LICENSING YOUR MUSIC TO TV + FILM

HOW I LANDED MY FIRST 30+ SYNC PLACEMENTS



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CHAPTER 1

FIND YOUR COMMUNITY

It has never been easier to build income as an independent artist. Through my journey, I've found sync licensing to be beneficial not only for exposure, but financially as well. The industry generates about $432 million dollars per year.

The first step to breaking into this lane is submerging yourself in the community. Even if you feel your music is 100% ready to send out, building relationships first will go a long way. All of the placements I've attained were made through knowing someone personally who knows the plug. A strong relationship and/or a solid reference is half of the equation.

The type of people or accounts to align with may be producers or other artists who also show an interest in the sync lane, music supervisors, sync groups, etc. There are a few things you will want to have in order prior to making your first impression.

SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE

What does your social media say about you? The internet has become a place to showcase your resume in realtime. If you are an artist, someone should be able to come to your page and learn that right away. You never get a 2nd chance to make a first impression and with social media, you never know when that impression may happen. Make sure who you are and what you do is not hard to find.

WHAT CAN YOU OFFER

Knowing your strengths and what sets you apart from other artists and songwriters will greatly separate you from the competition. Relationships must be mutually beneficial. You need to be able to communicate what you bring to the table. If the person or company who is able to give your music opportunities doesn't see value in what you offer, why should they choose you?

Do some research to find what shows use your style of music. You can reverse engineer that info and find who is responsible for providing music for those shows. Yes, this requires some research, but you'll have a better chance at landing music with shows that have a need for that genre.



CHAPTER 2

DO IT YOURSELF: IMPORTANCE OF BEING SELF SUFFICIENT

"You can't just sit there and wait for people to give you that golden dream. You've got to get out there and make it happen for yourself" - Diana Ross

One of my most memorable sync moments was getting a call for something needed immediately, completely outside of my comfort zone genre wise. There was a reference song they provided that had a fashion show/catwalk, vogue vibe. I went for it and had something written, recorded, and submitted within 30 minutes. That song was featured in a fashion show scene of *Our Kind of People Season 1 Episode 4*. Being able to turn things around quickly in these circumstances at times has put me at the front of the line. Not only is my material being the first listened to, it also leaves the impression that I'm dependable. Being self sufficient is a big part of how I've placed songs.

AT HOME RECORDING SETUP

Having the ability to record at any given moment is ideal. It is not required but it will more than likely be a big plus with music supervisors and sync groups. I recommend starting with whatever options you have. Even if that means recording your songs you plan to add to your sync catalog at a studio. At some point, make it goal to have your own, at home setup. Your equipment does not have to be expensive. Getting a good quality recording is key. It will also save you money and time booking sessions at a studio.

QUANTITY *AND* QUALITY

The best advice I could give you is to commit to being a student of the craft. It may sound cliche, but the opportunities you desire have no sympathy for excuses. There's always someone else willing to go the extra mile! The key is to build a quality catalog of music, while having the ability to constantly add to it.

There is a learning curve to recording and mixing your own vocals. Find an engineer you trust and ask them to create a vocal recording template for your DAW based on the sound you get from your home studio. This was monumental for me. While this template may not be perfect for every session, it gave me a foundation and a better understanding of mixing in general. Having my own studio at home and a vocal template helps me turn songs over quickly, while still having an industry quality sound.



PRODUCTION YOU CAN CLEAR

If you are not a producer, you will need beats to create with. When submitting your music, you will be liable for any issues that may arise with song clearances. For example, if you submit a song with a leased track, someone else may come along claiming they also own the track expecting a cut. This can be VERY messy and will not go over well with the sync library or music supervisor. You will want to be sure all sounds used in a track are royalty free and that the producer gives permission for you to shop the full song. Verifying split percentages for each song is important as well. You can draft a split sheet for everyone involved to sign or use a site like songsplits.com.

My personal advice goes back to Chapter 1; find your community! Make it a goal to align yourself with other creatives that have the same mission as you. If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together!

BUILDING A CATALOG

There is no set number required but I would suggest creating at least 3-5 songs to start with. Showing a music supervisor or sync library that you have solid, quality material may influence them to share their opportunities with you. As briefs start coming to you, regardless of how small or large your catalog is, chances are you will need to create songs for those particular opportunities. While having a larger catalog would benefit you, don't let that stop you from getting started.

There are different types of sync licenses that require exchange of ownership of your songs. You will have to decide what makes the best sense for you. Networks or libraries may require master, writing, and/or publishing ownership for an upfront fee. Every scenario is different. You will need to gauge what your personal goals are and what benefits you. Once you have your initial catalog together, decide whether or not you are willing to relinquish ownership. I have songs in my catalog that I'm not willing to give up ownership, and another group of songs that I'm open to selling a share or all of my ownership.



CHAPTER 3

WORKFLOW

Your work ethic will open more doors than your talent. Consistency equates to success. It is a numbers game. I currently have 30+ TV and Film placements from a catalog of over 150 songs. Finding an efficient workflow that fits your circumstances will help you win.

Make goals for yourself and set a schedule to stay on track. If you are working with producers, find ways of communicating that work for both of you. Eventually with consistency, your workflow will become habit. If you make the process easy and available, you'll have a better chance at staying consistent and reaching success.

TO-DO MANAGEMENT

The best way to keep yourself (and others) on task is to document everything. All songwriters and producers can attest to the black hole of unfinished tracks and songs. Make lists that help you follow what needs done and add deadlines. If there is an area where you need assistance, this will also help you delegate tasks. It may not be so hard to manage in the beginning, but as you progress and start to work with multiple situations this will go a long way.

