FREE GUIDE FOR ARTIST MANAGERS

Built from 25 conversations with managers and labels

THE ARTIST MANAGER'S ROYALTY CHECKLIST



How to track every statement and check that every label pays your artist correctly.

Qlero

FREE GUIDE FOR ARTIST MANAGERS

Every statement. Every label. Under control.

Your artist earns royalties from labels, distributors, publishers and collecting societies, and every one of them reports differently. This checklist gives you a simple system to track every statement, check that it is right, and keep your roster's royalty paperwork in order.

What's inside

01 **Build a statement tracker**
One sheet for every artist, every source and every due date.

02 **Check every statement that arrives**
Nine checks that catch most errors in about 20 minutes.

03 **Ask for the data, not just the PDF**
The fields to request, with an email you can send today.

04 **Set up the label side early**
What to have in place if your artist owns their masters.

05 **Keep the paperwork your accountant needs**
A structure that ends the end-of-year scramble.

Time to set up

About an afternoon for your first artist. Each extra artist takes far less.

Time to run

About an hour a month, plus 20 minutes per statement you check.

> Every step ends with one action. Do the action for your biggest artist first, then roll it out across the roster.

STEP

01

Build a statement tracker

You can't check a statement you don't know is coming. Start with one tracker that lists every income source for every artist you manage, one row per artist and source.

COLUMN	WHAT TO RECORD	EXAMPLE
Artist	Artist or project name	Artist A
Source	Label, distributor, publisher or society	Indie label, EP deal
Rights type	Master, publishing or neighbouring rights	Master
Deal basis	Royalty rate and basis from the contract	20% of PPD, or 50% net receipts
Reporting cycle	How often they account	Half-yearly
Due date	When the statement should arrive, per the contract	90 days after period end
Last received	Date and period of the last statement	30 Sep, for H1
Payment received	Date and amount paid into the bank	7 Oct, matches statement
Access	Who holds the portal login (never store passwords here)	Manager inbox
Open issues	Anything missing, queried or disputed	Asked for sales file

Three habits make the tracker useful

- **Take due dates from the contract.** Most label deals state how many days after the period end a statement is due. Labels commonly account half-yearly and distributors monthly, but the contract decides.
- **Log the payment separately from the statement.** A statement that arrives without the money, or money that arrives without a statement, are both problems.
- **Keep passwords in a password manager,** not in the sheet. Share access with your team through the password manager instead.

ACTION STEP

List every release your artist has put out and note who accounts for it. Any release where you can't name the payer is your first open issue.

STEP

02

Check every statement that arrives

Most statement errors are not fraud. They are a wrong rate in a system, a missing territory file, or a cost charged to the wrong artist. These nine checks catch most of them, and take about 20 minutes per statement once you know the deal.

- [ ] **Right period, on time.** The statement covers the period you expect and arrived by the contract's due date.
- [ ] **Balance carries over.** The opening balance equals the closing balance on the last statement. A jump here means something was changed behind the scenes.
- [ ] **Rate matches the deal.** The royalty rate applied is the one in the contract, including any escalation your artist has earned after hitting a sales threshold.
- [ ] **Basis matches the deal.** A royalty on PPD (the dealer price) and a share of net receipts produce very different numbers. Check the statement uses the basis your contract names.
- [ ] **All territories and platforms are there.** Compare against the last statement and against what was licensed. A country or platform that disappears is the most common sign of a missing file.
- [ ] **Volumes look plausible.** Compare streams against the artist's own dashboards, such as Spotify for Artists. Expect small differences, not large ones.
- [ ] **Only recoupable costs are charged.** Every deduction should be a cost the contract says is recoupable, at the share the contract sets. Ask for receipts on anything unexplained.
- [ ] **Recoupment adds up.** Advances and costs reduce over time as royalties come in. Check whether the artist is recouped and whether other contracts are being cross-collateralised without the contract allowing it.
- [ ] **The money matches.** The payment that lands in the bank equals the amount due on the statement, after any agreed currency conversion.

STEP 02, CONTINUED

Before you query anything

Check your audit window

Most contracts only let you object to a statement for a limited time, often two or three years. After that, the statement is treated as final.

Query in writing

Name the statement, the line, what you expected and why. A clear, factual query gets a faster correction than a general complaint.

ACTION STEP

Run the nine checks on the most recent statement for your biggest artist. Note every question in the Open issues column of your tracker.

STEP

03

Ask for the data, not just the PDF

A PDF statement tells you the total. The sales file behind it tells you where the money came from. You can't run the checks in Step 2 properly without it, and most labels and distributors can export one in minutes if you ask.

