Rock Dog News
ROCK DOG MUSIC FOUNDATION
A Monthly Newsletter From Rock Dog Music Foundation

What Are Your Goals? (And Do You Actually Have a Plan?)



Ask almost any independent artist what their goal is, and you'll usually get a variation of the same few answers:

"I want to make it big."
"I want a hit song."
"I want to sign a record deal."
"I want to play the Grand Ole Opry."

And those are great dreams. They are the fuel that keeps you writing at 2 a.m. and loading gear into a venue at 4 p.m.

But here is the hard question I want to ask you this month: **Do you have a plan?**

Not a wish list. Not a vision board. A real, actionable plan.

If you want to play the Opry, how do you plan on getting there? What is your plan for next year? What are you doing for the next five years? Where do you want to be in ten?

From what I've seen across the indie music landscape, the vast majority of artists don't have a 1-year, 5-year, or 10-year plan. They have a dream, and they have a guitar. And they're hoping the two will magically collide.

I get it. Planning isn’t fun. It doesn't feel as creative as writing a new song. But treating your music like a business isn't selling out—**it's how you survive long enough to keep making music.**

Let’s break down what a realistic roadmap actually looks like.

Year 1: The Foundation

Your first year shouldn't be about getting a Grammy. It should be about getting organized. If your goal is to be a full-time musician, your Year 1 goal might be:

- **Release consistently:** Instead of waiting three years for a full album, release a single or an EP and build the habit of releasing music.
- **Define your brand:** Who are you? What is your sound? (This is where building that EPK we talked about last month comes in).
- **Play 20 gigs:** Not necessarily *paying* gigs, but gigs that build your local audience.
- **Build a list:** Start collecting email addresses. Algorithms change, but your mailing list is yours forever.

Year 5: The Momentum

By year five, the training wheels should be off. If you’ve done the work in Year 1, Year 5 might look like this:

- **Regional Expansion:** You’re no longer just playing your hometown; you’re booking weekend runs in neighboring cities.
- **A Team:** You might have hired a part-time manager, a publicist for a specific release, or a booking agent.
- **Sustainability:** Your music income covers a significant portion of your living expenses (or at least funds its own recording and touring costs).
- **Sync Placements:** You’re actively pitching your music for TV, film, and ads.

Year 10: The Sustainability

This is where the dream starts to become the reality. A 10-year plan isn't about being an overnight sensation; it's about being a *working* artist.

- **Full-Time Independence:** You are making a living solely from your music.
- **Ownership:** You own your masters and your publishing. (If you took a deal, you knew exactly what you were signing).
- **Legacy:** You have a loyal fanbase that buys your merch, streams your music, and shows up when you come to town.

The Secret to Making It Work: Reverse Engineering

Here is the trick to achieving a 10-year goal: **You have to reverse engineer it.**

If your 10-year goal is to play the Opry, what does your 5-year goal need to be? (Maybe: having a regional hit and a manager).
If that’s your 5-year goal, what does your 1-year goal need to be? (Maybe: releasing a standout single and playing 30 regional shows).
If that’s your 1-year goal, what does *this month* look like? (Maybe: writing your goals down and booking your next three gigs).

If you don't break the big dream down into bite-sized, daily actions, the dream will always just be a dream.

Write It Down

So, I’m giving you homework this month. Take an hour—just one hour this week—and sit down with a pen and paper (or your laptop).

Write down where you want to be in 1 year, 5 years, and 10 years. Then, write down *three things* you can do this month to get closer to the 1-year goal.

(And hey, if you're staring at a blank page and don't know where to start, check out our feature this month: "Don't Fear AI, Learn It."

A prompt like, *"Act as a music career consultant and help me build a 1-year and 5-year plan based on my genre and current fanbase"* is a great way to get the ideas flowing.)

You have the talent. You have the drive. Now, let's get you the plan.

Stop waiting for the phone to ring. Stop waiting to "make it." Make a plan, and go make it happen.

Home Recording Studio Series: Part 1 — What You Actually Need



Your Room, Your Record (Part 1 of a Series)

Every independent artist eventually faces the same wall: **studio time is expensive**, the clock is always running, and the pressure to "get it right" in four hours can turn a creative session into a stress test.

Here's the truth most working musicians figure out too late: **you probably already own most of what you need to record at home.** And every dollar you don't spend on hourly studio rates is a dollar you can put back into your own setup—better mics, better monitors, better treatment, better everything.

You don't have to build a professional studio overnight. You build it one piece at a time. And that's exactly what this series is about.

This month, we're giving you the overview: **the gear, the room, and the realistic expectations.** In the months ahead, we'll take each piece apart in detail so you can make smart choices for your budget and your music.

The Short List: What You Actually Need

You can spend a fortune on a home studio. You do not need to. Here's the core:

1. A computer that can handle it.

This is your backbone. PC or Mac, desktop or laptop—both work. What matters is that it meets the **minimum requirements for your recording software**. Desktops are generally more efficient for running multiple tracks and plugins; laptops work great for smaller setups and are obviously more portable.

2. A DAW (Digital Audio Workstation).

This is the software you record, edit, and mix in. Popular choices include **Pro Tools, Logic Pro (Mac), and Ableton Live**. But here's the good news for beginners: **GarageBand is free on Mac**, and many DAWs offer free or entry-level tiers. You do not need to buy the most expensive software on day one.

3. An audio interface.

This is the piece that connects your microphones and instruments to your computer, converting analog signals into digital audio. It's essential for **high-quality recordings and low-latency monitoring**—meaning you can hear yourself in real time without an annoying delay.

4. Microphones.

A **condenser mic** is ideal for vocals; **dynamic mics** are great for instruments and loud sources. Don't forget the supporting cast: **mic stands and pop filters** make a bigger difference than most people expect.

5. Monitors or headphones.

You need to hear what you're actually recording. **Nearfield studio monitors** and **closed-back headphones** help you hear detail without interference. (And yes—mixing on earbuds is why your low end disappears in the car.)

6. Cables and accessories.

XLR cables, instrument cables, and mic stands. Unglamorous, absolutely necessary.

7. A MIDI keyboard or controller.

If you plan to use virtual instruments or compose digitally, this is highly recommended. Even a small 25-key controller opens up a lot of possibilities.

8. Acoustic treatment.

This is the most overlooked piece—and often the most important. **Bass traps, diffusers, and absorptive panels** reduce reflections and dramatically improve what you capture. You can spend a lot here, but you don't have to start there.

9. Storage and backup.

Audio projects are big. **External hard drives or cloud storage** keep your work safe. Back up twice. You'll thank yourself later.

Optional (But Nice to Have)

- **A mixing console** for hands-on control
- **Additional microphones** for recording multiple instruments at once
- **Pop filters, shock mounts, and isolation shields** to tighten up your vocal recordings

The Room Matters More Than You Think

You can own great gear and still get mediocre recordings if the room fights you.

Choose a quiet, rectangular room with minimal external noise. Keep the **listening triangle** between your monitors and your position open and unobstructed. Avoid clutter that interferes with sound reflections.

A note on room shape: **rectangular rooms with solid walls are ideal. Square rooms** and rooms with **lots of glass** will need extra treatment—sometimes significantly more.

And if you're recording at high volumes, **check your local noise ordinances.** Your neighbors will thank you, and so will your lease.

