

# The Artist Album Cycle

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The “album cycle” is the repeating loop an artist’s career moves through: you write, you record, you release, you tour/perform behind it, and then you reset and start again. Understanding the full cycle lets a manager plan a year (or two) ahead instead of reacting release-to-release.

For an electronic artist in the house/tech-house lane (like Snooko), the “album” is often really a **steady stream of singles and EPs** plus a DJ/touring calendar — but the same phases apply. Think of it as a continuous wheel, not a one-time event.

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## The Cycle at a Glance

flowchart LR

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A[Writing & Pre-Production] --> B[Recording & Production]
B --> C[Pre-Release Setup]
C --> D[Release]
D --> E[Touring & Performance]
E --> F[Catalog & Reset]
F --> A
F -. -> |momentum carries forward| C
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The dotted line matters: in modern electronic music you rarely stop. While one record is touring, the next is already being written — phases **overlap**. A good manager keeps two or three releases in different phases at all times so the artist never goes dark.

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## Phase 1 — Writing & Pre-Production

**Timeline:** Ongoing / 1–3 months of focused work before a release wave.

This is idea generation: writing, sound design, demos, collecting loops and ideas, deciding the artistic direction for the next batch of music. For an electronic artist this often means a folder of 20–40 project sketches that get narrowed down to the strongest few.

**The manager’s job:** - Protect studio/creative time — block it on the calendar and shield it from busywork. - Keep a simple **demo/idea tracker** so nothing gets lost. - Spot the singles early — flag the 2–3 tracks with the most obvious hook or DJ appeal. - Encourage co-writes and collaborations that expand the artist’s network and lane (other producers, vocalists, remixers). - Start thinking about the release narrative — what’s the story that ties this run of music together?

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## Phase 2 — Recording & Production

**Timeline:** 1–3 months (overlaps with writing).

Demos become finished records: arrangement, mixdown, vocals (if any), and final **mastering**. For a club track this includes making the multiple versions you'll need — **Extended Mix** for DJs, **Radio/Short Edit** for streaming, maybe an instrumental or remix-stem pack.

**The manager's job:** - Set realistic deadlines and a delivery date for the finished master. - Line up and budget the **mastering** (and mixing if outsourced) — realistically **\$50–\$200 per track** for indie mastering; more for top engineers. - Get the **split sheet signed** by everyone (writers, producers, featured artists, remixers) BEFORE anything is released. This is the cheapest problem to solve now and the most expensive one later. - Commission **artwork** and lock the visual direction. - Confirm samples/vocals are cleared and licensed — no unlicensed samples going to DSPs. - Make sure masters and stems are backed up in two places.

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## Phase 3 — Pre-Release Setup

**Timeline:** 4–8 weeks before release date.

This is the campaign machine spinning up: choosing the release date, delivering to the distributor, pitching editorial and Beatport, building pre-saves and smart links, prepping content, and servicing promos to DJs and press. (This phase maps to the **New Release Checklist** in this kit — use it.)

**The manager's job:** - Run the release calendar backward from the Friday street date. - Deliver to the distributor **3–4 weeks early** to protect every pitch. - Submit Spotify editorial **7+ days out** (ideally 3–4 weeks); pitch Apple, Beatport, Traxsource. - Build pre-save / Laylo capture and get the link everywhere. - Make sure ISRC/UPC, metadata, and credits are all correct and logged. - Brief the content plan — teasers, cover reveal, BTS — and batch it. - Service DJ promos and send the press one-sheet to supporters and curators.

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## Phase 4 — Release

**Timeline:** Release week + the first ~4 weeks (the momentum window).

The record goes live Friday. The first **7 days** are the most important for algorithmic momentum (saves, completion rate, playlist adds), and the first month determines how DSPs treat the track going forward.

**The manager's job:** - Confirm the release is live and correct on every DSP Friday morning; fix metadata errors immediately. - Flip smart links from pre-save to “listen now,” post the release-day content, blast email/SMS/Laylo. - Personally thank the DJs, curators, and superfans who showed up early. - Drive the momentum window — keep posting, repost DJ support and UGC, submit to post-release playlists. - Handle the **back-office registrations**: PRO (ASCAP/BMI/SESAC), publishing

admin, **SoundExchange**, and YouTube Content ID so every royalty stream is collecting. - Watch the analytics — where are streams coming from, and what content is converting?

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## Phase 5 — Touring & Performance

**Timeline:** Months — runs in parallel with and after the release.

For an electronic artist this is the **DJ/live calendar**: club dates, festival slots, your own brand events (TechYes), guest mixes, and radio shows. This is where a house/tech-house artist makes the bulk of their income and builds real fan relationships — the music is partly a tool to grow the booking value.

**The manager's job:** - Build the **booking pipeline** — agents, promoters, venues, festivals — and route offers. - Negotiate fees, advances, riders, and travel; confirm advances and settlements get collected. - Sync the release calendar to the gig calendar — drop records so the artist has fresh, recognizable material to play out. - Capture content at shows (clips, crowd moments) to feed the social engine and the next release. - Grow the data assets — Laylo subscribers, email/SMS list, follower growth — at every show. - Track show **P&Ls** and make sure the artist is paid correctly and on time.

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## Phase 6 — Catalog & Reset

**Timeline:** Ongoing / a few weeks of review between waves.

The release stops being “new” and becomes **catalog** — a long-tail asset that keeps earning through playlists, sync, and DJ play. This is also the **review and re-plan** moment: what worked, what didn't, what's next.

**The manager's job:** - Run the post-campaign review — streams, saves, source of streams, best content, playlist adds, Beatport chart performance, revenue by stream. - Pitch the track for **sync** (TV, games, brand content, compilations) and keep it in active playlists. - Make sure all royalties (master, publishing, SoundExchange, sync) are actually being collected and reconciled. - Log the learnings into the campaign tracker and feed them into the next cycle. - Plan the next release timing so the artist **re-engages within 6–8 weeks** — never go fully dark. - Roll insights back into Phase 1: the data tells you what to write more of.

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## The Manager's Big-Picture Job

Across the whole wheel, the manager is doing four things at once:

1. **Sequencing** — keeping multiple releases in different phases so there's always something coming.
2. **Protecting** — guarding creative time and getting paperwork (splits, registrations) done before it becomes a problem.

3. **Connecting** — turning each release and show into network growth (DJs, curators, promoters, labels, fans).
4. **Measuring** — closing the loop with real numbers so the next cycle is smarter than the last.

The cycle never really ends — it just gets bigger each turn if you keep the wheel moving.