

MIRI LLC

THE ROYALTY GUIDE · CREATED BY MIRI

What the game was really teaching you.

You just played Royalty Run. Here is the actual business behind it, the part that costs artists real money when nobody explains it.

\$1.8B

sits unclaimed in music royalties every year, in what the industry calls the black box. Not missing. Sitting. Waiting on paperwork nobody taught you to file.

Every song is two different pieces of property.

This is the split that trips up almost every new artist, and it is the whole reason royalties get lost.

THE COMPOSITION Publishing The song itself. The melody, the lyrics, the chord progression. Owned by whoever wrote it, split by whatever percentage they agreed to. This is the side people forget to register.	THE RECORDING The Master The specific recorded version. Owned by whoever paid for or controls that recording, often the artist or a label. This is usually the side people already understand.
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Every stream, every sync placement, every radio spin pays both sides separately, through completely different systems. Miss the registration on one side and that half of the money never finds you. It does not disappear. It drops into the black box, the industry's name for unclaimed royalties, and most of it never comes out.

Where the money actually comes from.

Four real income streams, four different places you have to show up to get paid.

STREAMING & SALES

Mechanical royalties

Paid every time a song is streamed or downloaded. In the US this runs through The MLC. If your songs are not registered there, this money accrues under an unmatched claim, not in your account.

RADIO, TV, LIVE, STREAMING

Performance royalties

Paid when a song is performed publicly, including the "performance" portion of a stream. Collected through a PRO: ASCAP, BMI, SESAC, or GMR. You have to join one and register every song, one at a time.

FILM, TV, ADS, GAMES

Sync licensing

A negotiated fee to use your song against picture. No automatic system pays this. It is relationship and pitching driven, which is where brand partnerships and procurement come in.

PHYSICAL & DIGITAL SHEET MUSIC

Print royalties

The smallest stream today, but still real for working songwriters and composers with published sheet music or method books in circulation.

Welcome to the black box.

That is the actual industry term for where this money sits. Not a metaphor. A real, named account that nobody is checking on your behalf.

THE BLACK BOX, DEFINED

When a song's ownership or metadata is not properly identified or matched, royalties can still be generated, but the system does not know who should receive the money. Those unmatched, unclaimed royalties end up sitting in what is commonly called **the black box**.

It is almost never fraud. It is metadata. A PRO or the MLC collects money tied to a recording, but the recording is not correctly linked to a registered songwriter, so the money drops into the black box instead of your account. Common causes: a song was never registered with a PRO at all, a co-writer was left off the split sheet, a title or ISRC does not match across platforms, or a name was spelled differently on the credits than on the registration.

Money in the black box does not come find you. You have to already be registered correctly before it gets there, or it just sits, waiting on a match that never comes.

None of this requires a lawyer to fix. It requires the paperwork actually getting done, in the right order, before the song comes out. That is the entire job of a publishing administrator, and it is a job you can partly do yourself.

Five moves to make this week.

In order. Do not skip the split sheet step, it is the one that is impossible to fix later.

01 Join a PRO if you have not already

ASCAP, BMI, SESAC, or GMR. Free or low cost to join. This is the account performance royalties get paid into.

02 Register every released song with your PRO

Joining is not the same as registering. Each song has to be entered individually, with every writer and their exact split.

03 Register with The MLC

Separate from your PRO. This is what unlocks mechanical royalties from US streaming. Free to set up.

04 Get a split sheet signed at the session, not after

Every writer in the room signs before anyone leaves. This document is what your PRO registration and your MLC registration both rely on.

05 Run your existing catalog through a royalty gap check

If you have released music before today, some of it is very likely unregistered or under-registered somewhere in this chain. Find out which songs before you assume they are covered.

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Use the tools yourself, or let us handle it. Either way you are covered.

The split sheet generator, the royalty gap checker, and the Schedule A builder are free and live right now. When your catalog is big enough that this becomes a full time job, that is what publishing administration is for.

[OPEN THE FREE TOOLS](#)

[SEE SERVICES](#)

The bridge between corporate and culture.

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