

# » RECORD LABEL LAUNCH CHECKLIST (2026) »

## ESSENTIAL STEPS TO START AND GROW YOUR LABEL

### 1. STRATEGY & POSITIONING

- Define your label's vision and long-term goals
- Choose your genre(s) and sonic identity (Do you want to specialize in certain genres and styles?)
- Identify your target audience and where they discover music
- Define your reference ecosystem (Which labels, playlists, and scenes you want to sit next to?)
- Define your unique angle (What makes your label different?)
- Test your concept: Can you describe your label clearly in one sentence?

### 2. BRANDING

- Choose a unique label name (always check availability)
- Important: Check name pronunciation & memorability (easy to say = easier to share)
- Secure domain + social media handles
- Create a logo and visual identity (e.g., color palette, typography, brand guidelines, brand personality, imagery & graphics, etc.)
- Define a consistent aesthetic across releases

### 3. LEGAL & BUSINESS SETUP

- Register your label as a business
- Set a feasible budget (How much can you spend and on what?)
- Set up accounting, taxes, and VAT compliance
- Open a business bank account
- Create artist contracts (define rights, revenue splits, recoupment terms clearly)
- Register with collection societies (e.g., GEMA, GVL)

## 4. ARTIST & MUSIC PRODUCTION

- Scout artists with both sound AND growth potential (not just talent)
- Build a sustainable roster of artists
- Align on release conditions, plans, and expectations: creative control, deadlines, promo involvement
- Record music (DIY or studio)
- Finalize mixing and mastering (release-ready quality)
- Make sure recordings meet platform standards (loudness, format, quality)

## 5. DISTRIBUTION SETUP

- Choose a music distributor that fits your label model
- Check payout structures of different music distribution services (commission vs. 0% models)
- Make sure you can manage multiple artists/releases efficiently
- Upload releases with correct metadata
- Prepare artwork (again, pay attention to consistent branding)
- Set release dates and territories

## 6. RELEASE STRATEGY

- Plan your rollout (singles → EP/album)
- Schedule releases to avoid overlap
- Plan at least 4 weeks of pre-release promotion
- Use a waterfall strategy to maximize streaming over time
- Set up pre-save campaigns on platforms like Spotify, Apple Music, and Deezer
- Pitch to playlists, blogs, and curators (you can submit your artists' releases through professional services like iMusician's Editorial Playlist Pitching)

## 7. PROMOTION & GROWTH

- Build the online presence of your label as well as your artists (website + socials)
- Create content (teasers, reels, behind-the-scenes)
- Build a content loop (each release = weeks of content, not just one post)
- Run ads (social media, YouTube, streaming platforms)
- Reach out to the press, blogs, and radio
- Collaborate with artists on cross-promotion (shared audiences)
- Build direct fan access (email list, community, or CRM)

## 8. (OPTIONAL) PHYSICAL RELEASES

- Decide on format (vinyl, CD, cassette)
- Plan manufacturing timelines – account for long vinyl lead times (often 3-6 months)
- Order realistic quantities

## 9. REVENUE & OPERATIONS

- Set up a simple royalty tracking system early
- Review performance per release (what worked vs what didn't) – track streams, sales, royalties, trends, etc.
- Pay artists accurately and on time
- Adjust strategy based on performance