GET READY, STAY READY

You'll likely encounter opportunities that require many changes to the arrangement of the track, or even the song as a whole. Make sure your stems are labeled in a manor that is easy to understand. If you are not also producing your tracks, it's a great idea to have the individual stems to the track as well. You don't want to lose a potential play because you aren't able to produce essential items. This market is highly competitive and an opportunity can easily be given to someone else if you aren't prepared. This part of the grind can be draining. Try to remain as flexible as possible. This could be the difference between working with a prospect one time or a hundred times. Being as prepared as possible and managing your to-do list and workflow will keep you on track and efficient.



CHAPTER 4

PITCHING YOURSELF

It's very important to do your homework and determine the best way to reach out to someone you're interested in working with. Email is the most professional way to reach out to someone. Social media makes it very easy for people to be accessible but you don't want to get lost in the sauce. If you choose to DM a library or someone directly, sometimes starting a conversation about how much you loved a recent show they worked on is better than immediately asking for something from them.

You'll want to be professional, courteous, and understanding. You may reach out and get a response right away or not at all. Don't take it personal. You never know if/when you might cross paths with someone again. Exercise patience!

PROFESSIONAL APPROACH

There are sync libraries who have a submission process via their website. If that is something already in place, that will be the best way to reach them. Otherwise, email is best. Make sure your email uses the correct punctuation and spelling. Begin with something that shows you've done your due diligence and are familiar with either something they've worked on, or the kind of artists they represent. Briefly, in a sentence or 2, state your strengths & what you do. Ask how you can be of service to them versus asking them to put you on.

EASY LISTENING ACCESS

When sending your email, be sure to include an easy way for them to listen to a few of your songs. These song's should align with the types of music that appear on shows they may work on or the types of genres they seem to represent.

There are a number of supervisors who solely use *Disco*, an online service that helps organize songs and tag/track metadata. You can also use something like a link to a Soundcloud playlist. Just be sure whichever method you choose is easy for them to use and doesn't require downloading files.

EMAIL EXAMPLE

Dear *(Insert Name)*,

I hope this email finds you well. The Chi *(Intert TV Show) i*s one of my favorite shows and the music you've sourced this season truly brought each scene to life. I am a signer/songwriter with 10+ years experience in writing and recording looking to align with sync professionals & libraries. If there is any service I could provide to you, I'd be honored! I have attached a link below to a p*laylist for your consideration*.

(insert link to playlist)

All the best,

(Your Name)



CHAPTER 5

EXPECTATIONS

Going into this with clear intentions and honest expectations will help keep things in perspective. You may get your first placement immediately or it could take awhile. You must STAY CONSISTENT! Even when it feels like nothing is happening.

My first placement "*Bring the Life*" aired on Season 3, Episode 4 of *The Chi* on *July 12th, 2020*. My next placement didn't come until *June, 2021*! Through that entire time I continued to add songs to my catalog. From June 2021 to *December 2021,* I placed a total of 17 songs! Imagine if I had quit when things seemed like they weren't working.

FREQUENCY OF PLACEMENTS

There are times where I've had placements coming left and right, week after week, and times where nothing seems to be coming through. You have to have honest expectations and continue to work through periods of feeling like nothing is happening.

$$$

The part everyone's looking forward to - *Money*. There are a few different sources of income in regards to sync. Typically, the first fee you'll receive is a **Sync Fee** - paid when a show/movie/company uses a song. This is generally paid AFTER the show/movie has aired. It can take months or even up to a year to receive this fee.

If you retain writing and/or publishing ownership, there are also **Royalties** you may receive. This income is received through PRO companies. You MUST be setup not only as a writer, but also as a publisher with a PRO to collect any royalties. Some of the most common PRO's are BMI, ASCAP, SESAC, etc. When songs air, there are royalties paid based on how many times that show was viewed. The amount paid per song is also based on the network it's aired on, how long the song plays, etc. There are a lot of factors at play.

If you are able to retain master ownership and decide to release the song to streaming platforms, you can also receive that income as well. These are considered **Mechanical Royalties.**

STAYING THE COURSE

Once you get rolling and things start to compound, It is possible to create a constant flow of income. Your sync fees may not always be a big home run. I've accepted fees as low as a couple hundred bucks and others where I've received thousands of dollars for one song. This is where it's important to be aware of what your goals are. If you are trying to get your foot in the door and build your resume, start where you can and build your way up.

THERE IS NO WRONG WAY

The beauty of being an independent artist is that you get to experience your journey however you choose. There is no wrong way to get to the top. You design what success means to you. Don't get discouraged if things don't go as planned. You are free to look at what is or isn't working for you and make adjustments as you go along.

Don't be afraid to collaborate with other creatives as well. Find your tribe and help each other obtain your goals. The most important part in all of this is your relationships.

CHAPTER 6

RESOURCES

- **Tunefind** - A *website that lists music played in TV shows and movies. Sometimes it will also list music supervisor info.*

- **Disco** - A *website that offers song catalog management, widely recognized by music libraries & supervisors.*

- **SongTradr** - *Music licensing and management platform. Also offers artists the opportunity to license, distribute and monetize their music.*

- **BMI**, **ASCAP**, **SESAC** - *PRO companies that facilitate writing and publishing royalty collection. You are not limited to these 3. In my experience, these are the most commonly used.*

- **The ASCAP Music Connections** - *list of resources provided by ASCAP*

- **SongSplits.com** - *convenient online version of a split sheet that documents the percentage of ownership for a particular song.*

- **Types of Music Licenses** - explanation of the different types of sync licenses you may encounter when placing your music.



DEAR DREAMER,

YOU'RE ON THE RIGHT PATH. STAY FOCUSED + DON'T QUIT.

I'm proud of you for taking another leap of faith into your dreams. I hope my experiences help you reach more of your goals. Remember - get started, make adjustments as you go along and most importantly, stay consistent.

Successfully,

Alonda Rich