OFFICE CHEAT SHEET

Plan backwards from the Friday

WHEN	WHAT (SOURCE)
≈ 3 months before, or earlier	Vinyl: all materials to the plant. RPM: test pressings within 4–5 weeks after all materials and the first shipping invoice, production another 4–5 weeks after approval – 2.5–3 months. Groove House: about six weeks from the approved test pressing; "most plants quote three to four months".
4–6 weeks before	Digital single to the distributor. CD Baby: at least 3 weeks if you promote or want a set date, 4–6 weeks "ideal"; iMusician: at least two weeks between payment and release, more if you pitch.
≥ 7 days before	Pitch one unreleased song to Spotify's editors (it shows under Upcoming around 48 hours after delivery) – also puts it on followers' Release Radar.
Friday	Global release day since 10 July 2015 (00:01 local time, more than 45 markets). Shops may switch it on between midnight and 11:59 pm (iMusician).

Final production starts only with your approval of the test pressing. iMusician: hold back public announcements until it confirms delivery to the stores.

Single, EP, album · files

- **Apple Music:** single = 1–3 songs, each under 10 min; EP = 1–3 songs with one of at least 10 min (30 min or less in total) or 4–6 songs, 30 min or less. **Spotify & others** (CD Baby): single 3 tracks or fewer, EP 4–6 tracks – both under 30 min; album 7 or more tracks and/or over 30 min.
- Pre-save: the Spotify Countdown Page is only for new original albums and EPs, from 3,000 monthly active listeners.
- Files: your distributor's rules come first (iMusician: WAV only). A square 3000 × 3000 px JPEG/PNG cover and 24 bit/44.1 kHz audio fit Spotify, Apple and iMusician.
- Unreleased archive session: original release date = date first available, not the recording date (Apple); a remaster gets the date of the original release.
- Delays: "Digital Single", "Limited Edition", "Exclusive" in titles (Apple 3.2); extra info or the label in the artist field (Spotify 1.5, 1.10); featured artists in the title instead of the artist fields (Spotify 5.1/5.3); ALL CAPS (Apple 3.20); URL, QR code, price sticker or blurry cover (Apple 7.2/7.3).
- **Waterfall** (EmuBands): separate releases; earlier tracks reappear with identical metadata and ISRC, so stream counts carry over.

Three roads out of the office

- **Digital distributor** (aggregator): delivers to streaming services and stores, pays out royalties. Spotify: "Work with a distributor"; Apple Music: no direct upload.
- **Direct to fans:** Bandcamp pays typically within 24–48 hours of a sale – but does not press, store or ship: you pack yourself or hire a fulfilment partner.
- **Physical:** distributors and wholesalers get records into shops – or shops buy or take them on consignment.

How a record is made

Vinyl mastering (24-bit WAV preferred, Gotta Groove) → **cutting** into a lacquer, or straight into copper (DMM) → **plating**: nickel on the lacquer, peeled off = stamper; three-step keeps a "father" for several "mothers" → **pressing**: vinyl "puck" between the stampers, mould closed about 30 seconds.

Test pressing = pressed with the same metal parts as your order. Check track order and sides, listen for skips and loud pops; the same noise in the same spot on several copies → tell the plant. Clear vinyl: ask your plant early whether and how it presses it.

MINUTES PER SIDE	DISC MAKERS	GOTTA GROOVE	UNITED (MAX.)
7″ 45 rpm	4.5 (opt. 3.5)	4.5	6
7″ 33⅓	6 (opt. 4.5)	6	8
12″ 45	12 (opt. 9)	12 ideal, 14 ok	13
12″ 33⅓	22 (opt. 15–18)	18 ideal, 20 good	22

Longer side = quieter (closer, shallower grooves). 7-inch: both Disc Makers and Gotta Groove recommend 45 rpm.