What's Coming in This Series

This is the roadmap. Each month, we'll go deep on one piece of the puzzle:

- **Part 2: Choosing Your DAW** — what to look for, what you don't need to pay for, and which one fits your workflow
- **Part 3: Audio Interfaces** — how many inputs you actually need, and why specs aren't everything
- **Part 4: Microphones** — condenser vs. dynamic, and how to get great vocals in a small room
- **Part 5: Monitors and Headphones** — what "flat response" actually means, and how to mix in a room that isn't perfect
- **Part 6: Acoustic Treatment on a Budget** — what actually works, what's overpriced, and the DIY options that hold up
- **Part 7: MIDI and Virtual Instruments** — building arrangements without a full band
- **Part 8: Storage, Backup, and Not Losing Your Recordings** — the boring stuff that saves careers

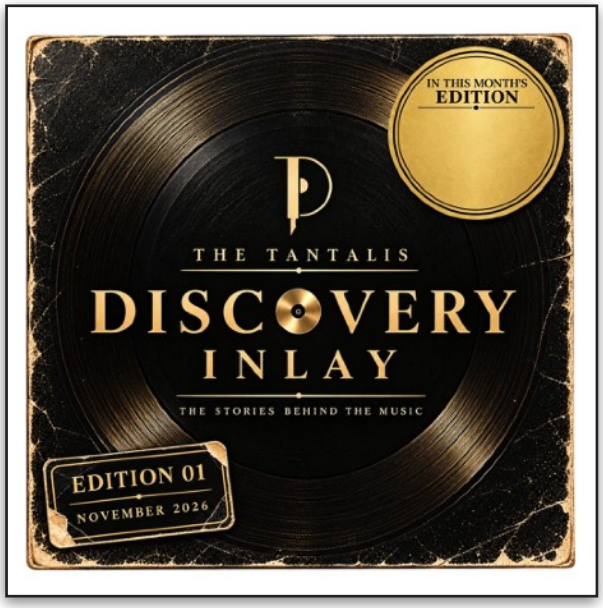
The Bottom Line

You don't need a record label to make a record. You need a room, a computer, and a willingness to learn.

Start with what you have. Add one piece at a time. Treat your room before you upgrade your mics. And remember why you're doing this: every hour you record at home is an hour you're not watching the clock—or the invoice.

In the months ahead, we'll help you build the studio that fits your music and your budget. Because the best studio isn't the most expensive one. It's the one you actually use.

Tantalis Music Awards



Last month, we introduced you to the Tantalis Music Awards—a platform built on the principle of judging music for artistry, not algorithms. Now, Tantalis is expanding its commitment to independent artists with the launch of a new monthly publication: **The Tantalis Discovery Inlay**.

The *Inlay* is designed as a companion piece to Tantalis Discovery, the organization's year-round editorial programme. Its mission is straightforward: to give Discovery artists a dedicated, recurring platform to share their stories, their music, and their creative journeys.

What to Expect Each Month

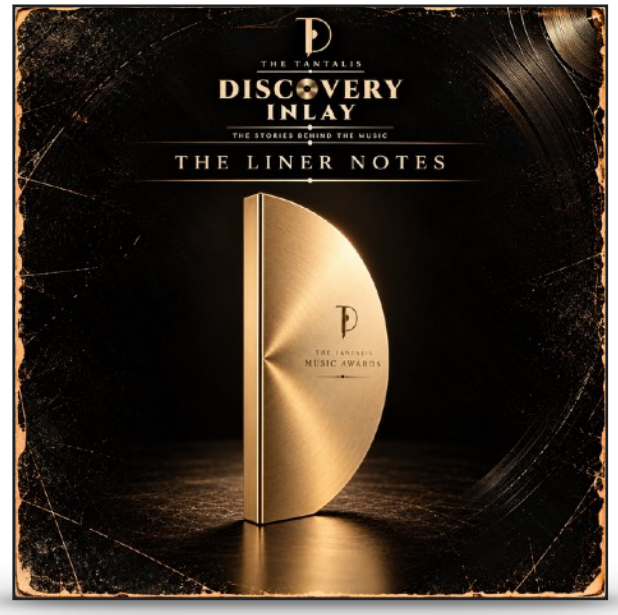
The *Inlay* will follow a consistent structure, offering readers a mix of features and ongoing resources:

- **Artist Spotlights:** Each issue will focus on the **four artists** who were showcased in Tantalis Discovery during the previous month. These features will include Q&As with the artists, along with links to their music and profiles. The editorial approach is deliberately forward-looking—the goal is to introduce these artists to a wider audience and highlight what's next for them, rather than simply recounting past accomplishments.
- **The Liner Notes:** A recurring section described as an "endless list of releases from all Discovery artists." This will serve as a living, evolving directory of new music from the Tantalis community, making it easier for listeners and industry professionals to discover fresh releases.

A Lifetime Commitment

Perhaps the most significant aspect of the *Inlay* is its framing as a **"lifetime commitment"** for all Discovery artists. This suggests that Tantalis intends to maintain an ongoing, long-term relationship with the artists it features—continuing to spotlight their work and provide promotional support well beyond a single feature.

For independent artists, this represents a meaningful departure from the ephemeral nature of much online coverage. It signals a sustained investment in their artistic trajectory.



Why It Matters

The *Tantalis Discovery Inlay* is more than just another newsletter. It is a structured effort to build a lasting archive and community around independent music. By committing to monthly features and an evolving release list, Tantalis is creating a resource that serves both artists—who gain consistent exposure—and listeners—who gain a reliable source for discovering new talent.

We look forward to seeing the first issue and will continue to follow Tantalis as it develops this new channel for independent artists.

Artist Spotlight: Jak Fiddler – A Bearded Voice with Bluegrass Roots and a Rock & Roll Heart



Some artists spend years searching for their sound. Jak Fiddler was born into his.

The grandson of Bluegrass Hall of Fame member Josh Graves—the legendary dobro player who helped revolutionize the instrument's role in bluegrass—Jak grew up surrounded by music. Honky-tonks, bars, bluegrass festivals, and recording studios were his playground. "My grandfather would take me to recording studios, bars, and festivals with him," Jak recalls. "It was exciting to see how he shared his music and interacted with people."

That immersion left a mark. Jak was on stage singing at just four years old. By ten, he had written his first song—a song he still carries a copy of in his pocket to this day, a reminder of where he started and how far he's come.

Finding His Own Voice

For years, Jak played in bands, usually on lead guitar. But something was missing. "It always seemed to end no matter how good it seemed," he says. Then, in 2018, his wife Amanda asked him a question that changed everything: *"Why are you still playing for other people? You are a frontman, you need to share your music."*

That was the catalyst. Jak stepped out on his own, determined to find his sound and his voice—and to never compromise on either. "I chose not to be like everyone else," he says. "I stepped out unapologetically as myself, for better or worse. The person you see on stage, on social media, and in public is the same person I am in private with my family and friends."



A Work Ethic Like No Other

What sets Jak apart isn't just his sound—it's his hustle. In his first year as a solo artist, he played over **200 shows while working a full-time job**. "I would play anywhere, anytime," he says. "People started to see me everywhere. I wouldn't turn down the opportunity to perform my music."

His dedication has paid off. His album **"Darkness"** (released October 31, 2024) surpassed 100,000 streams online and earned him **Album of the Year – Bronze** at the 2025 International Singer-Songwriters Association (ISSA) Awards in Atlanta. He also took home **Breakout Artist of the Year** at the Elite Music Awards and was nominated for **Americana Artist of the Year** at the Josie Music Awards.

The Journey of "Requiem"

Not one to rest on his laurels, Jak returned from the ISSA Awards and immediately began work on his next project. The result is **"Requiem,"** an album he describes as a journey through loss, heartbreak, and ultimately victory. "The title comes from the Latin word for rest," he explains. "In musical terms, it is a grand concert work to honor the dead. I took that influence and decided that, for me, it would be the ultimate Jak Fiddler album."



The album has already opened doors—including a **Grammy Award opportunity**—and solidified Jak's reputation as an artist who refuses to be boxed in. "When people try to describe my style, they cannot put me in a genre box," he says. "It has been best described as ‘music."

What's Next

Jak isn't slowing down. He has a **Halloween release** planned—a song born from a friend's offhand comment that "no one writes Halloween songs." (Jak went home that night and wrote one.) He's also working on a follow-up album to *Requiem*, diving even deeper into the darker themes he loves.

One song on the new project is particularly close to his heart: a **PSA for suicide prevention**. He hopes to partner with nonprofits to spread the message that "we are not alone and there are genuinely people who care."

