

How To MAKE MORE MONEY WITH MUSIC

VOLUME ONE



9 Free Revenue Streams for the Working (and Weekend) Musician

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9 Free Revenue Streams for the Working (and Weekend) Musician

By Randy Chertkow and Jason Feehan

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It turns out the old saying “it takes money to make money” isn’t true when it comes to making money with music. There are many music revenue streams you could be tapping into that cost \$0 up-front and still lead to new ways to generate income. Since they don’t cost anything out-of-pocket, why not start tapping them right now and see if you can earn more income? You’ll start earning profit from the first dollar that comes in.

Read on to learn about nine free revenue streams you should be tapping today or [click here for the free video version of everything covered in this guide!](#)



1. Collect non-interactive streaming royalties

You can make money every time your music is played on streaming services like Spotify Radio and Pandora or digital radio services such as Live365. If you have our book, [*Making Money With Music*](#), you should already know the 12 ways to register yourself—as songwriter, performing artist, producer, etc.—to ensure you earn every penny of the royalties you’re entitled to.



Although you’ll incur fees to sign up with some of the services and providers that grant you access to royalties generated by your music [SoundExchange](#) has no associated costs. SoundExchange collects sound recording performance royalties for non-interactive streaming services, which is simply a fancy way of saying “streaming radio,” where the listener doesn’t control the feed. (Spotify and Apple Music are *interactive* and pay you through other organizations.) But SoundExchange can’t pay you unless they know who you are and where to send the checks. Considering it’s free to join, there’s no reason to wait, just [sign up here](#).

Pro Tip!

Sign up for a “Both” account.

If you’re both the copyright owner of the sound recording and the artist performing the music, you should sign up with a “Both” account on [SoundExchange](#)

2. Generate YouTube AdShare revenue

If anyone on YouTube is using your music in their videos, you should be collecting AdShare revenue. To tap this revenue stream, you'll need to sign up for ContentID and, of course, be the copyright owner. You can apply [directly through YouTube](#), but note that they're particular about accepting direct applications. If YouTube doesn't accept your registration and you want an option to get this revenue without up-front costs, you can sign up with [Audiam](#) or [AdRev](#). While they don't charge up front, both of these services charge a percentage fee for any royalties collected—and it may be a higher rate than other for-pay services. They may also hold funds until a minimum amount is earned and have minimum qualifications to meet before taking you on as a member (e.g. number of daily views.)



Another potentially free option leverages your existing distribution partners. For example, [CD Baby's Social Video Monetization service](#) is automatically included with both its standard and pro distribution packages. Plus, CD Baby's service helps earn money from your music in videos on Facebook, Instagram Stories, and others. Check to see if any service you're already paying for provides an option to collect ContentID at no additional cost.

As with anything you sign up for, make sure you read the terms and are comfortable with all associated fees and services.

3. Collect songwriter performance royalties

You're entitled to royalties when your music is played on terrestrial radio, performed live, played on TV, and more. The money is split in two: 50 percent to the songwriter and 50 percent for the publisher. (If you're not sure if you have a publisher, it's probably you.) If you want more info about how this works, read the Licensing and Royalties chapter in [*Making Money With Music*](#).

BMI

You have your choice of societies to join, but if you'd like to get started and don't have a lot of funds, BMI allows you to [sign up as a songwriter member](#) for free, so you can start collecting the songwriter half of the royalties. And, once you have funds, you can use those funds to join as a publisher to collect the other half of the royalties (which you should do if you own your music recordings).

Royalty revenue streams like these are passive income, or "mailbox money," and they stack perfectly on top of other income streams like music sales, live shows, and patronage, so it makes sense to spend a few minutes to register your music. Note: this won't generate income unless your music is getting performed, streamed, and played consistently, so it's up to you to promote your music. Done right, these campaigns generate more royalty income, grow your fanbase, and even create more followers who are excited to hear your latest release, so they are worth your time. Just make sure to sign up to get royalties first or you'll be missing out on the income.

4. Earn affiliate sales

You could be making more money on every sale of your albums, products, and **merch** by using affiliate links. These are special links that Amazon, iTunes, and others let you create to provide an incentive for you to send your audience to their stores. They allow you to make an extra cut on the front end of each sale by way of a special code inside each affiliate link that lets them know who sent the customer. In essence, they pay you to send shoppers to their store. Most affiliate programs are free, which is more reason you should be using them to sell everything you can.

