the simple search bar. To reset your algorithm, you have to stop passively scrolling and start actively hunting. When you use that magnifying glass to search for specific topics—whether it's emerging tech, organic gardening, or stoic philosophy—you're sending a high-priority signal to the platform.

Intentionality is the secret sauce. If you're disappointed that your feed doesn't include the people you actually care about, ask yourself: when was the last time you actually digitally spoke to them? A "like" is the digital equivalent of a polite nod in a hallway, but a comment is a conversation.
Try the Five-Word Rule: When did you last leave a comment of five words or more on their page? That matters. It's the difference between being a ghost in the machine and a verified member of the community. Spend ten minutes a day searching for and engaging with exactly what you want to see. Watch the videos to the end, leave meaningful thoughts, and follow the leaders in those niche spaces. By flooding your history with these intentional interactions, you effectively drown out the old data.

The SEO Digital Handshake
While a reset helps you curate what you consume, SEO (Search Engine Optimization) dictates who consumes you. In the music industry, SEO isn't just a technical buzzword; it's your digital handshake.

Think of the internet as a massive, chaotic library. Without SEO, your music is a book misfiled in the basement next to a stack of damp 1990s encyclopedias. With it, you're on the "Staff Picks" shelf at the front door. SEO builds an "owned" audience, drawing people to your YouTube channel or website through intent-based searches rather than the random crumbs of attention from a fleeting social feed.

To dominate these results, identify your "keywords"—phrases like "independent acoustic artist" or "modern soul musician"—and weave them into your titles and metadata. (Seriously, change that file name from IMG_0988.jpeg to AwardWinningJazzArtistLisaJacks.jpeg).

The Pivot: YouTube Shorts as the New Front Line
I know what you're thinking—last month I was shouting from the rooftops about TikTok being the king of discoverability. I still stand by that; TikTok is where culture is born. However, if TikTok is the "party" where you meet new people, YouTube is the "library" where you build your legacy.

Because Google owns the platform, your Shorts aren't just fleeting clips; they're indexed data points. Right now, Google is aggressively training its AI models on Shorts content to understand context and sentiment. For the next 24 months, Shorts are your most powerful tool for "teaching" the algorithm who you are.

The 2026 Reality: Engagement Over Vanity
Here is the hard truth for 2026: The playing field has been completely leveled. The era of the "Mega-Follower Count" is officially over. Today, a brand-new account with your mom as the only follower has the exact same chance of going viral as a "perfect" influencer with a million followers.
Platforms no longer care about who you knew yesterday; they care about who you are holding right now. It's all about content quality and your ability to capture new eyes long enough to spark a real interaction. Attention is the currency, and engagement is the proof of purchase.

The Bottom Line: Real Over Rapid
At the end of the day, these platforms are just tools—they aren't your identity. The most important variable in the equation is you. In a world full of AI-generated noise, your only true competitive advantage is being authentic.
Don't let the pressure of "daily content" burn you out. If you can only post once a week, do it—but do it with intention. A consistent, high-quality long game beats a frantic "flash in the pan" every single time.

Test Your Digital Handshake:
Open an incognito window and Google your name. Does the "Staff Picks" version of you show up, or are you still buried in the basement? If you don't like what the search engine sees, start rewriting the narrative today.
Getting excited to see you all in Atlanta! Go get your fans voting, grow your communities, and keep creating.

Your friend,
Angela

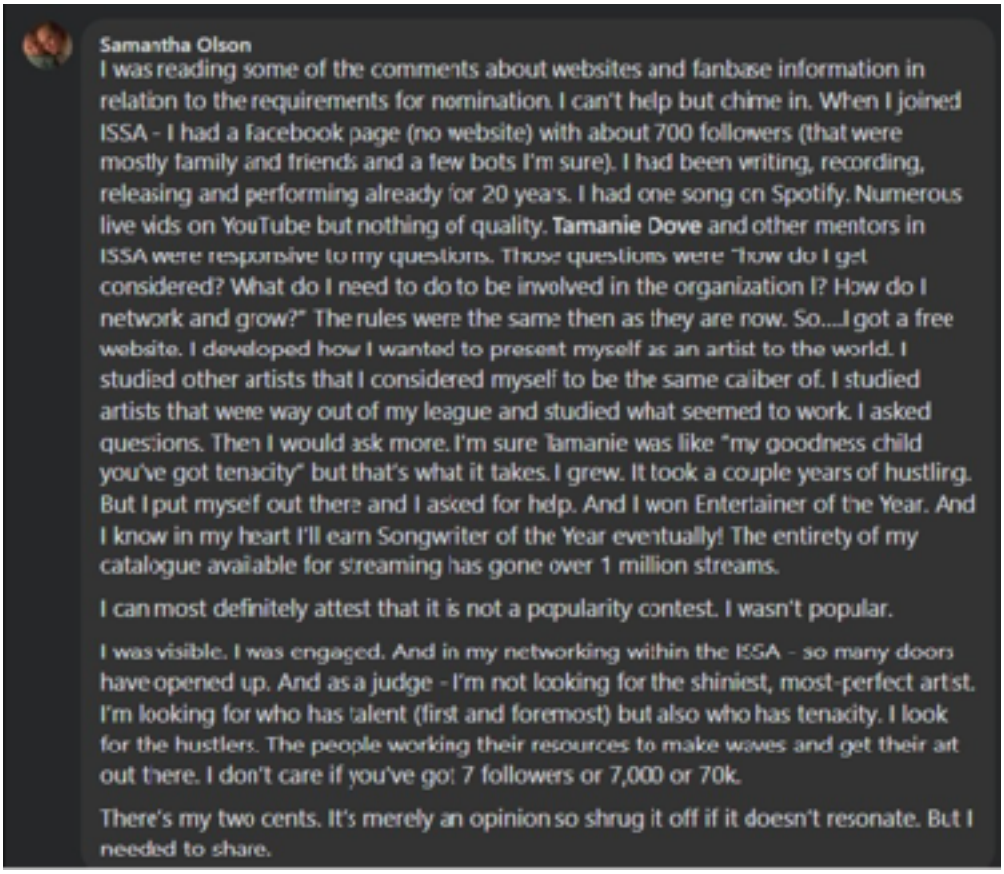
Each Stogie Joe guitar is a one-of-a-kind, handcrafted instrument.

