

Album Notes 101

The following is a list of information that should be included on your album or demo. While there are only a few items that are legally required to be added (such as per a contract or statute), it's probably a good idea to include most, if not all of the following. Look at other artists' album notes for examples and ideas, as you can get pretty creative with the boring legal stuff. [Note: Anything in quotes indicates the language you should use on your album, but you do not need to include the quotes on the album.]

Cover

- Artist name
- Album title
- Artwork/pictures
- Parental Advisory Explicit Content notice (if applicable)

Spine

- Artist name
- Album Title
- Record label (if applicable)
- UPC code numbers

Back Cover*

- Track numbers, song titles and length of songs
- *Credit
 - Usually for the producers, but may also be for the artist, songwriters, musicians, producer, engineer and others who helped put the album together
 - Songwriter credit should be given for each song, unless the same artist or the entire band wrote all of the songs, in which case "All songs written by [artist]." should be sufficient. Make sure to include this information for cover versions and samples as well.
 - Note: While you are only legally obligated to give credit to those who have required it in a contract with you, such as producers, managers, lawyers, and labels (although you should give credit to songwriters regardless of contracts), it's a nice gesture and good karma goes far in this business.
- *Publishing information "© [year] [publishing company name] ([ASCAP, BMI, etc.])"
- Copyright notices
 - "© [year] [artist name]" – This denotes the copyright in the lyrics and music on the album. This symbol should be used whether or not you have registered the work with the U.S. Copyright Office.
 - "(P) [year] [artist name or record label]" (the P should be in a circle just like the © symbol and denotes a copyright in the sound recording) – This denotes the copyright in the sound recordings on the album. This symbol should be used whether or not you have registered the work with the U.S. Copyright Office.
 - If the copyright in the lyrics and music and the sound recordings belong to the same person or entity (which is often the case), the following should be put on the album "(P)(C) [year] [artist name or record label]"

- “All rights reserved. Unauthorized duplication is a violation of applicable laws.”
- “Manufactured in USA.” (but only if this is actually the case)
- Artwork/pictures – Be sure to give credit to the artist(s). “[Artwork or Photographs] by: [artist]” or “[Artwork or Photographs] © [year] [artist]”
- Website
- UPC bar code (Contact the Uniform Code Council at www.uc-council.com or (937) 435-3870 for more information.)
- *If you have liner notes, you may want to include this information there instead of on the back cover.

Liner Notes**

- Track numbers and song titles
- Credit
 - For the artist, songwriters, musicians, producer, engineer, label and others who helped put the album together
 - Songwriter credit should be given for each song, unless the same artist or the entire band wrote all of the songs, in which case “All songs written by [artist].” should be sufficient. Make sure to include this information for cover versions and samples as well.
 - Note: While you are only legally obligated to give credit to those who have required it in a contract with you, such as producers, managers, lawyers, and labels (although you should give credit to songwriters regardless of contracts), it’s a nice gesture and good karma goes far in this business.
- Publishing information “© [year] [publishing company name] ([ASCAP, BMI, etc.]”
- Song lyrics
- “© [year] [artist]” after the lyrics for each song
- “All rights reserved. Lyrics used by permission only.”
- Copyright notices
 - “© [year] [artist name]” – This denotes the copyright in the lyrics and music on the album. This symbol should be used whether or not you have registered the work with the U.S. Copyright Office.
 - “(P) [year] [artist name or record label]” (the P should be in a circle just like the © symbol and denotes a copyright in the sound recording) – This denotes the copyright in the sound recordings on the album. This symbol should be used whether or not you have registered the work with the U.S. Copyright Office.
 - If the copyright in the lyrics and music and the sound recordings belong to the same person or entity (which is often the case), the following should be put on the album “(P)(C) [year] [artist name or record label]”
- “All rights reserved. Unauthorized duplication is a violation of applicable laws.”
- “Manufactured in USA.” (but only if this is actually the case)
- UPC code numbers
- Thanks – This is where you thank everyone (from your mom to your lawyer ☺) who has helped you get where you are
- Artwork/pictures – Be sure to give credit to the artist(s). “[Artwork or Photographs] by: [artist]” or “[Artwork or Photographs] © [year] [artist]”
- Website address

- Contact information (especially if this is a demo or you have a fan club)
- **If you do not have liner notes, you may want to include this information on the back cover of the album and/or on the reverse side of the album cover.

