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, remember our main 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.