The guitars are traditional three and four-string cigar box guitars. The necks are hard maple, hand-carved with a "C" profile. and have a traditional headstock, as well as sealed tuners. The guitars can be tuned to open G, open E or open D.



Fretboards are walnut, Bolivian rosewood, padauk, wenge or purpleheart with medium/medium nickel-silver frets and a jumbo zero fret.

If you are looking for a unique instrument for yourself or a gift for a musician friend/family member, a Stogie Joe Cigar Box Guitar is an excellent choice.



Samantha Olson

I was reading some of the comments about websites and fanbase information in relation to the requirements for nomination. I can't help but chime in. When I joined ISSA - I had a facebook page (no website) with about 700 followers (that were mostly family and friends and a few bots I'm sure). I had been writing, recording, releasing and performing already for 20 years. I had one song on Spotify. Numerous live vids on YouTube but nothing of quality. **Tamanie Dove** and other mentors in ISSA were responsive to my questions. Those questions were "how do I get considered? What do I need to do to be involved in the organization I? How do I network and grow?" The rules were the same then as they are now. So....I got a free website. I developed how I wanted to present myself as an artist to the world. I studied other artists that I considered myself to be the same caliber of. I studied artists that were way out of my league and studied what seemed to work. I asked questions. Then I would ask more. I'm sure Tamanie was like "my goodness child you've got tenacity" but that's what it takes. I grew. It took a couple years of hustling. But I put myself out there and I asked for help. And I won Entertainer of the Year. And I know in my heart I'll earn Songwriter of the Year eventually! The entirety of my catalogue available for streaming has gone over 1 million streams.

I can most definitely attest that it is not a popularity contest. I wasn't popular.

I was visible. I was engaged. And in my networking within the ISSA - so many doors have opened up. And as a judge - I'm not looking for the shiniest, most-perfect artist. I'm looking for who has talent (first and foremost) but also who has tenacity. I look for the hustlers. The people working their resources to make waves and get their art out there. I don't care if you've got 7 followers or 7,000 or 70k.

There's my two cents. It's merely an opinion so shrug it off if it doesn't resonate. But I needed to share.

Thank You Samantha Olson (aka Samantha Grimes) for this beautiful post on FaceBook. You've totally captured the essence of what ISSA is all about. We're more than an awards show. We are here for you 24/7 - 365 days a year! We would also like to point out, that you've come full circle. From someone seeking help, to someone now giving out your expertise to those seeking help!

ISSA Featured Artist of the Month



Congratulations to Ritchie Dave Porter and Debra Susan for being the ISSA Featured Artist for April!

Ritchie Dave Porter & Debra Susan are an award-winning British songwriting and performance duo whose powerful fusion of blues, rock, and soul has earned them international recognition, including top honors with the International Singer-Songwriters Association (ISSA).

Together, Porter and Susan have developed a signature songwriting partnership built on strong musical chemistry—Ritchie's guitar-driven compositions forming the foundation, with Debra's lyrical storytelling and vocal melodies bringing each track to life. Their music spans blues-rock, classic rock, and melodic rock, often blending raw energy with emotional storytelling that connects deeply with listeners.



Music Industry News!

News From Around The World That Affects All Of Us

Apple Music's New AI Rule: What Indie Artists Need to Know

You may have seen the news about Apple Music requiring transparency around AI-generated music. As an independent musician, you might be wondering, "Does this affect me? And what do I actually have to do?"

Let's break it down in plain English, focusing on how this impacts you when you upload your next single.

The Bottom Line

Apple Music is now requiring labels and distributors (the services you use to get your music onto the platform, like DistroKid, TuneCore, or CD Baby) to label music that was primarily created by artificial intelligence.

