

GETTING YOUR DUCKS IN A ROW: REMOVING ANY BARRIERS TO GETTING SYNC PLACEMENTS

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WHAT IS SYNC?

- **Short for synchronization, matching music to visuals/video**
- **Sometimes spelled synch**
- **There are licensing fees available for your songs in sync; TV, movies, commercials, adverts, promos, trailers, video games, etc.**
- **Some people make a full-time living with sync licensing**

HOW DO YOU EARN INCOME FROM SYNC?

- **There are two sides:**
 - **The sync license: a lump sum that comes in after the song is placed and used; often within weeks**
 - **Writing and publishing: This is much more delayed; sometimes called “backend” income; if you’ve signed away your publishing, this will be cut in half**

GETTING YOUR DUCKS IN A ROW

- **Sync moves fast**
- **You must own the rights to the master or have permission to pitch it and sign a licensing deal**
- **You must have signed work for hire forms and signed admin forms available**
- **You should have your songs registered at your PRO (BMI, ASCAP, PRS, etc.)**
- **You should have access to the original files for alternate mixes, instrumentals, and STEMs**

GETTING YOUR DUCKS IN A ROW

- **Like other areas of the music business and life, relationships and trust matter**
- **If you don't have your ducks in a row, you could lose out on placements and burn some bridges for future placements**

THE PLAYERS

- **Music libraries**
- **Sync agents**
- **Sync agencies**
- **Publishers**
- **Music supervisors**
- **Artists**
- **Songwriters**
- **Producers**
- **Show runners/directors/ad agencies**

ELEMENT 1: WHO OWNS THE MASTER?

- **Who created the master recording?**
- **Who paid for the master recording?**
- **Was it done as a “work for hire”?**
- **Did you get the agreement in writing and signed?**
- **Who has the right to say yes to getting signed by a sync agent/library or to a placement offer?**

ELEMENT 2: DO ANY OF THE PLAYERS, VOCALISTS AND PRODUCERS ON THE SONG OWN ANY OF IT?

- **You can hire people to sing on, play on and produce or mix/master the track, but if you don't have a clear agreement, they may claim ownership of the master or even the writing/publishing**
- **You should have a “work for hire” agreement if you are not sharing writing, publishing or master ownership and income**

ELEMENT 3: WHO HAS THE RIGHTS TO PITCH THE MASTER AND SAY YES TO CONTRACTS AND PLACEMENTS?

- **Who has the right to say yes to getting signed by a sync agent/library or to a placement offer?**
- **These agreements are called admin agreements**
- **The best agreement is called a “one stop,” because whomever wants to sign or license the song only has to get one person to agree and sign the contract**
- **If it is more complex, these are often called “easy clear” agreements**
- **As usual, get it in writing and signed**

ELEMENT 4: WHO OWNS THE WRITING AND PUBLISHING RIGHTS TO THE SONG?

- **Who wrote the song?**
- **Who owns or controls the publishing of the song?**
- **The form that is used to show/clarify this is usually called a “split sheet” and specifics ownership percentages for those elements and is best if it is signed and includes the contact information for all parties**

ELEMENT 5: IS THE SONG REGISTERED WITH THE WRITERS’ AND PUBLISHERS’ PROS

- **PROs=ASCAP, BMI, SESAC, PRS, SOCAN, etc.**
- **Make sure you get all writers’ PRO IPI numbers as writers and publishers (some PROs don’t have separate writer and publisher numbers, some do)**
- **Then make sure you register the song correctly with the PRO, clarifying the percentages before registering. Each writer can separately register the song, but if there is a difference in percentages in the registrations, it could cause issues**

ELEMENT 6: IS THE SONG REGISTERED WITH THE MLC TO COLLECT PERFORMANCE/STREAMING ROYALTIES?