Typical affiliate programs start with you signing up and using their tools to create affiliate links for all the items you sell. Use these affiliate links everywhere you drive merch and music sales: on your website, social media, and other online presences. These links don't affect your customers—they won't notice any difference by clicking the affiliate link you provided so they can buy your album (or whatever)—but the store will track the link and give you a percent of that sale. This front-end cut is tacked on to your standard back-end cut through the retailer or digital aggregator. It doesn't matter to the store that you're making money on both ends. They just want you to send the customer their way and the percentage cut they give you is a reward for doing it.

It gets even better: you also get a cut of everything in the customer's shopping cart. In some cases, they'll give you a cut of everything the customer buys within 24-48 hours of clicking your link. That means if they decide to purchase other items beyond your music—such as food, books, or that large flat screen TV they've been eyeing—you get a percentage of that total purchase!

To do this for your digital music, you'll want to sign up as an affiliate at every site you have your music up for sale, such as [iTunes](#) and [Amazon](#). You might also want to sign up with affiliate aggregators to make affiliate links to other types of products and merchandise that fit with your band and brand—music gear or lifestyle products you like, for example. These services partner with tons of vendors and stores across the globe (including instrument retailers like Guitar Center, Musician123, and more). Two of the biggest aggregators include [CommissionJunction](#) and [Rakuten](#) (both are free).

Once you're approved, each affiliate partner will send you instructions on how to create affiliate links (here's an example from Apple for [creating and using affiliate links for iTunes](#)). For music links, you'll need to create these special links for each of your albums, EPs, and tracks. (We advise you keep track of them in a spreadsheet for easy access).

Once you create the affiliate links, update all your online presences with them instead of the generic non-revenue-generating ones. Be sure to use affiliate links every time you post to Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, or other social platforms, so when fans click the link and make a purchase, you'll automatically get your extra cut. A weekend of work can make you more money on every single sale.

5. Crowdfund to raise money for your next album, tour, or project

If you want to record your next album, go on tour, or create an inventory of merchandise and don't have the cash on hand to make it a reality, crowdfunding can help you get the funds. That's where free fundraising services like [Kickstarter](#), [IndieGoGo](#), [Launchpad](#), and [ArtistShare](#) come in.

These services allow you to ask your fans and the public to help fund a project or product. You set an overall target dollar amount you're trying to raise, create rewards to encourage people to pledge higher amounts of money, and choose a fundraising time limit. These services handle collecting all the money for you as well as provide a communication platform so you can market your project or product to your backers. In exchange for this, the platforms take a percentage of the total amount you raise. This means no up-front costs for you.

Crowdfunding does two things. First, it allows you to pre-sell your music, albums, merch, or tour dates to fans so you get money up front. This helps reduce your risk of taking on the cost of a new album or tour by lowering the amount of money you need to come up with. Plus, you know who's going to buy it up front. Second, crowdfunding gives you the opportunity to pull in larger backers—especially if you choose enticing rewards and stretch goals to get them to pledge more than they would normally pay for a regular album, event, or show.

Although crowdfunding doesn't cost money up front, it does take considerable time and effort to run a campaign, so it's not something you want to jump into without a plan. In fact, more than 44 percent of music campaigns on Kickstarter fail. However, musicians who plan their campaign, create compelling rewards, and put together great marketing that sells the project tend to not only reach their funding goal, but exceed it.

KICKSTARTER

INDIEGOGO.



Pro Tip!

Always have a \$1 reward!

There is a lot that goes into planning your crowdfunding rewards to maximize the amount of money you raise. But one key is to always have a \$1 reward. Everyone can afford it and it's an easy way to hook people in who are only casually interested in your project.

Once they commit \$1, you can message them to keep them up to date with what you're doing as well as upsell them to higher rewards. Also, remember that even the fans who only pledge a dollar might know people they can forward your latest messages to. For a good low-barrier \$1 reward, try choosing a single downloadable track.

6. Make recurring monthly income through patronage

If you like the crowdfunding model but are interested in something bigger than one-off, project-based initiatives, patronage could be the way go. One platform that can help you achieve this is [Patreon](#), which is free, charging only a percentage of the total amount you raise each month (no up front costs to you!).

PATREON |

The goals and mechanics behind patronage are almost identical to crowdfunding: get as many pledges as you can—at the highest levels possible—by offering a variety of rewards. But, since patronage requires

pledgers to pay you monthly, your job is to create rewards that provide value for their money every month. With patronage, you're creating a long-term relationship with your most dedicated supporters, so the rewards you offer need to vary month to month.