If you record a song in your bedroom studio, this doesn't change anything for you. **However, if you are using AI tools to generate the main vocals or the core instrumental track, you will soon need to declare that during the upload process.**

What You Have to Declare

The new rules focus on two main areas where AI might be used:

- **AI Voices:** Is the main vocal on the track an AI voice clone? This applies even if the voice is meant to sound like a famous singer, or if it's a synthetic voice you created from scratch.

- **AI Instrumentals:** Was the main music bed (the drums, bass, chords, or melody) entirely generated by an AI tool based on a text prompt?

If the answer to either of these is yes, your distributor will likely ask you to check a box confirming that.

What You Do *Not* Have to Declare

It is important to know that you do not need to declare anything if you used AI as a **tool** in your process, but a human made the final creative decisions.

- **Mixing & Mastering:** If you used an AI-powered plugin to clean up the audio or master the track, you are fine. That is considered a production tool.
- **Inspiration & Samples:** If you used AI to generate a synth sound that you then tweaked, or to help write lyrics that you then edited, you are still the primary creator.

Why Should You Care?

As an indie artist, your brand and authenticity are your biggest assets. These rules are actually designed to protect you.

Imagine a "deepfake" song comes out using an AI version of your voice. Under these new rules, Apple Music has a system in place to identify that something is wrong. They can investigate because the person uploading it would have to lie on the metadata form to get it up there.

A Quick Checklist for Your Next Release

Before you hit "upload" on your distributor's website, ask yourself:

- **Did I record the vocals myself in a studio (or my closet)?** ✅ No AI declaration needed.
- **Did my human band play the instruments?** ✅ No AI declaration needed.
- **Did I write the lyrics and melody?** ✅ No AI declaration needed.
- **Did I type a prompt into an AI app and upload the audio file it spat out without changing it?** ⚠️ You likely need to declare this as AI-generated.

The Golden Rule: Be honest. If you made it, claim it. If a machine made it, declare it. This keeps your account safe and your fans trust.

Have you caught The Rick Spins Show in ISSA Radio yet? If not, why not? Rick's "Fun In The From Monday's (8pm Eastern on ISSA Radio) are "Making Monday's Great Again and the Thursday Night "Top 15 Show" (8pm Eastern on ISSA Radio) features 15 of ISSA's top artists, along with Rick's "Pick of The Week". If you happen to miss a show, you can catch highlights on TikTok. https://issasongwriters.com/issa-radio/

TikTok's SoundOn Deploys New Tech to Protect Your Songs—Even When They've Been Altered

If you've ever worried about someone taking your song, speeding it up, slowing it down, or shifting the pitch to get around copyright rules, here's some encouraging news.

SoundOn—the music distribution and promotion platform owned by TikTok—has just launched a powerful new tool to catch unauthorized uploads. The platform has partnered with ACRCloud, a company that specializes in audio recognition, to integrate a new service called **Derivative Works Detection**.

How It Works

Think of it like a high-tech fingerprint scanner for audio. The technology creates a unique digital fingerprint for every song. Even if someone tries to hide by significantly altering your track—like speeding it up or changing the pitch—the system can still recognize it.

This scanning happens **before** a track is distributed to major streaming services like Spotify, Apple Music, and Amazon Music. If the system finds a match, the upload gets flagged for review. SoundOn has also added a photo ID verification step for uploaders, and any flagged content goes to human reviewers for a final check.

Why This Matters for Songwriters

For independent artists, this extra layer of protection helps ensure that:

- **You get credit for your work.** When someone uses your song without permission, you lose out on both recognition and royalties.
- **Your music stays yours.** The system is designed to block unauthorized uploads before they ever reach listeners on streaming platforms.
- **The ecosystem becomes more fair.** By catching manipulated or stolen tracks early, SoundOn helps create a more transparent and reliable music industry for everyone.

Nichal Sethi, Head of SoundOn EMEA, put it this way: "In combining ACRCloud's newest technology with our multiple in-house detection systems, we have developed a true best-in-class technology solution, enabling us to verify ownership and identify potential issues before distribution".

A Quick Note for Artists

If you're a SoundOn user and you're uploading your own original work, you have nothing to worry about. This system is designed to catch people who try to upload **someone else's** copyrighted material without permission. For legitimate artists, it's an extra safeguard that helps protect the value of your catalog.

This move is part of a larger industry trend. Major labels like Universal and Sony are also investing in new detection technologies to fight unauthorized uploads, including AI-generated copies and derivative works. The message is clear: the music industry is getting smarter about protecting creators.

— Stay tuned to the ISSA Summit Newsletter for more updates on tools and platforms that help protect your work.

How to Get Your Music in Movies, TV Shows, and Video Games (A Simple Guide)



Want to make money from your music and get it heard by thousands of new fans? Placing songs in TV shows, movies, and video games is one of the best ways to do it. And the good news? There are more opportunities than ever before.

Why Bother with Placements?