As for goals, Jak admits he's never been one to plan too far ahead. But recently, he's set a few. "I really want a Grammy," he says. "My grandfather had one, and I think it would be super cool to add to my accomplishments. It would also be cool to play the Opry." Beyond that, his focus is simple: "I really just want my songs to resonate with people and we can bond over these shared experiences through music."

A People Person First

Ask Jak what his greatest strength is, and he won't say guitar playing or songwriting. "My ability to connect with people," he says. "I write songs from the heart hoping they will relate with someone. My grandfather taught me to be a people person. You'll never catch me in a green room waiting to perform—I'll be out introducing myself to people trying to connect."



That authenticity is the thread that runs through everything he does. Whether he's telling stories over melodies, blending his bluegrass roots with blues and rock & roll, or inviting an audience to take a musical journey with him, Jak Fiddler is exactly who he appears to be: a real person, writing real songs, and working harder than just about anyone else in the room.

Stay Connected

Follow Jak Fiddler and the Jak Fiddler Band online:

- 🌐 **Website:** www.jakfiddler.com
- 📸 **Instagram:** @jakfiddler
- 🎵 **TikTok:** @jakfiddlerband
- ▶️ **YouTube:** @jakfiddlerband
- 🔗 **All Links:** linktr.ee/JakFiddler

Jak Fiddler – bluegrass bloodlines, a rock & roll heart, and a voice that refuses to fit in a box. We're proud to shine this month's spotlight on him.

Booking Venues 201: The EPK (Electronic Press Kit) That Gets You Booked



The Booking Series (Part 2)

Last month in "Booking Venues 101," we laid down a hard truth: **the phone isn't going to ring if you're not out there knocking on doors.**

But here's the follow-up truth. When you *do* knock on that door—when you send that cold email to a venue, slide into a talent buyer's DMs, or walk into a club to introduce yourself—you need to be ready to hand them your resume.

In the music business, that resume is called an **EPK: an Electronic Press Kit.**

If a venue has to hunt through your Facebook page to figure out what genre you play, or if they have to ask you to email them a photo, you've already lost. A busy talent buyer isn't going to chase you. They are going to move on to the next artist who made their job easy.

What is an EPK, Really?

Think of an EPK as your digital portfolio. It’s a single link (usually on your website, or hosted via a service like Bandzoogle or Wix) that contains everything a venue, a promoter, or a festival needs to know about you in one place.

It is not a Facebook page. It is not a Dropbox folder. It is a clean, professional, easy-to-navigate page.

The Non-Negotiables: What Must Be in Your EPK

If you want to get booked, your EPK must include these core elements:

1. A Killer Bio (Keep it Brief)

Don't write your life story. Write a compelling paragraph that tells them your genre, your vibe, your hometown, and what makes your live show special. If you've opened for a national act or played a major festival, put it here. **And if you're struggling to find the right words, this is a perfect time to try out AI as your assistant! Check out our main feature in this issue, "Don't Fear AI, Learn It," for tips on how to use AI to draft a bio that actually sounds like you.**

2. High-Resolution Photos

You need at least one great live shot (showing you performing) and one professional promo photo. Low-res cell phone pictures or blurry screenshots are an immediate red flag. You can even host a private link to a Dropbox folder with high-res images so press and venues can download them.

3. Music & Live Video

A venue wants to know three things: What do you sound like? How many people will you bring? What does your live show look like?

- Link to your best recorded music (Spotify, Apple Music, Bandcamp).
- **Crucial:** Include at least one video of you playing *live*. They don't want to hear your studio magic; they want to know what they are actually paying for on a Friday night.

4. Press & Testimonials (Social Proof)
If a local paper reviewed your album, or if another venue owner said you were great to work with, put it here. Quotes from other musicians or fans also work. This builds instant credibility.

5. Your Tech Rider and Stage Plot
This is the piece most indie artists forget. A venue needs to know if you are a solo acoustic act, a 3-piece, or a 7-piece band with a horn section. Include a simple list of what you need (microphones, DI boxes, monitors). *Note: For smaller venues, keep your technical requirements simple. Don't demand a grand piano if they have a keyboard.*

6. Contact Info & Socials
Make it obvious how to reach you. Include your booking email, phone number, and links to your social media.

The "Booker-Friendly" Extras

If you want to stand out, make sure your EPK is mobile-friendly. Most talent buyers are looking at your EPK on their phone while they are working the door or driving between venues.

Also, make sure your EPK features **upcoming dates**. If you have a show next month at a nearby venue, they can see that you are active and grinding.

The Golden Rule: The One Link

When you follow up on that cold email, or send a message to a venue, **send one link.** Do not send them six different links to Spotify, Instagram, YouTube, and your website. Send them *one* link to your EPK.

They click it, they see your photo, they hear your music, they read your tech needs, and they know exactly how to contact you. That is how you make it easy for them to say "yes."

Coming Next Month: The One Sheet

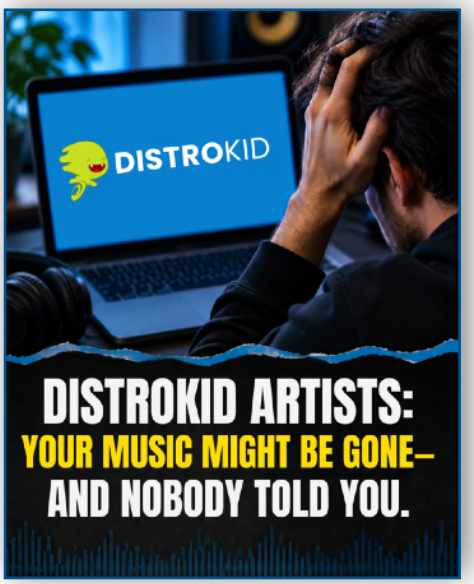
We know what you're thinking: *"What if I'm walking into a venue in person? I can't hand them a link."*

That's exactly where the **One Sheet** comes in.

Next month, we'll break down how to take all the best parts of your EPK and condense them into a single, powerful PDF page that you can print and hand to a venue manager on the spot. We'll also show you how to use a QR code to connect your physical One Sheet directly to your digital EPK—so they can listen to your music the second you walk out the door.

Until then, keep building your digital house. Stop making venues guess who you are. Make it easy for them to book you.

P.S. – If you have a booking success story (or a horror story), we'd love to hear it. Reply to this email and share your experience. You might just be featured in a future issue.



DistroKid's Silent Takedowns: What Happened, Who Got Hit, and What You Can Do

If you distribute your music through DistroKid, this is the most important thing you'll read this month.

On **September 15, 2026**, Universal Music Group—along with Capitol Records and Capitol CMG—filed a lawsuit against DistroKid in federal court in Delaware. The allegations: deceptive trade practices and copyright infringement, including distribution of unauthorized remixes and altered recordings, and what UMG describes as an **"AI slop pipeline"** that floods streaming platforms with mass-generated content and dilutes the royalty pool for genuine artists.

DistroKid's response was immediate: *"We strongly dispute the allegations underlying UMG's lawsuit and regret the disruption to affected artists"*.

Then the takedowns started.

What Actually Happened

On **October 10**, independent artists began posting on social media that their music had disappeared from streaming platforms—**no email, no warning, no explanation**. The next day, DistroKid confirmed to *The Verge* that the removals were a direct response to UMG's claims.

Amanda Ferri, DistroKid's VP of Artist Services, said **"a very small number of recordings"** had been removed and that the company was working to "minimize the disruption".

But the artists caught in the sweep tell a different story—and their accounts raise serious questions about how "small" this really was, and who exactly got caught.

The Artists Who Got Hit

McGwire, a musician who describes himself as a "Video Game boy," told *The Verge* that **six of his songs were removed**. He received no communication before or after. When he tried to find out why, he first had to endure what he called a **"lengthy circular conversation"** with a bot before reaching a human being.