Think of your patrons as your fan club: you need to offer this paying group of fans access to either yourself (online chats, behind-the-scenes videos, blogs, etc.) or unreleased material, live recordings, concert footage, or other exclusives that you don't share with the public (or will let them see first).

As with crowdfunding, you always want an entry-level, low-end reward to hook people into supporting you on a monthly basis. Even at \$1 or \$2, you're really asking for \$12-\$24 a year, which are common *crowdfunding* levels of commitment. If you can get pledges between \$5-\$25, that's \$60-\$300/year. Of course, don't forget to offer higher reward levels, like \$75-100+ (\$900-\$1,200/year), since you never know who might fund you. It also makes the lower levels look more reasonable and appealing.

Patronage stacks very nicely on top of all of the other income you make. It's free, and it doesn't get in the way of the money you earn from your other revenue streams, like shows, music sales, royalties, merchandise, licensing, video advertising, etc.

7. Collect cashless donations and tips

Of course, the simplest, free revenue stream to tap is to have an "online tip jar" on your website. All you need is something as simple as a [PayPal](#) or [Venmo](#) link. These services take a cut of every transaction, but the rest is all yours—and it's free to sign up

Don't make the mistake of thinking these donations can only be used online! As more people and businesses are going cashless, opting to pay electronically through their phones, you can (and should) bring your online tip jar to all your real-world events, like gigs, listening parties, and street performances. For the real-world, services like [PayPal.me](#) or [Square Cash](#) allow you to share a link and let others pay you. Mobile apps like [Busk.co](#) also make it easy for fans to tip you if they have the app installed.

Pro Tip!

Use QR codes to bring your online tip jar offline

When it comes to bringing your online tip jar into the real world, use QR codes. With today's smartphones, all anyone needs to do is point their camera at the code and the phone will launch the link.

To see how easy it is to use a QR code, point your smartphone camera at the QR code image below—it's a link to the video version of this guide, which you should check out!



To create a QR code, check out free sites like [QRCode Monkey](#) which allows you to customize your QR codes and embed images, like your logo, directly inside it.

Even if you don't use the online tipping jar, if you have a Patreon page or crowdfunding project in the works, create a QR code that points fans to it. Doing so can turn someone in your audience into a monthly patron or project backer.

8. Partner with a charity and earn money while helping a cause

You can always promote a cause or charity for free, but if you play live or tour, you can make money and underwrite your touring and recording costs by giving certain charities access to your audience to promote their cause.

Similar to how large corporations set aside marketing and promotional dollars, many large charities do as well. These promotional budgets help organizations focused on eliminating world hunger, ending poverty, rescuing at-risk children, or assisting with women's issues build awareness of the problem they're tackling, spread the word as to how they help, grow donations, and ultimately help them do more good.

By growing, they can do more for their cause. While these organizations usually place ads on television, radio, and the web to spread the word, there's a growing number of charitable institutions, such as [Worldvision](#), that also set aside funding to sponsor musicians who perform live. While this includes huge acts who tour and fill arenas across the globe, they've found that local, grassroots advocacy helps their cause as well.

To make it cost effective for the charity to sponsor you, they require you play live at least 25 times within the year, since it's all about being in front

of a certain amount of people to plug their charity and get sign-ups. Since it requires commitment on your part—taking time on stage promoting the cause of the charity and collecting sign-ups and donations at your merch table—to tap this type of funding, you need to have a passion for the work the charity is doing. And, it goes without saying that partnering with a charity and promoting its cause has to fit your persona and brand as well. But if it does and you meet the requirements they're seeking, you can both do good and earn money to pay for travel, tour support, gear, and recording.

Tapping this revenue stream is not as simple as signing up at a “charity artist matching” site. It’s about making connections. In fact, one of the key connectors in the space is [Tom Jackson](#), the live music producer, who also helps charities connect with the right independent artists. One artist Jackson worked with performed house concerts, at small venues, and in coffee shops about 45 times in a year and earned between \$8,000-\$12,000—all while helping feed, educate, and bring medical care to about 750 people. If you’re sincere about helping a charitable cause and you’re willing to put in the work, this avenue might be for you. To investigate further, check out [Jackson’s inquiry form page](#).