Getting your song on screen isn't just about the paycheck (though that's nice). When your music appears in a popular show or game:

- You earn licensing fees and performance royalties
- New fans discover your music
- It builds your resume and credibility
- Your song gets heard by people who might never find it otherwise

The best part? TV and movies need ALL kinds of music – rock, country, hip-hop, instrumental, even songs that sound like they're from different decades. If your music doesn't fit what's on Top 40 radio, don't worry. Film and TV might still be a perfect home for it.

What Are Music Supervisors Looking For?

Music supervisors are the people who find songs for shows and movies. Here's what they want:

Songs that sound like current hits or classics – but without the huge price tag. They want that *feel* without paying for the real thing.

Universal lyrics – Think themes like love, new beginnings, overcoming challenges, feeling good, enjoying life. Avoid specific names, places, or details that might conflict with a scene.

Upbeat tempos – Surprise! Slow, sad ballads are actually the hardest to place. Energetic, positive songs work better.

Clean versions available – If your song has swear words, have a "clean" edit ready.

Broadcast quality recordings – Your recording needs to sound as good as what's on the radio. The good news? You can absolutely achieve this in a home studio with the right skills and equipment.

How Good Does Your Recording Need to Be?

The recording you submit is almost always what gets used. It won't be re-recorded (unless it's for a major movie's opening or closing credits). So make sure:

- Vocals sound professional
- Instrument performances are tight
- Overall sound quality matches radio-ready tracks

If you can't play all the parts yourself, hire musicians online who can record in their own studios and send you the files.

Wait – Do You Actually Own Your Recording?

Here's something many songwriters miss: If you hired singers or musicians, you need their permission in writing to license the recording. Get everyone to sign a simple "work for hire" agreement saying you own the performance and can license it. This is crucial.

What About Sampling?

If your song samples other artists' recordings, you'll have a hard time clearing it for TV/film. But loops that come with programs like GarageBand? Those are fine to use.

Two Ways to Get Your Music Placed

1. Music Libraries

Think of these as publishers that specialize in placing music in visual media. They have catalogs with thousands of songs. When you sign with one:

- They pitch your music to music supervisors
- They usually keep 50% of licensing fees and performance royalties
- Contracts typically last 2-5 years
- Some deals are exclusive (only they can represent your song), others are non-exclusive

Where to find them: Check out Music Registry (www.musicregistry.com) and Music Library Report (www.musiclibraryreport.com) for extensive listings.

2. Pitch Directly to Music Supervisors

This can be tougher without credits, but it's possible. You can find opportunities through:

- **Tip sheets** like Cue Sheet (www.cuesheet.net)
- **Pitch services** like Taxi (www.taxi.com) and Broadjam (www.broadjam.com)
- **Trade publications** like Variety and The Hollywood Reporter
- **IMDb** to learn about upcoming productions

Extra Tips from the Pros

From music licensing expert Mark Northam: "Build relationships, don't just send blind emails. Follow music supervisors on social media, engage with their posts, and when you do reach out, be personal and specific about why your song might work for them."

From indie filmmaker Jessica Chen: "I've placed songs from unknown artists in all three of my films. What made me say yes? The song made me *feel* something immediately. Don't overthink it – just send me music that moves you."

From music library owner Dave Cine: "The writers who succeed with us have at least 50-100 solid songs. It really is a numbers game. The more quality material you have out there, the more chances you have to get placed."

From video game composer Marcus Lee: "Game soundtracks need tons of variety – intense action music, atmospheric exploration tracks, emotional moments. Think about how players will feel at different moments and write to those moods."

Smart Submission Tips

- **Embed your contact info** in every digital file (metadata)
- **Ask how they want to receive music** – some prefer links, others use Dropbox or YouSendIt
- **Be ready to describe your song** – tempo, style, mood, instruments, similar artists, lyric themes
- **Have multiple songs ready** – success often comes from having lots of material out there

What Will You Get Paid?

Two types of licenses are needed:

1. **Sync license** – permission to use the song itself (paid to publisher/songwriter)
2. **Master use license** – permission to use that specific recording (paid to recording owner)

If you control both, you keep both fees!

Performance royalties also get paid when shows air. How much depends on the network (bigger networks pay more), how long your song played, and when it aired.

Movies playing in theaters only pay performance royalties outside the U.S., but when they later air on TV, the soundtrack songs earn royalties then.

The Bottom Line

Placing music in TV, film, and video games takes work, but it's absolutely achievable. Focus on creating great, well-recorded songs with universal themes. Build relationships. Get your music into multiple libraries. And be patient – this is a marathon, not a sprint.

Every time you watch your favorite show, remember: those background songs came from real songwriters just like you. Why not let the next one be yours?

Good luck with your placements!

From Sneaking Backstage to Running the Room — A Blueprint for the Independent Artist



You see a spaceship land and spend over an hour staring in awe at a barely-believable being from a distant planet. It’s bound to have an impact, right?

For Jonathan Azu, that moment wasn’t science fiction. It was real life.

In 1997, Azu was a college student at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa, with a shattered athletic career and no sense of direction. Then he saw **George Clinton and Parliament-Funkadelic** lower their legendary Mothership from the lighting rig. The experience was a revelation.