The removed tracks included:

- A cover of Stevie Wonder's **"Isn't She Lovely"** that McGwire says he **properly licensed**
- A song built on a **beat he purchased through a marketplace**—one that had also been licensed to other artists
- A track flagged for an uncleared sample—**except the song he allegedly sampled was released two years *after* his own**

- **Insane Ian**, a nerdcore rapper, posted that he **“had an original song taken down with no warning, and they wouldn’t tell me why either”**.
- **King Chase told *The Verge* that an entire album by an artist he works with was removed with no communication. The album had been up for three to four years without a single copyright strike.**

Other artists have reported takedowns on **cleared samples where licensing fees were paid through DistroKid’s own platform**, public domain audio that is free to use, and even **100% acoustic recordings** with no third-party samples at all.

Music producer **Jesse Cannon** offered a blunt assessment: *“DistroKid gave up on customer service about two years ago.”* He said former employees told him the company sees customer service as *“a waste of profits since they have such a high market share”*.

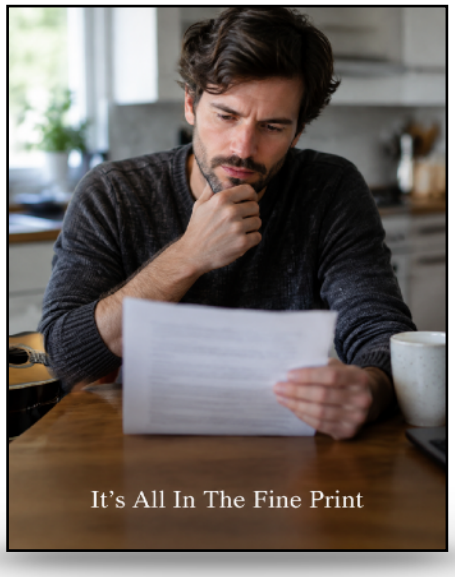
The Bigger Picture: This Isn’t Just About AI

UMG’s lawsuit is framed around AI-generated “slop”—mass-produced tracks flooding streaming services and stealing royalties from real artists. That’s a legitimate concern. The complaint expressly distinguishes its claims from **clearly disclosed AI-generated music**, focusing instead on **unauthorized remixes, sped-up versions, and altered recordings**.

But the takedowns are catching music that has **nothing to do with AI**.

That’s the part every independent artist should be paying attention to.

When a distributor responds to a major label lawsuit by **pulling first and asking questions later**, the artists who pay the price are the ones with the least power to fight back. A licensed cover gets caught. A legally purchased beat gets flagged. A four-year-old album disappears because an automated system said so—and the only recourse is a DMCA counter-notice and a **10-business-day wait**.



And this is happening while UMG and Sony are separately **subpoenaing DistroKid** for its monthly submission data and AI detection tools, arguing the company has "an outsized role in distributing AI-generated music." Between March and September 2026, DistroKid delivered nearly **12 million tracks** to a single major streaming service—more than half of all tracks delivered to that service, exceeding all other distributors combined.

The pressure on DistroKid is enormous. And when pressure goes up, the artists at the bottom of the chain feel it first.

What You Can Do Right Now

1. Check your catalog today

Log into DistroKid. Check your releases on Spotify, Apple Music, and every platform you distribute to. **Don't assume everything is where you left it.**

2. If something is missing, file a counter-notice

DistroKid's published guidance says artists who believe their content was removed "as a result of a misidentification or mistake" can submit a **DMCA-compliant counter-notice**. Once filed, DistroKid is obligated to wait **10 business days** before reinstating the content. It's not fast, and it's not fair—but it's the process available to you.

3. Document everything

Release dates. ISRC codes. License agreements for covers. Receipts for beat purchases. Screenshots of your dashboard. **If your music disappears, you need proof of ownership and authorization ready to go.**

4. Don't rely on a single distributor

This is a hard lesson, but an important one. Diversification isn't just good business—it's protection. If one pipeline gets shut down, you need another way to reach your audience.

5. Watch for updates

This story is moving. DistroKid's response to the lawsuit is now due **December 4, 2026**, with an initial court conference set for **November 13**. UMG and Sony's subpoenas are new, the lawsuit is ongoing, and DistroKid's response strategy may shift again. We'll be tracking it.

The Bottom Line

DistroKid built its business on being the easy, affordable way for independent artists to get music onto streaming platforms. That ease came with a trade-off: when things go wrong, there's often **no human to call**, **no warning** before your music vanishes, and **no clear path to a fix**.

UMG's lawsuit may be aimed at AI fraud. But the collateral damage is landing on real artists with real catalogs and real income on the line.

Check your music. Know your rights. And don't wait for an email that isn't coming.



Rock Dog Radio Network Goes Live!

We're excited to announce that the **Rock Dog Radio Network is officially live!** Broadcasting 24 hours a day, 7 days a week through Live365, **Rock Dog Radio** is a completely commercial-free station created to support independent artists and the music community. Our mission is simple: provide listeners with great independent music while giving artists another platform to be heard, discovered, and celebrated.

Programming will feature music from emerging and established independent artists from around the world, along with curated playlists, genre spotlights, and themed programming. Beginning November 9, we'll also be simulcasting **The Rick Spins Show**, hosted by Rick "Rick Spins" Landstrom. Additional programming planned before the end of November includes a **Sunday Gospel Music Show**, **Metal Mayhem**, **Artist Spotlight**, and **New Music Showcase** programs. Listeners can also look forward to artist interviews, educational segments covering topics such as marketing, production, music business, radio etiquette, and performance tips, as well as highlights from future Rock Dog Music Rally events and other community-focused programming.

As the station continues to grow, we'll feature listener requests, artist shout-outs, nonprofit announcements, and other community-driven content. Independent artists are also invited to submit professionally recorded, fully tagged MP3s for airplay consideration by emailing info@rockdogartists.org **(If you've submitted your music to the Rick Spins Show, we already have it and you don't need to send it to us again!)**. For programming updates, show schedules, and station news, visit **RockDogArtists.org** and follow the Rock Dog Music Foundation on Facebook. We're building a radio network designed to support artists, connect communities, and showcase the incredible talent being created outside the traditional music industry.

The Rick Spins Show Expands to Rock Dog Radio



Starting **Monday, November 9th**, listeners will be able to hear **The Rick Spins Show** live on both **ISSA Radio** and the **Rock Dog Radio Network**! Hosted by Rick "Rick Spins" Landstrom, the show will air every **Monday and Thursday at 8:00 PM Eastern**, giving fans two ways to tune in and enjoy great music, artist interviews, industry conversations, and more. Whether you listen through ISSA Radio at ISSA Songwriters or on the Rock Dog Radio Network at Rock Dog Artists, you'll be able to catch Rick live twice each week. We look forward to continuing to support independent artists and building new partnerships throughout the music community.

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



"I have a Facebook page, an Instagram account, and a TikTok. Why do I need to pay for a website? Doesn't Facebook already do everything a website does?"

This is a question I hear a lot, and it's a fair one. Social media is free, it's easy to update, and it's where the people are. Facebook *does* allow you to post your bio, upload videos, and even set up a shop.

But here is the hard truth: **Building your entire career on social media is like building a house on rented land.**

Yes, Facebook can do *some* of what a website does, but a properly designed website does it better, and most importantly—**you actually own it.**

Here is why you need a website, even in the age of TikTok:

1. You Own It (The Algorithm Can't Evict You)

Mark Zuckerberg can change the algorithm tomorrow. Your account could get hacked, suspended by a bot, or hit with a link limit (like the 2-link rule we've talked about). If all your music, videos, and merch are only on Facebook, you are at the mercy of the landlord. A website is yours. No one can take it down, hide your posts, or charge you a "boost" fee to show your music to your own fans.

2. It’s Your Clean, Uncluttered "Home Base"

When someone visits your Facebook page, they are hit with ads, suggested reels, and a messy feed. But when someone visits your website, **there are no distractions.** It is a clean, professional window into your world. It is the one place online where the focus is 100% on *you* and your music.

3. It Captures Your Most Valuable Asset: Emails

Do you know what you can’t easily get on Facebook? A direct line to your fans that doesn't rely on an algorithm. A website allows you to build a mailing list. When a fan gives you their email, they are saying "I want to hear from you." You can email them when you release a song, and they will actually see it. You don't have to hope the algorithm pushes it to them.

