



The anatomy of a

DIY

Album Launch

Plan your recording project from start to finish

65 point
checklist

Mark Pierce

Before you get started

Embarking on a recording project isn't a trivial undertaking. To do it well, and for your album to reach your intended audience, it will require *a plan - and a lot of work*.

To help you avoid coming unstuck I've created a checklist of all the major points you will need to consider (and act upon). If you follow each step carefully then you will give yourself a much improved chance of enjoying the whole process and emerging with a great recording of which you're proud, and that others enjoy listening to.

Be Your Own Record Label

You'll likely have noticed that The DIY Music movement has gained incredible momentum. The name is perhaps a little misleading, however. Rather than thinking that you have to do *everything* yourself, try to picture it more as **'Do It Together' Music**.

Essentially, rather than being solely a recording artist, you need to take on the role of being CEO of your own mini-record label and pull together a team to make your musical vision a reality.

There are some areas where working with professionals is definitely worth the outlay, but don't discount the impact of enlisting fans, friends, and family. You'd be surprised how much momentum you can achieve together.

How to use this guide

I've broken everything down into three major sections:

1. Pre-production
2. Production
3. Release

As this is a brief checklist designed to quickly give you an overview of all the key points in managing your recording project from concept to completion, you may discover that some of the points need further explanation.

I suggest using this as an opportunity to do some research - ask professionals, buy a book on the particular subject you're unsure about, or make use of the wealth of information available via Google & YouTube.

1. PRE-PRODUCTION

Writing & Rehearsal

Planning and preparation will make all the difference between you experiencing success or frustration. Here are the key points to consider:

- ☐ Clarify what kind of music you want to create, and why
- ☐ Clarify who your audience is and where they are
- ☐ Compose your songs
- ☐ Record quick demos, get constructive feedback on the songs from people you trust, and pay attention to the comments you receive
- ☐ Choose the musicians who will play on the songs (everything could be performed by you, friends, band members if you have one, or by the studio you choose)
- ☐ Rehearse the songs thoroughly
- ☐ Choose a recording studio & producer, and agree a price
- ☐ Choose a method of funding the album. Crowdfunding is a popular option
- ☐ Make sure all your instruments & equipment are in good working order
- ☐ Join associations such as PRS, PPL and CCLI (in the UK) to ensure any royalties generated from your music make their way to you

2. PRODUCTION

Under the guidance of your producer, studio engineer and mastering engineer (who can often be the same person in lower budget projects), you'll take your songs from concept to polished final versions.

Recording

- ☐ Record guide tracks for all songs
- ☐ Record instruments & vocals to all songs

Mixing

- ☐ Mix each track
- ☐ Get feedback, listen carefully via different systems, and possibly make adjustments to the balance of the mix

Mastering

- ☐ Choose a mastering engineer (possibly the same person as your mix engineer)
- ☐ Choose song order & the ideal gaps between tracks
- ☐ Assign an ISRC code to each song for royalty tracking

Replication or Duplication

- ☐ Decide how many CDs you need
- ☐ Decide on either replication or duplication process (duplication can be very short run, by the quality is similar to burning CDs from a computer. Replication is the process used for all commercially available CDs)
- ☐ Decide the style of packaging and if you require a booklet insert
- ☐ Choose a CD manufacturing company & agree a price

Photography, Artwork & Design

- ☐ Choose a title for your album
 - ☐ Choose a professional photographer, if applicable, & agree price
 - ☐ Choose a professional designer & agree price
 - ☐ Buy a UPC barcode, used for scanning CDs at point of sale
 - ☐ Make sure all text you intend to use is 100% correct
 - ☐ Approve artwork & page layout
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- ☐ Send final artwork and mastered audio to CD manufacturing company
 - ☐ Approve proof (often a PDF) to give go-ahead for production run

3. RELEASE

This is the part that many artists fail to pay attention to. The excitement of creating the product itself makes it easy for the marketing and promotion to be left as an afterthought. Don't fall into that trap. Ideally, much of this should be going on *while the album is being produced*.