“It blew my mind,” Azu recalls. “They had the Mothership dropping from the lighting rig, and I’m thinking to myself, ‘This is what I want to do with my life!’ I don’t know how I’m explaining it to my parents; they’re probably going to think I want to be an astronaut, but I want to be in this business.”

Instead of just dreaming, **he took action**. He snuck backstage, tracked down the show's producer, and got their phone number. A year later, as a sophomore, he produced his first concert — a George Clinton show at his own school.

That one, bold act of initiative set off a chain reaction that would redefine his life. It's a lesson for every independent artist reading this: **Your biggest break often starts with one fearless move.**

Full Circle: From a College Contract to an Industry Giant

That boldness paid off again in his junior year. Azu produced a Dave Matthews concert, and the contract was signed by none other than **Coran Capshaw** — the legendary founder of Red Light Management and the mastermind behind the Dave Matthews Band's meteoric rise.

Azu kept that contract. Years later, after climbing the corporate ladder at CBS Radio, Superfly (co-creators of Bonnaroo), and eventually becoming an executive at Red Light Management itself, he looked back and saw a full-circle moment. He had gone from a college promoter needing Capshaw's signature to a trusted leader working within his organization.

For an independent artist, this is a powerful reminder: **The relationships you build today — even the seemingly small ones — can become the foundations of your future.**

The "Secret" to Longevity: Own the Room

Jonathan Azu's career is a testament to perseverance, but his mindset reveals the real secret to "making it" as an independent artist. Today, he is the founder and CEO of Culture Collective, an artist management company representing Grammy-winners like **Leon Thomas, Jon Batiste, and Michelle Williams**. He's also been named a *Billboard* 40 Under 40 honoree and a Pollstar Impact 50 honoree.

But his success isn't just about the trophies. It's about his philosophy. When asked what a manager does today, Azu says, "You're really just sitting at the table with the artist." More importantly, he emphasizes the power of presence. As a person of color, he knew it wasn't enough just to be in the room — "I had to help open the door wider for others."

His mission with Culture Collective isn't just to build a successful company, "but to serve as an example of what diversification in ownership can look like in music."

That's a crucial lesson for indie artists: **Don't just wait for a seat at the table. Build your own table.**

Perseverance Through Setbacks

Jonathan Azu's journey is far from a straight line to the top. He started with a career-ending injury, faced countless rejections, and had to forge a path where none existed. That's the reality for every independent artist. **The music industry is a marathon, not a sprint, and resilience is your greatest asset.**

Azu's approach reflects a broader truth. As one artist put it, "I was surrounded by chaos and uncertainty… but those experiences taught me resilience. I learned to fight for what I wanted."

Others have echoed this. Le John, a 22-year-old independent artist, is building a career with "no manager, no major label, and no industry machine to prop him up. Just songs…" Similarly, Casey Lowery was told by **seven major record labels** he couldn't make it without their help. He defied them, retained creative control, and is now on the path to chart success.

These stories — Azu's included — share a common thread: **Success comes to those who persist, adapt, and believe in their own vision, even when the industry tells them no.**

How You Can Start Your Journey — With ISSA

Jonathan Azu's story proves that you don't need a major label deal or a massive budget to change your life. You just need **vision, perseverance, and the right community.**

That's where the **International Singer Songwriters Association (ISSA)** comes in. We're here to help you build your own full-circle moment.

ISSA is your launchpad:

- **Global Connections:** ISSA is a worldwide family of thousands of independent artists who support one another every day. Our private member directory is designed for collaboration and exposure.
- **Real Recognition:** Get access to our annual awards show, monthly featured artist opportunities, media exposure, and even Grammy recommendation eligibility.
- **Career-Building Resources:** Pitch for sync placements, get your music played on hundreds of approved radio stations, and use our free promotion, support, and management tools.
- **No Barriers:** ISSA will always be a **FREE** platform for singer-songwriters and musicians worldwide. There is never a fee to join.

"Independent Doesn't Mean Alone." That's our mantra.

Your Mothership Moment is Waiting

Jonathan Azu saw a spaceship land, and he decided to build his career around that feeling. Your own Mothership moment could be just around the corner — but it won't find you while you wait.

Your action plan:

1. **Join ISSA today** *(if you haven't already)*— for free — and start building your network.
2. **Take one bold step** this week: reach out to a venue, submit your music, or start that project you've been putting off.
3. **Attend the ISSA Awards Show & Summit** - There's no better place to network and learn.
4. **Remember Azu's story** every time you face a setback. Perseverance isn't just about waiting — it's about taking action, again and again.

The Mothership has landed. **What will you do next?**

The Rick Spins Show News



Why You Should Be Sending Your Music to Internet Radio (Especially ISSA Radio & The Rick Spins Show)

Hey indie artist, let's talk about a simple truth.

For decades, mainstream radio was the only game in town. But unless you had a major label behind you, getting played was nearly impossible. Today, that wall has crumbled.