4. Professional Credibility

When a venue talent buyer, a music supervisor, or a journalist wants to check you out, they Google you. A Facebook page looks like a hobby. A professional website (*yourname.com*) looks like a business. It tells them you take your career seriously.

5. It Can Host Your EPK

As we discussed in the EPK article this month, your website is the perfect place to host your Electronic Press Kit. You can have a private page with high-res photos, your bio, and your tech rider, and all you have to do is send one link.

6. Better Direct-to-Fan Sales

Facebook shops and Instagram checkouts are great, but they charge fees and control the data. On your website (using tools like Bandcamp, Shopify, or WooCommerce), you keep a much larger percentage of the sale. You own the customer data, so you can market directly to them again.

The Bottom Line

You shouldn't quit social media. Social media is your **discovery engine**—it's how new people find you. But your website is your **conversion engine**—it's where people go to actually buy your music, book you for a show, and join your inner circle.

Don't build your house on rented land. Build the house, and use social media to invite people to the front door.



Meta's New 2-Link Limit: What It Means for Indie Artists & How to Beat It for Free

If you tried to post a pre-save link, a ticket link, or a Spotify link on your Facebook Page recently, you may have run into a frustrating new wall: **Meta's 2-link-per-month limit.**

It's not a glitch. It's a deliberate policy change.

In December 2025, Meta quietly began testing a limit on external links for Facebook Pages. Then, on **September 15, 2026**, Meta launched **Meta One for Business**—a tiered subscription service—and expanded the link cap to a much wider set of Pages. Now, if your Page is subject to the rollout, you can only include external links in **two organic posts or comments per month** .

Once you hit that limit, you can still publish the post, but **the link will appear as plain, unclickable text**. And yes—comments count now, too. The old "link in the first comment" trick no longer bypasses the limit.

The Fee Schedule

To get more links, Meta wants you to subscribe to Meta One. Here are the tiers:

- **Free:** 2 links/month
- **Essential ($14.99/mo):** 2 links/month (No, that's not a typo—paying the entry fee does *not* increase your link allowance)
- **Advanced ($49.99/mo):** 8 links/month
- **Expert ($149.99/mo):** 20 links/month
- **Max ($499.99/mo):** Unlimited links

For an independent artist, paying $50 to $500 a month just to share links is simply not feasible. As *Saving Country Music* noted, this change is "catastrophic" for indie artists, bands, and venues who rely on Facebook to stay in touch with fans—particularly older fans who are more likely to buy merch, pre-order albums, and purchase tickets .

The Good News: You Don't Have to Pay

The good news is that **you do not need to pay for a subscription just to share your website or release links**. There are several free workarounds that not only bypass the limit but often perform *better* than direct links.

1. Use the Comment-to-DM Automation (The Best Free Workaround)
Instead of putting a link in your post, ask your fans to comment a specific word.
Example: "Comment **MUSIC** and I'll DM you the pre-save link!"
Meta Business Suite has a built-in "comment-to-DM" automation tool that lets you set this up for free . This actually boosts your engagement (comments drive more reach than link clicks) and puts the link directly in the fan's inbox .

2. Leverage Facebook Events for Ticket Links
If you are promoting a show, create a Facebook Event and put your ticket link in the "Admission/Ticket URL" field. Facebook displays a prominent "Find Tickets" button, and links to Events are exempt from the feed limit .

3. Use the Link Sticker in Facebook Stories
Stories are exempt from the main feed link restrictions . Use the link sticker to send fans directly to your pre-save or new release.

4. Update Your Page Intro and Action Button
Your Page intro, website field, and action button (e.g., “Shop Now” or “Listen Now”) are not posts—they don’t count toward the limit . Keep these updated with your current release and tell fans in your post to “tap the button on my Page.”

5. Create a Permanent “Link Hub”
Create a simple page on your own website that houses all your current links (Spotify, merch, tickets, mailing list). Point your Page intro there. You can also use a free “link in bio” tool (like Lnk.Bio, which offers unlimited links on its free plan) and direct fans to that single URL .

6. Use Exempt Links
Links to Meta’s own platforms—Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Threads—do **not** count toward the limit . If you have a Reel or an Instagram post promoting your music, you can link to that directly.

7. Save Your Two Free Links for Your Biggest Moments
Treat your two free links like gold. Save them for your absolute biggest conversion moments: the release day itself, a major ticket announcement, or a merch drop . Everything else can go through the workarounds above.

A Note on Verification (and Why It Doesn’t Help)

It’s worth noting that even if you pay the $14.99/month for the “Essential” Meta One plan (or the old Meta Verified program), your link allowance remains at 2 per month . The only way to get more links is to pay for the Advanced tier ($49.99) or higher.

The Bottom Line

Meta is trying to keep users on-platform and monetize link-sharing. It’s frustrating, and it hurts independent artists who don’t have corporate marketing budgets. But you don’t have to play their game—and you don’t have to pay to stay connected to your fans.

Use the workarounds. Build your email list (which no algorithm can touch). And save your two links for the moments that matter most.

Rock Dog News will continue to monitor this rollout. If you find a workaround that’s working for you, let us know.

Don't Fear AI, Learn It: A Practical Guide to Using AI as Your Business Assistant



When most independent musicians hear the term "AI," the reaction is immediate: a mix of dread and exhaustion.

The mental image is almost always the same. A kid at a computer types a prompt, and seconds later, a fully produced song is uploaded to a distributor. That song—along with thousands of others just like it—floods the streaming platforms, buries your new release in an ocean of noise, and quietly steals a fraction of the royalty pool you depend on.

That is a real problem. It is a serious one. And it is a problem that governments, distributors, and streaming services are finally beginning to address. But here's the hard truth: **you have almost no control over that part of the equation.**

Here's what you *do* control: **how you use AI in your own career.**

The tragedy of the current moment is that the very fear keeping artists up at night is also causing them to miss out on the single greatest efficiency tool for the business side of music. The song is only half the job. The other half—the planning, the marketing, the promotion, the endless administrative grind—is where careers are built or abandoned. And that is exactly where AI can help.

This is not about using AI to write your songs. It's about using AI to give you back the time to write your songs.

The Fear vs. The Reality

Let's separate the two conversations, because they are not the same.

Conversation One: AI-generated music is flooding the ecosystem. This is the conversation about fraud, bot streams, and "AI slop" diluting the royalty pool. It is a legitimate crisis, and it is being litigated in courtrooms and investigated by the U.S. Copyright Office right now.

Conversation Two: AI as a business assistant. This is the conversation almost no one is having with independent artists. It is the conversation about using AI to draft a press release, plan a release timeline, write social media captions, build a one-sheet, research radio contacts, and organize your entire rollout—without a label, a manager, or a publicist on your payroll.

Conversation One is about fear. Conversation Two is about utility. Rock Dog is here to lead Conversation Two.

What AI Can Actually Do for You

Here is the part that artists who fear AI rarely hear: the technology is remarkably good at the "mundane" work that eats up hours you could spend creating.

Release Planning. AI tools can generate a structured, personalized marketing plan for an upcoming release. You input your release date, your goals, your budget, and your artist profile, and the tool builds a timeline of what to do and when to do it. This is the kind of structure that used to require a manager. Now it's available to you.

Writing and Copy. Press releases. Email pitches to venues. Social media captions. Bio rewrites. Grant application language. All of this falls squarely into what general-purpose AI tools do well.

Social Media Content. AI platforms built for artists can help you generate short-form video content, visuals, and ad campaign copy tailored to your music. The tool doesn't replace your voice; it helps you find it faster and stay consistent.

Planning Your Release Date. Should you release on a Friday? A Tuesday? AI can help you think through the trade-offs based on your audience and your goals. (For what it's worth: Friday is the industry standard and the day streaming platforms refresh their editorial playlists—but a Wednesday or Thursday release can help you stand out from the major-label herd if you have a direct fanbase to rally.)

Research and Strategy. Need to know which blogs are currently reviewing indie releases in your genre? Which radio stations are actually spinning music like yours? What the current Spotify editorial submission windows are? AI research tools can give you grounded answers fast, rather than forcing you to wade through clickbait.