Ask for a sales file (CSV or Excel) with these fields on every line

- ISRC and UPC
- Platform, such as Spotify, Apple Music, YouTube or TikTok
- Territory
- Sales period
- Units or streams
- Gross amount received and net amount after fees
- Royalty rate applied and the resulting royalty
- Any deductions, with a description

STEP 03, CONTINUED

Don't forget the other income

Also ask for statements from every other source your artist earns from: the publisher or PRO for songwriting income, and the neighbouring rights society or label for performer income. Managers often track masters closely and miss the rest.

Here is a short email you can adapt

EMAIL TEMPLATE

Subject: Sales data request for [Artist], [period]

Hi **[Name]**,

Thanks for the statement for **[period]**. To keep our records complete, could you also send the underlying sales file in CSV or Excel, with ISRC, platform, territory, units, gross and net amounts and the royalty rate applied per line?

If it is easier, a standard export from your royalty system is perfect. Could we receive it alongside each statement from now on?

Thanks,
[Your name]

ACTION STEP

Send this email to every label and distributor in your tracker that currently sends only a PDF, and log the date you asked.

STEP

04

If your artist owns their masters, set up the label side early

When your artist releases through a distribution deal, someone has to account onward to producers, featured artists and other collaborators. That job usually lands on the manager. Getting these six things in place before the first royalty run saves weeks of untangling later.

- [ ] **Signed split sheets for every track.** Who gets what share of the master, agreed before release.
- [ ] **Deal terms per collaborator.** For each person: their royalty rate, whether it is calculated on PPD or net receipts, and whether it comes off the top or out of the artist's share.
- [ ] **A recoupment rule for each deal.** Decide whether costs and advances are recovered before a collaborator is paid, and whether that applies to them at all.
- [ ] **A cost register.** Every recording, mixing, mastering, artwork and marketing cost, with date, amount, receipt and which release it belongs to.
- [ ] **Payee details collected up front.** Legal name, address, bank details, VAT number if they have one, and any tax forms needed for cross-border payments.
- [ ] **An accounting cycle.** Monthly, quarterly or half-yearly. Quarterly is a sensible start for a small roster: frequent enough to keep on top of, rare enough to be manageable.

> **Tip:** producers and collaborators ask far fewer questions when their statement shows units, platforms and territories rather than a single total. Whatever you use to produce statements, include the breakdown.

ACTION STEP

Pick your artist's most recent self-released single and check that every person on it has a signed split and agreed deal terms. Fix any gaps before the period closes.

STEP

05

Keep the paperwork your accountant needs

Your accountant or business manager needs the same numbers you do, at the same time. A shared, consistent structure stops the end-of-year scramble for missing statements.

- [ ] **One folder per artist, one subfolder per source.** Name every file the same way: Artist, Source, Period. For example: ArtistA_IndieLabel_2026-H1.pdf.
- [ ] **Statement and sales file stored together.** Keep the PDF and the CSV side by side for every period.
- [ ] **A monthly reconciliation.** Match every payment in the bank against a statement in your tracker. Unmatched money in either direction goes to Open issues.
- [ ] **Your commission calculated from the statement.** Note which statement each commission invoice is based on, so it can be traced later.
- [ ] **Tax documents filed with the payee.** VAT numbers, withholding tax forms and residency certificates, with their expiry dates.
- [ ] **Read access for your accountant.** Give them access to the folder or system directly instead of forwarding PDFs by email.

ACTION STEP

Book a 30-minute call with your accountant, show them the tracker and folder structure, and agree what they need from you each month.

WHEN THE SPREADSHEET STOPS SCALING

One place for every statement on your roster

This checklist works by hand for one or two artists. Across a whole roster, with several labels each, it turns into a full-time job. That is where Qlero comes in.

- **Every statement in one place.** Drop in any sales file from any label, distributor or society. Qlero reads the format and builds one view per artist.
- **Income you can actually see.** Earnings by platform, territory, track and release, across every source.
- **Statements for your collaborators.** If your artist runs their own label, Qlero calculates every split, recoups costs per the deal and produces clear statements, with a portal for each collaborator.
- **Your team on the same numbers.** Invite your accountant or business manager and choose what they can see, label by label.

See it with your own roster

Book a 30-minute walkthrough and we'll show you how your statements would look in Qlero.

Book a walkthrough

qlero.cal.com/victor/qlero

Qlero

Built by the team behind Nova Sounds, a record label and distribution company, so it is designed around how music royalties actually work.