Internet radio shows and podcasts are now the real discovery engines for fresh, authentic music. Unlike corporate stations with tight playlists, independent online hosts play what they *love*—not what they're told. They care about your talent, your story, and your originality.

So what does this mean for you? It means you don't need permission from a big gatekeeper anymore. What you need is to get your music into the hands (and ears) of the right internet radio stations.

And there are two fantastic opportunities waiting for you right now within the ISSA family.

Opportunity 1: ISSA Radio – 24/7 & Commercial Free

ISSA Radio is an around-the-clock internet radio station that plays ISSA artists non-stop. No commercials. No corporate playlists. Just real music from real singer-songwriters like you.

Why submit here?

Because your song could be heard at any hour of the day or night by listeners who are actively seeking new indie talent. It's a permanent, living, breathing showcase for your work.

How to submit to ISSA Radio (24/7 channel):
Send your music to **ISSARadiosubmissions@gmail.com**
*Make sure your files are properly **meta-tagged** (artist name, song title, album art, genre, etc.). This helps the station play you correctly and gives you credit.*

Opportunity 2: The Rick Spins Show – Exclusive to ISSA Radio

The Rick Spins Show is hosted by legendary radio personality **Rick Landstrom**. This show is *only* on ISSA Radio, and it's a very special opportunity.

Rick brings two live shows every week:

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

On either show, Rick does something that corporate DJs never do: he tells stories. He shares stories about his life, about artists, and about the backstory behind your music. He mixes those stories right in with the songs. It feels like hanging out with a friend who really *gets* music.

And then there's the Chat Room.
Rick has a loyal group of chat room followers who tune in live every show. Anyone is welcome to join the chat – and once you do, you quickly become a regular. Rick banters with the chat room during the show, answers questions, and makes everyone feel like family. As an artist, getting your song played while Rick talks about you to a live, engaged audience? That's pure gold.

How to submit to The Rick Spins Show:
Send your music to **issaradio.rick@gmail.com**
*Again, please properly **meta-tag** your files. It makes Rick's job easier and ensures your music sounds its best on air.*

⚠️ Very Important – Two Different Email Addresses

Please read this carefully:

- Music sent to **ISSARadiosubmissions@gmail.com** goes to the **24/7 ISSA Radio station** only. It does **not** go to The Rick Spins Show.
- Music sent to **issaradio.rick@gmail.com** goes to **The Rick Spins Show** only. It does **not** go to the main ISSA Radio channel.

If you want your music to be considered for **both** – and we hope you do – you must send it **separately to each email address**. And both submissions need proper meta-tagging.

Final Word to You - the Indie Artist

Internet radio is no longer a side note. It's a thriving grassroots movement that champions creativity and gives overlooked artists a platform. ISSA Radio and The Rick Spins Show are right at the heart of that movement.

So don't wait for a major label to call. Tag your files, write those emails, and send your music today. Your next big fan might be listening to ISSA Radio at 3am, or chatting with Rick live on a Monday night.

The door is open. Walk through it.

Have you checked out the ISSA Store lately? There are a lot of cool new items, including:



Embroidered 2026 Summit Cap



ISSA Awards 2026 Tee Shirt



2026 ISSA Summit Tee Shirt

Make sure to go to the ISSA Store and add a few other these to your wardrobe. Just click on the link below and pick out something for yourself or your loved ones.

https://issasongwriters.com/store/



The Summit Artist Spotlight for April - Rich Allen

New Album Release: The Ghost We Keep An Introspective Odyssey into the Human Soul

We are honored to introduce “The Ghost We Keep”, an album that transcends mere musical expression to become a philosophical exploration of our innermost existence.



Releasing on May 1st, this collection of profound songs invites us to contemplate the delicate dance between memory and oblivion, love and loss, pride and humility—illuminating the invisible threads that weave the fabric of our being.

A Reflection on the Human Condition

The Ghost We Keep is not simply a collection of melodies; it is an invitation to peer into the depths of our consciousness and confront the shadows that reside within. Each song acts as a mirror, reflecting the silent whispers of our internal struggles, unspoken hopes, and the eternal quest for truth amid the illusions of life. It beckons us to consider the nature of identity, the impermanence of experience, and the ghosts—both literal and metaphorical—that haunt our journey toward understanding.

Meet the Architect of This Reflection: Rich Allen

At the core of this contemplative voyage is Rich Allen, a musician whose artistry is rooted in sincerity and philosophical inquiry. Originally from New Jersey, now residing amidst the tranquil waters of Tampa’s Davis Islands, Rich’s self-taught mastery of piano and guitar became tools not just for creation but for exploration—an ongoing search for meaning through music.

Rich’s involvement with esteemed songwriting communities, his leadership in “Indie Resonance Voice”,and his acclaimed discography, including the recent “Thursday Child”—are all expressions of his relentless pursuit to uncover the truth behind the human experience. His recognition as Sliver Songwriter of the Year and his openness about mental health struggles further underscore his commitment to authentic exploration and compassionate connection.