Preparing For Launch

- ☐ Choose an official release date and alert your team. Don't announce the date publicly until you have the physical disks and everything else in place.
- ☐ Give away a free song as a teaser for the album in exchange for an email address
- ☐ Create a lyric video of the same song to share on YouTube
- ☐ Keep your fans up to date with how the album is progressing

Digital Distribution

- ☐ Choose an aggregator for digital distribution
- ☐ Upload finalised cover artwork and mastered audio files
- ☐ Complete your artist- and album profiles
- ☐ Add all song details including copyright information
- ☐ Choose destinations for your tracks (iTunes, Spotify etc)
- ☐ Build Soundcloud and Bandcamp pages
- ☐ Decide on any sync licensing options made available via your aggregator (these make your songs available for possible TV / advertising placements)

Merchandise

- ☐ Prepare album related products such as t-shirts, books, stickers, photos for sale

Live Performances

- ☐ Plan a CD release party / concert
- ☐ Schedule a series of gigs (possibly as a support slot for another artist)
- ☐ Rehearse the songs
- ☐ Perform the gigs & encourage people to buy CDs / merch

Press kit & PR

- ☐ Prepare an engaging, professionally written artist biography
- ☐ Supply interesting, professional photographs
- ☐ Provide MP3 downloads of the album for review

- ☐ Send Press Release & link pointing to your Press Kit to all potentially interested publications, blogs, podcasts and other outlets
- ☐ Set up and attend radio & podcast interviews

Website

- ☐ Update your website with news of the new album
- ☐ Populate with new professional photos
- ☐ Ensure blog / news section has recent engaging stories added
- ☐ Ensure people are able to buy your album and merchandise from your website
- ☐ Add info for gigs / tour / live appearances
- ☐ Make it easy to contact you
- ☐ Provide a method to sign up to your email list

Social Media

- ☐ Make sure your branding is consistent across all platforms & accounts
- ☐ Open Facebook, Twitter, YouTube & Instagram accounts
- ☐ Regularly update your social media accounts

Email

- ☐ Make sure your email list branding is consistent with website & social media
- ☐ Send regular emails (at least monthly) to your list
- ☐ Cultivate relationships with artists similar to you and ask if they'd share your new album news with their fan base

Street Team

- ☐ Enlist family and friends to help promote your new album via any channels they have available to them
- ☐ Encourage as many people as you can to sign up to your email list and follow your social accounts

CONCLUSION

Now that you have worked your way through the checklist, it is my sincerest hope that you now have increased clarity in your thought process and approach to recording and releasing your next album.

Managing The Overwhelm

Make no mistake - it is a big commitment you're making when deciding to record & release an album. It can feel a little overwhelming at times, but don't worry. That is perfectly normal.

The sense of achievement and fulfilment you'll get from doing it properly is wonderful, and is something that many people dream of doing, but only a small percentage experience. Will you be one of the few who do?

Pace yourself. Make a plan. Follow-through with it.

You're Not Alone

Even though we are firmly in the era of the DIY Musician, you don't have to go it alone.

If you ever need me, email is best: mark.pierce@revelator.co.uk

You can also keep in touch with me via my blog at www.revelator.co.uk/blog

Make your art. Make it well. Make sure people hear it.

Here's to your success!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mark', with a stylized flourish extending from the end.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Mark Pierce
Founder, Revelator

I founded Revelator in 2005 when I quit my comfortable management career working in design & marketing on projects for many household names.

Being something of a serial creative, when not in the design studio or on a photoshoot, I would be down at my friend's recording studio. I'd regularly be his guinea pig for any new techniques he wanted to practise, and I soaked it all in like a sponge. This was where I discovered my real passion. It had to be music production - front and centre.

Today, I am no longer a cog in a corporate machine but an English music producer & marketer, working from my purpose built studio at home in the beautiful North Wales countryside.

I am blessed in that I now get to help solo artists and songwriters realise their musical dreams, plus I get to exercise the skills learned from years in senior design & marketing roles to help present and market them well.

No matter what hurdle you're facing right now, starting from scratch or wanting to improve, I want to help your recording reflect you.

To explore your options, just get in touch with me. I have a friendly, relaxed approach - an informal chat over coffee is a great way to discover what your next steps look like!

Visit the website

www.revelator.co.uk