- **MLC=Mechanical Licensing Collective**
- **<https://www.themlc.com/>**
- **Register your song with this service to collect royalties when the song is played on streaming services**
- **Even if you don’t release your song, it could show up on a compilation after it gets a sync placement**

ELEMENT 7: DO YOU HAVE THE HIGH QUALITY, INSTRUMENTAL VERSIONS AND STEMS FOR YOUR SONG?

- **Sync placements usually want instrumental versions of songs they sign**
- **They also may want to do new mixes so having the STEMs (stereo mixes of each sound file or group of files) available is a bonus**
- **They also sometimes want “cutdowns,” shorter versions of your song (15-second, 30-second, 1-minute, etc.)**

ELEMENT 8: MASTERING METADATA

- **Because sync agents/agencies and libraries move fast, they often do last-minute searches for songs through vast libraries**
- **Having metadata means they can find tracks you have sent or signed to them**
- **They can also find you to sign the song and pay you**

WHAT IS METADATA?

- **Also called metatags or metatagging, it consists of information, keywords and images attached to your music file that others can see when you send your file to them**
- **Sometimes publishers, sync agents, sync agencies, sync libraries or artists listen to a song long after it was sent and forget who sent it, who wrote it, how to contact the writers or people associated with the song; You could lose out on a cut or a placement!**
- **And sync libraries and agents often search for the kinds of songs they want quickly using metadata, so having good metatags in place can up your chances of your song being found**

WHAT KINDS OF INFORMATION GOES IN METADATA?

- **Writers’ names and contact information**
- **Publishers’ names and contact information**
- **BPM, instrumentation, genre, lyric content, feel of the song, what songs this song may be like**
- **Whether or not the song is licensable, if so, how easily**
- **Any special minority/marginalized status or writers/producers, vocalists (BIPOC; LGTBQIA+; AAPI)**

HOW TO ATTACH METADATA AND MAKE SURE IT STICKS

- **Metadata sticks well to mp3 files and aiff files, but not .wav files**
- **If you send a .wav file with metadata to someone via email, the metadata will typically not show up when they open the file**
- **It even gets stripped out of mp3s and aiff files at times when you send it**

TESTING YOUR METATAGS

- **Send your song/track to a friend and have him or her one it and see if the metadata survived the trip through cyberspace**
- **Send that same friend a link to an online downloadable version of your song and make sure the metadata is coming through**

ELEMENT 9: RELEASING YOUR SONG TO COINCIDE WITH A PLACEMENT

- **Getting a sync placement can bring attention and interest to your song, so it's best to release the song so people can find it when they hear it in the placement (They usually Shazam it.)**

TYPICAL CONTRACTS

- **All agents/libraries will take a portion of the initial licensing fee (usually 50%, but could be 20%, 40% or 35%)**
- **Some will take your publishing or part of your publishing**
- **The length of the contract may be anywhere from one to five years, usually automatically renewing unless one of the parties withdraws after the initial contract period**

TERMS/JARGON

- **Exclusive=You can't pitch that song to any other licensing opportunities, agencies, agents or libraries for the length of your contract**
- **You might be able to release the song as an artist, the exclusivity often only applies to sync licensing**
- **Non-exclusive=You can pitch it to multiple opportunities, agencies, libraries and agents**

SYNC COLLABORATION

- **Get clear, signed agreements up front (admin, ownership of masters)**
- **Two or three times the pitch/networking opportunities**
- **Get "Work for hire" agreements signed**
- **Get everyone's PRO info and register the songs**

CREDIT AND LEGALITIES

- **Deciding splits before pitching**
- **Getting everyone's contact and PRO information**
- **Get admin and work for hire agreements signed**

BILL'S STUFF

Bill's music page:

www.BillOHanlonMusic.com

Bill's playlist of co-written songs that have been released:

<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/7Lvp3FShnIld67QnfCV3aV?si=7244b8f7d5ad4f00>

Free video on adding "furniture" to your songwriting to add spice and interest for the listener:

<https://billohanlon.ck.page/songwriting>