A Journey Through the Shadows - Shadows and Stones begins this philosophical odyssey with an invocation to the silent witnesses of history—the stones beneath our feet that silently record stories of resilience, pain, and wisdom. These stones symbolize the collective memory of humanity—immutable yet mutable—reminding us that our histories are not static; they are living forces shaping our consciousness.

The History of Yesterday deepens this reflection, contemplating the cyclical nature of time and the impermanence of love and pain. Like the seasons, our passions bloom and fade, yet within this transience lies the infinite—the eternal imprint of our choices, mistakes, and memories. It challenges us to see life not as a linear path but as a fluid dialogue between past and present, urging humility and awareness of the interconnectedness of all moments.

Foolish Pride confronts the ego's illusion, exposing how pride distorts perception and blinds us to the profound truths of our existence. Through visceral imagery, it questions whether life is a waking nightmare or a dreaming illusion—an inquiry into reality's very fabric. It reminds us that humility, the acknowledgment of our fallibility, is essential for authentic growth and genuine connection.

Facing the Ghost explores the roots of loss and the inevitable decay of what once seemed eternal. The imagery of seasons changing and landscapes fading prompts us to question whether our longing for permanence is an illusion—a projection of the mind—yet also a universal truth: our internal landscape is forever haunted by memories, love, and longing.

You Kept My Name examines the paradox of attachment—holding onto love's remnants as a way to preserve identity amid the flux of existence. The act of keeping a name becomes a metaphor for the human desire to anchor ourselves amidst the chaos of change, revealing how memory and identity intertwine in the silent language of the soul.

A Little Bruised celebrates vulnerability—a recognition that scars are not signs of weakness but symbols of resilience. In embracing our wounds, we accept the impermanence of life and the necessity of pain as part of the evolutionary process of the soul.

The Ghost We Keep confronts the spectral remnants of regret, unspoken truths, and unresolved longing. These ghosts embody the parts of ourselves that resist dissolution, whispering of lessons unlearned and truths unspoken. The song asks whether true peace lies in acceptance or suppression—the philosophical inquiry into integrating our shadow selves.

Proper Goodbye underscores the importance of grace in the act of release. It recognizes that some partings require a sacred act of acknowledgment—an acceptance of impermanence and the dignity of closure. In surrendering what once was, we find the space for new beginnings—an essential step in the ongoing cycle of rebirth.

An Invitation to Philosophical Reflection

The Ghost We Keep is more than an album; it is a meditation on the human condition—a call to embrace life's paradoxes, confront our inner ghosts, and find humility in the face of impermanence. It challenges us to question the constructs of identity, the illusions of permanence, and the true nature of love and loss.

Rich Allen's artistry invites us to consider that our greatest strength lies not in resistance but in acceptance—the willingness to face our wounds, honor our history, and surrender pride. In doing so, we discover that resilience is born from humility, and wholeness emerges through acknowledgment of our shadows.

Join me on this contemplative journey, because the path to understanding begins within. In listening to the ghosts we keep, we may find the wisdom to live more fully, love more deeply, and walk more peacefully amidst life's fleeting, beautiful mystery.

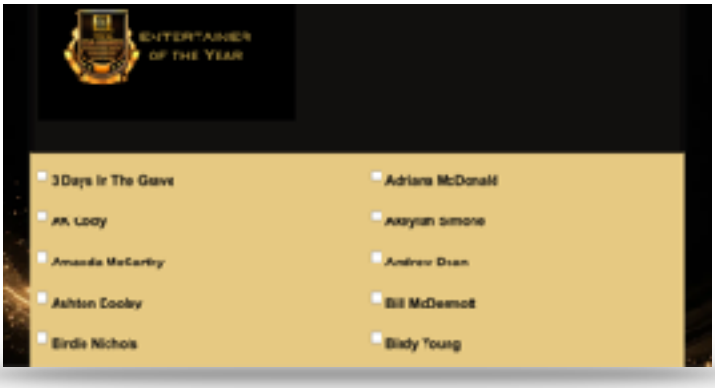
Rich Allen is an award winning Singer / Songwriter from Tampa, Florida.
Rich is the ISSA Florida State Representative.
You can find out more about Rich on his website, https://richallenmusic.com/



Don't Forget To Vote Daily!

https://issasongwriters.com/2026-vote/







2026 Summit Information

Earlier in this newsletter, we revealed the Speakers and their topics for this years Summit. We've been asked by 2 of the speakers (Linda Marks & Alan Garmonsway) to include the following requests for help with their Summit Sessions.

Mentoring At The 2026 ISSA Summit
by Linda Marks (**lsmheart@aol.com**)

One of the great gifts in a community of singer songwriters like ours is the abundance of skills and experience we bring individually and collectively. Being a singer songwriter is often a solitary experience, with so many aspects to our work it often feels overwhelming. No matter where we are in our music careers, having an opportunity to talk about skills, tools, experiences and to receive feedback from our fellow singer songwriters can be both supportive and helpful.