9. Rent out your gear, rehearsal, and recording space

If you find your instruments, lighting and PA equipment, or recording gear is sitting unused for long periods of time, why not turn that down time into money? Using a service like [Sparkplug](#), the “Airbnb of gear,” can open up a whole new revenue stream for you.

SPARKPLUG

SparkPlug acts as a marketplace for gear and studio space. It has a large inventory and a great location-based search engine. It's very convenient for musicians who are on tour and don't want to carry their equipment everywhere or are looking for that perfect piece of gear to use in the studio.

Sparkplug works like any peer-to-peer trust-based sharing service. After creating an account, you create a page for whatever you want to allow people to rent and set a time range for when it's available and for how much. When someone contacts you through the site to rent your gear, Sparkplug walks you and the renter through the entire process: scheduling, pick up, payment (including withholding a security deposit from the renter), and the return of the equipment (and rating one another).

But this service is not just for music gear: if you have studio or rehearsal space, you can rent it out when you're not using it. In exchange for this, Sparkplug takes a percentage cut of the transaction.

Sparkplug also gives you a lot of flexibility in the terms. For instance, you can set the price and duration of the rental—per hour, week, or month—to whatever you think is appropriate. If you want to offer delivery to your renters, you can set a fee and the delivery radius you're willing to travel to transport the gear. You can also charge fees for optional services (changing strings, providing extra cables, tuning), and create custom quotes for one-off rentals.

As with any sharing/renting service, there's always a possibility of your equipment getting dented or scratched or even lost or damaged, so you need to be careful about what equipment you'll want to make available. Also, since you're dealing with the public, there's an element of customer service you need to focus on as well. Since there's a rating system, you'll want to make sure your customer is pleased with the entire experience—

this includes the collection/delivery process, how responsive you are, and the condition of the equipment you're renting.

That said, turning your gear into a revenue stream can add up. For instance, musicians in Austin who rent equipment during SXSW earn, on average, \$700 during that week alone. If you have music festivals in your city, making your equipment available to rent could provide some good income.

Conclusion

Each of these free revenue streams are out there, waiting for you to take advantage of them so you can make more money with music. While these nine ideas are a good place to start, there are even more opportunities to explore. Once you see which ones work the best for you and you earn enough income, you can reinvest in your music to unlock even more income sources.

For example, there are many other worthwhile revenue streams beyond these free ones that require money up front. For instance, to register as a publisher with a performance royalty organization (PRO) such as BMI or ASCAP, there's a sign-up fee. But, being a member allows you to tap *additional* royalty income your music is earning. In fact, there are dozens of royalty revenue streams worth investigating, all of which are covered in our book [***Making Money With Music.***](#)



About the Authors

Billboard magazine called Randy Chertkow and Jason Feehan “the ideal mentors for aspiring indie musicians who want to navigate an ever-changing music industry.”

Chertkow and Feehan are musicians, authors, columnists, professional speakers, and consultants. They've written three books: *Making Money With Music* (Sept 2018, Macmillan); *The Indie Band Survival Guide: The Complete Manual For The Do-It-Yourself Musician* (Macmillan); and *The DIY Music Manual* (Random House). They're the also creators of the 15-hour online educational course, “[Making Money With Music](#)” on CreativeLive, are regular contributors to *Electronic Musician* magazine and the [Disc Makers Blog](#), and are working on their 21st album with [Beatnik Turtle](#), their band of 21 years.



Randy Chertkow, M.S.

randy@makingmoneywithmusic.com

Beyond being a musician, Randy is also an enterprise-class IT professional with over 20 years' experience as an infrastructure architect in Fortune 500 companies. He's a consultant and has worked as a pre-sales systems engineer for a major software vendor as well as a start-up. He has a business bachelor's degree and an M.S. in Computer Science: Data Communications, with a secondary concentration in Artificial Intelligence.



Jason Feehan, J.D., PMP

jason@makingmoneywithmusic.com

Beyond being a musician, Jason is also a licensed attorney and a business professional who specializes in project and program management, product management, change management, business operations, technology, and consulting. He has a Bachelor of Science in Political Science & Psychology, a J.D., and is a certified Project Management Professional.

[Beatnik Turtle](#) is a horn-powered pop-rock band based in Chicago that has released over 500 songs and has written music for TV, commercials, films, podcasts, theater (including Chicago's world-famous Second City), and has licensed music to Disney/ABC Family and Viacom.