The AI Toolkit: A Starting Point, Not a Prescription

You do not need to use every tool. You need the *right* tool for *your* situation. Here is a breakdown of platforms by the job you're trying to do.

For General Business and Writing (Your Daily Driver)

- **ChatGPT (GPT-4o)** and **Claude** are the Swiss Army knives. Use them for press releases, email pitches, social captions, bio rewrites, and general planning. If you only pay for one tool, start here.
- **Gemini** is particularly useful for research and for processing large amounts of text—like pasting in a contract and asking it to flag anything unusual.

For Release Planning and Strategy

- **Orphiq** is built specifically as an AI music strategist. It plans releases, builds content strategy, and keeps campaigns on track. Its AI, Apollo, learns about your sound, vision, and audience and gets more specific over time—it's designed to handle the operational side so you can stay focused on the creative side.
- **Un:hurd** offers "Planning Cycles" built around what you're actually trying to achieve, plus AI tools that can generate a press release, EPK, bios, and sync pitches in *your* voice.

- **Symphonic's Release Campaign Builder** (if you distribute through Symphonic) generates a customized release marketing plan in minutes, tailored to your goals, timeline, and budget.

For Social Media and Content

- **Ghoste** is an AI-powered marketing assistant for independent artists that helps generate marketing strategies, short-form video content, and ad campaigns through a chat-based interface.
- General-purpose tools like **ChatGPT** and **Claude** can also draft captions and video scripts, while tools like **CapCut** and **Opus Clip** can help with the video editing itself.

For Research and Industry Intelligence

- **Perplexity** is search with a brain attached. Use it to find current information on industry practices, submission windows, and what distributors actually do in practice—without wading through seventeen clickbait articles to find one real piece of information.

A Word of Caution on AI Music Generators

You'll see tools like **Suno** and **Udio** marketed as full-song generators. These are not business assistants. They are creative production tools. If you use them, understand the disclosure requirements and commercial rights before you distribute anything. As of 2026, distributors like Catapult have embedded mandatory AI disclosure into their upload process, and platforms like Apple Music and Vevo require disclosure when AI is used in music videos. Transparency is becoming non-negotiable.

What AI Should NOT Replace

- Your songwriting voice
- Your personal relationships
- Live performance
- Creative decision making
- Authentic storytelling

The Old Rule Still Applies: Garbage In, Garbage Out

Here is the most important thing you will read in this article:

AI is not magic. It is a tool. And like every tool, the quality of the output depends entirely on the quality of the input.

You remember the old computer science adage: *Garbage in, garbage out*. It applies here with full force. If your prompt is vague, generic, or missing context, you will get back vague, generic output.

If you tell an AI, *"Write me a press release,"* you will get a bland, generic press release that sounds like every other press release.

If you tell it, *"Write a press release for my new single 'Ghost Light,' an Americana song about growing up in a coal town, releasing on Friday. My audience is 35-55, they love Jason Isbell and Lucinda Williams, and the song features a pedal steel player from Nashville. Keep it under 300 words and make it sound like me, not like a marketing robot,"* you will get something you can actually use.

The difference between a useless AI output and a valuable one is almost always the quality of the prompt. The gap is not an AI capability gap—it's a prompt quality gap.

Feed it your voice. Feed it your story. Feed it your audience. Feed it your goals. The more context you give it, the less it sounds like a machine and the more it sounds like *you*.

This article is the beginning of the conversation, not the end of it. Over the coming months, we'll be breaking down each of these areas in depth:

- **How to choose the right AI platform for *your* workflow** (and how to avoid paying for tools you don't need)
- **How to use AI to build a release marketing plan from scratch**
- **How to write prompts that actually work** (the GIGO principle in practice)
- **How to use AI for social media without losing your authentic voice**
- **The current state of AI law and disclosure**—what you need to know before you distribute

Everybody is preaching fear. We're here to teach utility. Rock Dog is leading that discussion.



Rock Dog Monthly Music Industry & AI Update: October 2026

What Happened Last Month

October was the month the cleanup started—and the collateral damage became impossible to ignore. DistroKid quietly pulled songs from independent artists to appease a major label lawsuit. Spotify buried tens of millions of tracks from its recommendations. And a man who made $8 million from AI streaming fraud was sentenced to prison. Here's what you need to know, without the noise.

🔴 The Big Story: DistroKid's Silent Takedowns

What happened: On October 10, independent artists began posting that their music had vanished from streaming platforms—**no email, no warning, no explanation**. The next day, DistroKid confirmed the removals were a direct response to UMG's September lawsuit, which accuses the distributor of running an "AI slop pipeline".

The problem: The sweep is catching **non-AI music**.

Musician McGwire had six songs removed. One was a Stevie Wonder cover he says he properly licensed. Another used a beat he legally purchased. A third was flagged for an uncleared sample—**except the song he allegedly sampled was released two years *after* his own track**. Nerdcore rapper Insane Ian had an original song taken down with no reason given. Rapper King Chase said an entire album he

worked on disappeared after being up for three to four years without a single copyright strike.

DistroKid says only “a very small number of recordings” were removed. Artists say they had to fight through bots just to get a human on the phone.

What to do: Log into DistroKid **today** and check your catalog on every platform. If something is missing, file a DMCA counter-notice immediately. Document your licenses, receipts, and ISRC codes. And **do not rely on a single distributor**—diversification is now basic protection.

What’s next: DistroKid’s response to the lawsuit is now due **December 4**, with an initial court conference set for November 13. This story is moving.

🟠 Spotify’s AI Purge: The Numbers vs. The Reality

What happened: On October 20, Spotify announced it has removed **more than 75 million tracks** from the platform entirely, and pushed **more than 50 million** “slop and spam” tracks out of its recommendation algorithms in 2026.

The fine print: These are two different numbers for two different actions. The 75 million were **removed from the service**—mostly for severe or repeated rule violations. The 50 million were **buried from recommendations**—meaning they’re still on Spotify, but the algorithm won’t serve them to you. Spotify says it’s using upload patterns, metadata, third-party AI detection, and listener feedback to make these calls.

The catch: Spotify’s head of music, Charlie Hellman, said the company is “not here to punish artists for using AI authentically and responsibly”. But the system is automated, and **human artists can get caught in the sweep**. If your music suddenly stops appearing in Discover Weekly or algorithmic playlists, this may be why. The appeals process is not yet clear.

The good news: Over 300,000 artists have been verified as human through Spotify’s verification badge, and **70% of those are independent**. If you haven’t applied yet, do it now.

🟡 The Fraudster Who Went to Prison

What happened: On October 6, Michael Smith—the man behind an **$8 million AI streaming fraud scheme**—was sentenced to **18 months in federal prison**. He was also ordered to forfeit the full $8,091,843.64 and serve two years of supervised release.

How he did it: Between 2017 and 2024, Smith created thousands of fake accounts on Spotify, Apple Music, Amazon Music, and YouTube Music. He used AI to generate hundreds of thousands of songs and bots to stream them billions of times. At his peak, he was running **10,000 bot accounts at once**.

Why this matters for you: Every dollar Smith stole came out of the same royalty pool that pays independent artists. This sentencing sends a clear message: **streaming fraud is a crime**, and the industry is finally treating it that way. The IFPI's new Streaming Integrity Initiative is now coordinating enforcement across platforms.

🔵 Suno's Very Bad Month

Suno had a brutal October on multiple fronts:

- **Italy's competition authority opened an investigation** into Suno's terms of service, citing clauses that may be "unfair to consumers." The regulator is looking at Suno's broad discretion to change subscription prices without justification, a license that requires users to **waive their moral rights**, and mandatory US arbitration with class actions waived.
- **UMG and Sony filed a second lawsuit** against Suno, this time alleging the company copied **60,202 recordings** without permission. The new argument is strange and significant: UMG and Sony claim Suno's V6 model was trained on **music made by earlier AI models**, meaning Suno is now learning from its own allegedly infringing output【from user notes】.
- **Believe and TuneCore signed a licensing deal with Suno** on September 8, reversing their earlier decision to block Suno-made tracks. Participating artists can opt in to have their music used in Suno's industry-partner models.