This year, we are building a mentoring segment into the ISSA Summit. In addition to a formal presentation on mentoring on Thursday afternoon, we will be creating opportunities for 1-on-1 mentoring sessions. In each session, one ISSA community member mentors another. We encourage you to be both a mentor and to be mentored. **Sessions like this are what the International Singer Songwriters Association (ISSA) and the Summit are all about—helping others and learning from one another.**

In order to build this program, we need YOU to let us know if you would like to mentor and if you would like to be mentored.

Examples of topics you might wish to mentor or be mentored in include (but are not limited to):
*. Songwriting methods and techniques
*. Strategies for recording and releasing music
*. Arranging music
*. Feedback on songs in process
*. Best practices for social media marketing
*. Synch licensing
*. Booking gigs

*. Developing your brand
*. DIY recording
*. Self-care and mental health
*. Balancing your music career with family responsibilities
*. Awards contents
*. How, why and when to seek nomination to become a Voting Member of the Recording Academy
*. Promoting to radio

And if you would like to be mentored, we need to know what topics you would like to learn more about.

To apply to BE MENTORED or BE A MENTOR, please write to me at lsmheart@aol.com and tell me:

- If you want to be mentored, mentor or both?
- What topics are you interested in discussing as a mentor or as a mentee?
- Which days will you be at the ISSA Summit and Awards Show? (Thursday? Friday? Saturday?)

Please be sure to get your responses in by June 1st so I have time to put the session details together.

We hope many of you will choose to take advantage of the opportunity to learn from one another while in Atlanta.

Be a Judge on the Stage! Join our Summit Panel 🎶

By: Alan Garmonsway (**alan@garmonsway.com**)

We're looking for a few Gold Winners to join Alan Garmonsway for a special panel at the 2026 ISSA Summit on Friday, August 21.

This session is all about sharing your experience with the audience. It's a chance to discuss the art of judging: **what you look for** in a winning song, how you compare entries across genres, and the fun challenges that come with the role.

It will be a lively, insightful discussion (with a touch of humor!) leading into the Awards Ceremony.

Interested in being on the panel? Contact me soon! We want to ensure the panel represents the full diversity of our incredible ISSA community.

The Summit Is Free. Keeping It That Way Isn't. Here's How You Help.



Hello ISSA Family,

This month, we've packed this newsletter with value. Tips on mobilizing your fans to vote. Breaking industry news. Insider advice on sync licensing submissions and radio pitching. A fresh look at the Summit Speakers. Even a guide to Search Engine Optimization so your music gets *found*.

We give you all of this—every single month—because we believe in you. We believe education and opportunity should never have a price tag.

And that brings us to August. The ISSA Awards Summit at the Courtyard by Marriott in Atlanta. A professional, inspiring, career-changing event... completely free for you to attend.

But here is the honest truth we didn't want to say last month: **free isn't sustainable alone.**

Last month, we asked for your help. The response was... quiet. And because we love this community, we're not giving up. We're getting louder.

The Clock is Ticking on August

The Conference Room is booked. The dates are set. The speakers are confirmed. But right now, the gap between "possible" and "real" is simply... help. The kind of help we've been asking for over the past several months.

We can't carry this weight alone anymore. Not if we want this Summit to happen *this* August. And not if we want it to grow for years to come.

Here is what "help" actually looks like (and why it helps YOU):

By chipping in, you aren't just saving an event. You are saving a resource that belongs to all of us.

- **Connect us with a sponsor.** That local guitar shop, recording studio, or merch printer? An introduction from you is stronger than any cold email we send. Their support covers the venue. The tech. The coffee. The things that make "free" possible.
- **Send us a speaker.** Know a producer, publisher, or mentor you'd love to learn from? Send us their name. Help us build the education *you* want to receive.
- **Say "I'll help behind the scenes."** One person saying "put me to work" changes everything.

Why you? Why now?

Because this month's newsletter wasn't just tips and news. It was proof. Proof of what ISSA does for *you* every single day. We help you get those votes. We help you get heard. We help you get smarter about your career.

Now we are asking you to help the thing that makes all of that possible: T**he Summit.**

When you step up, you aren't just helping ISSA. You are helping the artist sitting next to you in Atlanta. You are helping the songwriter who can't afford a $500 conference fee. And yes—you are helping yourself. Because a strong Summit means a stronger network, better connections, and a community that refuses to let the lights go out.

We need your "yes" now.

Not next month. Not “maybe". This week.

Reply to this newsletter. Send us a name. A business. An offer to volunteer. Even just an **"I'm in—tell me where you need me most."**

Let's stop hoping the Summit magically happens. Let's make it happen. Together.

With gratitude, urgency, and absolute belief in this family,

The ISSA Summit Planning Team

P.S. We've given you the tools all year. Now we need you to pick up one for us. The stage is waiting in Atlanta. Let's fill it—together.

This Newsletter is edited by Todd Apfel (issasongwriters.todd@gmail.com) & Angela Marie Eidenmiller (issasongwriters.angela@gmail.com) Feel free to reach out to either of us with your comments or suggestions.