

Top Ten Tips for Getting Your Music in Films and TV Shows

From [Durango Songwriters Expo](#)

Simple but often overlooked details...

❶ Make a CD of your songs (DUH) and also upload them to the web (also DUH) using sites like [Soundcloud.com](#), [ReverbNation.com](#), [CDBaby.com](#) or any of the many popular music discovery sites. You should also have a [Dropbox.com](#) or [Box.com](#) account as some supervisors will ask you to send them a link to a box you have set up specifically for them, where they can easily view and download your files.

❷ Package your CD in a traditional plastic jewel case (or a cardboard facsimile) and print your name on the spine. Why? This is a hold-over from radio programmers and reviewers who stack up the CDs waiting for their attention. If they can see your name on the spine of the CD and find you quickly, this is a huge advantage for you. (Remember, everyone else in that stack could be chosen as well!) Music supervisors are extremely busy people and their tasks are very time-sensitive. Make it easy for them to work with you!

❸ Print the following information on the face of your CD via a paper label or thermal printing: Your name, your contact info, the name of each song and a brief description of the genre or feel of the song i.e. (moody), (happy), (dark), (foul language - YES they need dirty songs too!), etc. Make it easy for them to find what they are looking for!

❹ Do not send shrink-wrapped CDs! Yes they LOOK more professional and NEW but music supervisors are very busy people. Save them every minute you can, it will benefit you more than you think.

⑤ Your recordings **MUST BE** of **MASTER QUALITY**. Poorly recorded tracks will not only get tossed but will hurt your chances of getting another listen. Make sure to have both the full recorded versions and also just the tracks (without vocals) available (on a CD and on the web). Often supes will hear something that's perfect but they need to get rid of the vocals for the scene. If you don't have the tracks you'll miss the opportunity.

⑥ How to find music supervisors: Watch TV shows and films! And also notice the music that plays in commercials. Make a note when a program is using music that sounds like yours. Look in the credits for the name of the Music Supervisor. Google that person or find their work on imdb.com searching for the name of the program. The Hollywood Reporter and Billboard Magazine are also good sources for finding music supervisors and what shows are currently in development or shooting.

⑦ **DO YOUR HOMEWORK**. Don't submit songs to supes without knowing their work or what they are currently working on. Don't send inappropriate material. Study up on them before communicating!



There were 30 music supervisors at the [Durango 2014 Film/TV Showcase!](#)

⑧ **CONTACTING AND FOLLOWING UP:** It's still OK to call people on the phone...if you can get their number. But more likely you will first find an email address to contact. Use their name in the subject line of your email i.e. "Hi Janet, it was nice talking to you today" or "Hi Steve, Bill at Big Bad Music referred me." Be brief, get to the point. **DO NOT ATTACH AN MP3.** Ask if you can send them your songs. Never send anything unsolicited, it will get thrown away. Follow up but don't stalk! You want them to remember you as a nice person. It's amazing how being nice can get you in front of people important to you!

⑨ **ONE-STOP!** Most of today's Film/TV productions work on a skinny budget of both time and money. It's a fast-paced world. When a supe needs a piece of music, often they need it NOW, like today or tomorrow morning! Consequently the ability to quickly "clear" a piece of music for use is of paramount importance. When a supervisor asks you if this is a one-stop, they are asking, "can you legally clear this song yourself?" Do you own the master recording? Are you the songwriter and/or publisher? Can you sign off on the paperwork to grant this license? **IMPORTANT:** If you say yes, and later a publisher or fellow musician or co-writer challenges your right to license this work, this can be very bad for you. The worst thing that a supe can have happen is a law suit over a piece of music they have licensed. When you say "this is a one-stop," it darn well better be or you will have a lot of trouble getting licensed in the future. Word gets around and people do get "black-listed." Take care of the paperwork early, like when you are recording the song! (You can see and download a sample Release Form at the end of this booklet.)

⑩ Be reasonable in your expectations. There are three main factors in bringing more and more Film/TV opportunities to today's indie artists. 1) High quality recordings are easily made by indies via modern technologies like Garageband and other fairly inexpensive digital platforms. 2) The shrinking production budgets of the Film/TV world. 3) The rapidly growing need for music to accompany the burgeoning programming world afforded by hundreds of cable channels and now thousands of Internet programs.

A cautionary note: Don't get too attached to a specific amount of money you expect to get paid for the use of (probably) just part of your song in a film or TV show. In the beginning you will get placements with new or untested programs. It might be \$50. It might be \$500. It might be \$2,500! It depends on how it is used (background, title theme, etc.) Be careful not to too quickly dismiss an offer because to be sure there are other great indie artist's CDs sitting on her desk!

So, in summation: Music Supervisors need your music...IF it's good enough, appropriate for their project, and a "one-stop." Yes, you have to find them and get your tunes to them in a manner that will work FOR THEM. But make no mistake, a lot of money is being made by indie artists for their work licensed to Film, TV and Ad Agencies. If you are very good and very persistent, you will get licensed!

BONUS TIP! Make sure you complete, as fully as possible, the META TAGS associated with your tracks: mp3, wav, aiff, etc. You can do this in your itunes account or you can use another program like [IDTagEditor](#).

(SAMPLE)

Session Musician / Vocalist Release Contract

Project Name:

Session Date(s):

Session Musician/Vocalist:

Dear _____:

This letter constitutes the formal agreement (“Contract”) between (Producer/Label) and yourself (herein described as the Artist), whereby you are being hired for compensation to play/perform on the above titled recordings whereby you agree to provide your professional services as a musician or vocalist for the purposes of making studio recordings (“Recordings”), all as hereinafter set forth.

Terms and Conditions:

1. Compensation: Upon immediate completion of the contracted Recording Session Date(s) above, you will be paid the amount of: \$_____ for your services.
2. Non-Royalties: By entering into this contract and agreeing to the above compensation amount with (Producer/Label), you agree to give up any rights to any Royalties earned by this project’s recordings.
3. Non-use of material: By accepting the above compensation amount, you agree not to not use any of the songs recorded at the above stated session without the expressed written consent of (Producer/Label). To this extent, you are granting (Producer/Label) the exclusive rights of your performance during these sessions.

4. Copyright: (Owner/Publisher) has secured the copyright(s) to all songs recorded during the above dates and all recorded song shall be the sole property of the (Owner).

It is expressly understood that payment is considered on an all-works- for-hire basis, and that the aforementioned individual is not entitled to royalties, publishing, or ownership in any way, shape or form regarding the copyright, royalties, and/or mechanics for the master or reproduced recordings.

I AGREE THAT AS A SESSION MUSICIAN/VOCALIST, I HAVE NO CLAIMS WHATSOEVER IN THE FUTURE TO ANY PART OF SUCH RECORDING.

Signature _____

Session Musician / Vocalist: _____

eMail Address _____

Phone _____

(Producer/Label) has permission to use my name &/or picture in promoting this project.

YES _____ NO _____

This form courtesy of the [Durango Songwriters Expo](#).