What this means for you: Suno is under legal, regulatory, and reputational pressure from every direction. But it's also signing deals and building partnerships. The company isn't going away—it's trying to survive by becoming "legitimate." Watch the Italy investigation closely; if regulators force changes to Suno's terms, it could set a precedent worldwide.

🟢 Spotify's AI Remix Tool Adds Believe and TuneCore

What happened: On October 20, Believe and TuneCore signed a licensing deal for Spotify's upcoming **AI-powered covers and remixes tool**, joining Universal Music Group, Merlin, and Kobalt.

How consent works: Believe runs a **two-step opt-in process**. Artists first decide whether they want to be considered for AI programs at all. Those who opt in are then shown the Spotify partnership specifically and choose whether to join. Believe's CEO put it bluntly: *"The artist must consent first, period."*

What this means for you: If you're a TuneCore or Believe artist, you now have a clear, explicit choice about whether your music can be used in AI fan remixes. If you're **not** opted in, your music shouldn't be included. Check your dashboard and your email for the opt-in prompt.

🟣 Quick Hits

Grammy FYC is over. First-round voting for the 69th Annual Grammy Awards ran from **October 12–22**, with nominations announced **November 16**. If you released music between August 31, 2025, and August 28, 2026, make sure your FYC materials are in order. The ceremony is **February 7, 2027**.

UMG is restructuring—and it's not about artist development. Multiple reports suggest Universal is shifting its business model away from traditional artist development and toward **catalog acquisition, distribution, and AI licensing**. The same label suing AI companies is also building its own licensed AI ecosystem. What does that mean for new artists trying to get signed? Nothing good, probably.

AI safety warnings are getting louder. Krystle Delgado covered new warnings from AI insiders about the long-term risks of artificial intelligence—and the government's response, which has been a **voluntary safety pact** rather than enforceable regulation. This isn't just a music story anymore.

What You Should Do This Month

✅ **Check your DistroKid catalog today.** Log into your dashboard and verify every release is still live on every platform. Don't assume.

✅ **Document everything.** Keep license agreements, beat purchase receipts, ISRC codes, and screenshots of your releases. If your music disappears, you need proof ready to go.

✅ **Apply for Spotify's human verification badge.** Over 70% of verified artists are independent. Make sure you're one of them.

✅ **If you're on TuneCore or Believe, check your AI opt-in status.** The two-step consent process means you have a real choice—make it consciously.

✅ **Don't rely on a single distributor.** This month proved why. Diversification is protection.

The Proof: Spotify Just Removed 50 Million AI Tracks From Your Recommendations



In our main feature this month, we told you that the industry is finally getting involved in taming the AI slop problem—and that you don't need to panic because the platforms, distributors, and governments are responding.

Here's the proof.

On October 20, Spotify announced that it has removed **more than 50 million "AI-generated slop and spam" tracks from its recommendations** so far this year. That's in addition to **more than 75 million "spammy tracks"** the platform has removed entirely for "serious or repeated violations" of its rules.

Spotify's blog post was direct: *"AI-generated slop and spam don't belong in your recommendations, and we've made changes to keep them out and protect the listening experience."*

How did they do it? Spotify says it looked at the tracks listeners were **skipping, ignoring, or telling the platform they didn't want to hear**. A clear pattern emerged: those tracks were consistently ones identified as slop or spam. The company then made "numerous updates" to its recommendation system over the past six months to surface more music by "authentic, human artists."

The platform is also watching for new tactics, including **mass uploads, duplicates, SEO manipulation, "spammy playlist networks," and artificially short tracks**—the kind of tricks that game the system and bury real artists in the process.

Spotify's editors apply the same standard and do not program content identified as slop or spam.

The Honest Caveat

Spotify admits the challenge is far from over: *"AI detection technology in particular has limitations, and it will only get harder as generative AI evolves."*

That's true. But this is what progress looks like—imperfect, ongoing, and real. The platforms are no longer pretending the problem doesn't exist.

If you're an independent artist making real music with real instruments and real stories, this is good news. The platforms are actively working to keep your music from being buried under an avalanche of AI-generated noise.

You don't need to fear AI. You need to learn it, use it wisely, and keep making the kind of music that no algorithm can replicate—the kind that comes from **you**.

For the full breakdown of how to use AI as your business assistant (without losing your voice), see our main feature: "Don't Fear AI, Learn It."



YOUR STREAM, YOUR VOICE: THE FINAL WORD BEFORE THE BALLOT

New to the Rock Dog Newsletter? For months, we've been tracking the bills in Washington that could finally change how musicians get paid—for radio play, for streaming, and for protection against AI. Here's your quick catch-up: the **American Music Fairness Act (AMFA)** would close the AM/FM radio loophole. The **Living Wage for Musicians Act (LWMA)** would create a penny-per-stream royalty. The **NO FAKES Act** would protect your voice and likeness from AI deepfakes. The **Protect Working Musicians Act (PWMA)** would let independent artists collectively negotiate with streaming platforms. These bills matter. And right now, they are hanging by a thread.

What Happened (and Didn't) in October

Congress left town for its midterm election recess, and the music bills went with it—mostly stuck in neutral.

The NO FAKES Act hit a wall. On October 8, Senator Marsha Blackburn (R-Tenn.) tried to push the bill through the Senate by unanimous consent. Senator Ted Cruz (R-Tex.) objected, citing First Amendment concerns, and the effort collapsed. The bill—which would give you exclusive control over your voice and likeness for up to 70 years, with penalties of up to $750,000 per unauthorized replica—is now stalled until at least November. This was a painful miss.

The AMFA is still alive, but the math is brutal. The National Independent Talent Organization (NITO) spent October urging Senate support for the American Music Fairness Act. But the broadcasters' counter-legislation, the Local Radio Freedom Act, now has **over 200 House co-sponsors**. The radio lobby is winning the numbers game. That doesn't mean we stop—it means we have to make our voices louder than theirs.

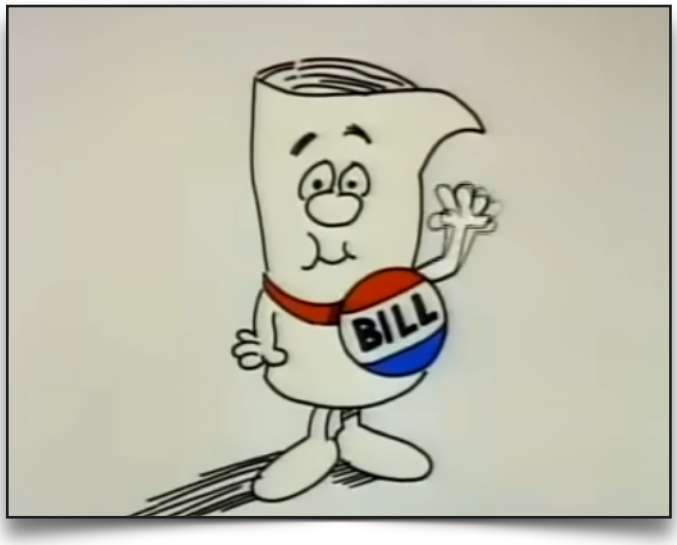
The Living Wage for Musicians Act remains introduced but stalled. No new federal movement this month. However, the fight for streaming fairness shifted to a different battlefield—the Copyright Royalty Board.

The PWMA is still alive. The Protect Working Musicians Act, introduced in June, is pending in Congress and still gathering support. The Recording Academy made it a centerpiece of its **Music Advocacy Day on October 8**, alongside the NO FAKES Act and the TRAIN Act.

The Quiet Battleground: The Copyright Royalty Board

While Congress stalled, a critical fight unfolded at the **Copyright Royalty Board (CRB)** —the obscure but powerful body that sets the mechanical royalty rates streaming services pay songwriters.