Storing & shipping

- Discs upright, cool, about 35–40 % relative humidity, no direct light, away from radiators (Library of Congress). Record out of the jacket, inner sleeve, mailer with stiffeners, "FRAGILE".
- **Warensendung** (domestic, goods only): 10–35.3 × 7–25 cm, up to 5 cm high; up to 1,000 g (2,000 g with surcharge); €2.70, surcharge +€0.85; 4 working days. An LP mailer of about 13 × 13 inches is too wide.
- Outside the EU: CN 22/23 customs declaration on the parcel; commercial goods over €1,000 need an electronic export declaration. Warenpost International: up to 1,000 g and 35.3 × 25 × 10 cm.

Packaging law - no legal advice

EU Packaging Regulation (PPWR) applies since 12 Aug 2026, in Germany alongside the VerpackDG. A "producer" registers in LUCID (free); shipping packaging is subject to system participation "without exception" – contract with a dual system, report quantities. Sales packaging of sound carriers is listed too. Platforms must check your LUCID registration. Check with the ZSVR, your IHK or a lawyer.

Press kit & press text

- **EPK** (iMusician): one-sheet, bio, music (your two most successful tracks first), press photos landscape and portrait, highlights and reviews, contact.
- **Inverted pyramid:** who, what, when, where, why in the first paragraph; the rest by importance, so editors cut from the bottom.
- **Photos:** the author decides on the credit (§ 13 UrhG); even a snapshot is protected (§ 72); showing portraits needs the person's consent (§ 22 KUG; exceptions § 23).

Promo, newsletter, rules - no legal advice

- Bandcamp codes: 200 to start, 1,000 more per US$500 in sales. DJs: a download link, 24-bit WAV or 320 kbps MP3.
- **Newsletter:** e-mail advertising without prior express consent is always an unacceptable nuisance (§ 7 (2) no. 2 UWG); narrow existing-customer exception (§ 7 (3)). Double opt-in "geboten" (data protection authorities); consent must be provable.
- Spotify for Artists counts a stream after 30 seconds. Bought streams or playlist placements violate Spotify's terms.
- **Imprint** (§ 5 DDG, since 14 May 2024): name, address, e-mail; also on company social profiles (IHK); fines up to €50,000 (§ 33). Paid posts: "Werbung" or "Anzeige" at the start – posting your own release usually needs no label.

Radio pays twice

Broadcasting a released recording needs no permission from the performers – they are owed fair remuneration (§ 78 UrhG). **GEMA** for the song; **GVL** for the recording (paid by reported broadcast minutes). No invoice to the station: register works, recordings and codes – and put the **label code** on every promo. Programmes with fewer than 20,000 simultaneous users (six-month average) need no broadcasting licence – but music licences.

Sync: two licences, two doors

- Existing recording in film, series, ad or game → **sync licence** for the song (usually the publisher; unpublished: the creators) + **master use licence** from the label (§ 85). Own new recording → only the song side.
- GEMA covers the songs via framework agreements only for a broadcaster's in-house or commissioned productions (broadcasting only); third parties involved → in principle consent from the rights holders beforehand; advertising only from the rights holders. No list price; clearance can take several weeks or months.
- Content ID claims a licensee's trailer? Ask your distributor about allowlisting the channel. Small stations below GEMA's €60,000 programme settlement limit: usage-based settlement on application within six months after the distribution date (paid only if at least €5 per work remains).

Sources: Music Business Association · RPM Records · Groove House · CD Baby · iMusician · Spotify for Artists & specs · Apple Music Style Guide · EmuBands · Bandcamp Help · AHK · Disc Makers · Gotta Groove · United Record Pressing · Library of Congress · Shopify · Deutsche Post/DHL · Umweltbundesamt · ZSVR · Purdue OWL · UrhG §§ 13, 72, 78, 85 · KUG § 22 · UWG § 7 · DSK (2022) · DDG §§ 5, 33 · SIHK Hagen · Medienanstalten · Medienstaatsvertrag · GEMA · GVL · YouTube. Details: adubta-music.de/buero.html