On October 5, a coalition of songwriter and publisher advocates filed a landmark proposal: a **flat $0.0030 per-stream rate** for interactive streams starting in 2028, replacing the current opaque revenue-percentage formula. Spotify, meanwhile, asked the CRB to lock in the current headline rate of 15.35% through 2032. The CRB will decide next year what you get paid from 2028 to 2032. This is happening whether or not Congress acts.



Tomorrow Is Election Day. This Is Your Moment.

All **435 House seats** and **33 Senate seats** are on the ballot **tomorrow**. Every single member of Congress who has stalled these bills, ignored these bills, or fought against these bills is asking for your vote right now.

This is not a drill. This is your leverage.

Here's what you can do **today**, before you cast your ballot:

1. **Know where they stand.** Check your candidates' records. Did they co-sponsor the AMFA? The LWMA? The NO FAKES Act? If they didn't, ask yourself why.
2. **Vote for music.** Whatever else is on your mind this election, put fair pay for creators on your list of non-negotiables. A vote for a candidate who won't fight for your livelihood is a vote against your own career.
3. **Tell them why.** Post on social media today using **#RockDogFairPay**. Tell your candidates: *"I am a musician and a voter. I want fair pay for radio and streaming, and I want protection from AI. Your record on these issues matters to me."*
4. **Email me your story.** Did you contact a representative? Did you attend a town hall? Did you ask a candidate the tough questions? Send it to **issasongwriters.todd@gmail.com** and I'll feature your stories in our post-election issue.

The Bottom Line

The bills are stalled. The lobbyists are winning. The clock ran out on this Congress before it did right by musicians.

But **tomorrow, the voters get the final word.**

Congress may have left Washington, but we are still here—and we are not going away. Cast your ballot for the candidates who will fight for creators. Then, on Wednesday, we get back to work.

Vote. Then keep fighting.

Looking for Great Shows and Podcasts

The **Rock Dog Radio Network** is actively seeking podcasts, specialty music programs, interview shows, educational content, and live radio broadcasts to add to our growing lineup. If you currently host a podcast and would like us to feature it on the network, or if you have a live radio show that you'd like us to simulcast, we'd love to hear from you. Our goal is to provide listeners with diverse, engaging programming while helping creators reach new audiences. For more information, contact **Todd Apfel** at **todd@rockdogartists.org** and let's discuss how your show can become part of the Rock Dog Radio Network family.



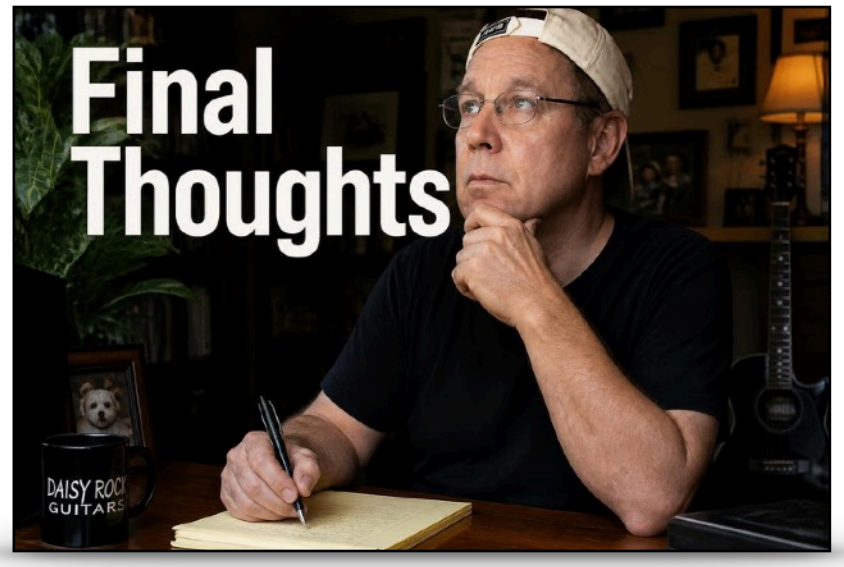


Some instruments are manufactured. Others are **built**.

Stogie Joe Cigar Box Guitars falls firmly in the second category. Each guitar is handcrafted with care, using quality components and a level of attention to detail you simply don't find in mass-produced instruments. The result is a guitar with a voice all its own—warm, gritty, and unmistakably authentic—along with a look that turns heads the moment you walk on stage.

But Stogie Joe is more than a builder. He's a **supporter of independent music**, and we want to take a moment to say thank you.

Stogie Joe has been a generous backer of **The Rick Spins Show**, helping keep indie artists in the spotlight. That kind of support doesn't happen often enough in this industry. When someone steps up for indie artists the way Stogie Joe has, they deserve a shout-out. Visit him online: www.stogiejoeguitars.com



One Month In—Look How Far We've Come

Well, that was fast.

It feels like just yesterday that Jill and I were putting the finishing touches on our very first Rock Dog Music Newsletter, hoping you'd stick around for whatever came next. Here we are one month later, and I can honestly say: I don't think either of us fully understood just how much we could accomplish in thirty short days.

So before we get to anything else—thank you. To everyone who opened that first newsletter. To everyone who clicked through to the website. To everyone who volunteered their time, their expertise, or just a kind word of encouragement. You made this month possible. And we're just getting started.

A Look at What We've Built

If you haven't been to **www.rockdogartists.org** in the past couple of weeks, you really need to go back and take a look around. It's a different site than the one you saw in October.

- **The Artist Resource Hub now has almost 100 articles**—and we are nowhere near done. We have so much more to add, so keep checking back. And be sure to read the articles from our **Community Contributors: Andy De Rosa, Jon KT, and Sam George.** These are working professionals sharing real insight, and it's all right there for free.
- **Rock Dog Radio is LIVE.** That's right—we're already playing your songs. If you've submitted to The Rick Spins Show, your music is already in rotation, so *please don't resubmit*. We've got it. Within the next month, we plan to have a full slate of different programs running, so stay tuned.

- **Our 501(c)(3) status has been approved.** That's a big one. It means we can now ambitiously go after grants and sponsors—not to line anyone's pockets, but to bring you as much educational content, information, and opportunity as we possibly can.
- **We're in the planning stages of our first Rock Dog Music Rally.** I can't divulge the details yet—we're still finalizing things—but I'll say this much: this is one event you will not want to miss.
- **Coming soon:** a partnership with **Musolist** (https://musolist.com/), a free listing service where you can start a band, join a band, or find musicians for the band you already have. We've been working with them to bring this to our community, and we think you're going to love it.

A Small Change to the Newsletter

We tried hard to make this issue is a little leaner than the ones that used to land in your inbox. We did hold off on a few articles, including a great Op-Ed from Jon KT. Don't worry… it will be in next month's Newsletter and also on the Website.

Our goal is to scale the newsletter down to something easier to read—while still keeping you up to date on what's happening in the music industry and still giving you practical tips to help your career. But here's the great news: **you no longer have to save these emails to go back and find the tips you need.** Everything lives on the website now. Need a resource? Check the Artist Resource Hub. Missed an issue? Browse our past newsletter database.

The newsletter is now a starting point, not a filing cabinet. The website is where the good stuff lives.

And if you haven't yet, **please like and follow our Facebook page** at https://www.facebook.com/RockDogMusic. That's where we'll be posting news, updates, and community conversation between issues.

So What's the Point of All This?

Here's the thing I keep coming back to.

This foundation doesn't work if it's just Jill and me in a room making decisions. It works because of *you*—the artists who tell us what you need, the professionals who volunteer their time, the community that shows up.

We are a much stronger force in this industry when we all work together. That's not a slogan. That's the entire reason Rock Dog exists.

So please—if you have a question, ask us. If you need help, reach out. And if you have an idea for something we should be doing, *tell us*. You can reach us anytime at **info@rockdogartists.org**, or reach me directly at **todd@rockdogartists.org**.

We don't have all the answers. But together, we can sure figure out a lot of them.

One month down. A lot more to go.

Onward and upward.

— **Todd**

(and Jill, too!)