CD/Cassette/Other Media

- Artist name
- Album title
- Artwork/picture
- Song titles and length of songs
- Website
- Copyright notices
 - “© [year] [artist name]” – This denotes the copyright in the lyrics and music on the album. This symbol should be used whether or not you have registered the work with the U.S. Copyright Office.
 - “(P) [year] [artist name or record label]” (the P should be in a circle just like the © symbol and denotes a copyright in the sound recording) – This denotes the copyright in the sound recordings on the album. This symbol should be used whether or not you have registered the work with the U.S. Copyright Office.
 - If the copyright in the lyrics and music and the sound recordings belong to the same person or entity (which is often the case), the following should be put on the album “(P)(C) [year] [artist name or record label]”
- “All rights reserved. Unauthorized duplication is a violation of applicable laws.”
- “Manufactured in USA.” (but only if this is actually the case)
- UPC code numbers
- Compact disc symbol
- Record label name/logo (if applicable)
- Contact Information (but only if this is a demo)

Other

- Make sure to give proper credit to trademarks where applicable (either TM or ®). Use ® only with federally registered trademarks, as, unlike with ©, you must have a federal registration to use the ® symbol. You may use TM to indicate that you claim trademark rights in a word or logo that you have not registered or if your federal trademark registration is pending.
- If the music was recorded using Dolby, be sure to include their symbol.
- Add the universal compact disc logo to CDs and add the type of tape and EQ settings on tapes. (You may want to speak with the album manufacturer about adding these symbols.)

A Few Legal Considerations

- Mechanical Licenses – Contact publisher for a mechanical license if you have cover songs on your album.
- Sample Clearances – Contact the Harry Fox Agency, the publisher or the copyright owner for the musical composition rights *and* the record label or copyright owner for the sound recording rights.
- Work for Hire Agreements – Anyone you hire to work on your album (such as studio musicians, engineers and cover artist) should sign a short “work for hire” agreement assigning all of their rights in their contributions to prevent any potential future claims (this should be done *before* recording begins).
- Publicity Release/Permission – You should get permission or a release if your album artwork contains a photo or artistic rendering of someone outside of your group, if the artwork was created by a third party, or if any third party trademarks or logos appear in your artwork.
- Producer Agreements – If you use a producer outside of your group, you should have a written agreement setting forth compensation and royalty terms among other issues (this should be done *before* recording begins).
- Production Credits – If you have contracts with anyone involved with your album, make sure their album credits conform to any contractual requirements.
- Internal Band Agreement – If a group creates the album, a written agreement should be created (if not a more formal agreement or corporate entity) setting forth at least how the recording project will be financed, if not other pertinent band issues (such as band name ownership).
- Investors – If investors are involved in the album, you will want to have an attorney prepare documents that comply with federal and state securities laws.
- Copyright Original Material – File copyright applications promptly for sound recordings, original songs, and original artwork on the album. You may be able to file an SR form application for both the sound recording and musical composition in some instances.
- Register Original Songs with ASCAP or BMI – If you have written a song(s) on the album and are affiliated with ASCAP or BMI, file title registration forms for each original song appearing on the album (enabling the society to monitor airplay of your songs).
- Copyright Notices – Correct copyright notices for original and cover songs, including publisher and performing rights society information, should be included in the liner notes.
- Trademark Notices/Registration – Make sure any trademarks you use have the proper trademark notice attached. You should also verify that you have the right to use the group (or label) name, and you may want to file a trademark application for the group, label and/or individual performer’s name(s) and logo(s) as well.
- Obtain a Bar Code – You can obtain a bar code from the Uniform Code Council (www.uc-council.org) or through your CD duplicator.
- Register with SoundScan – If you want to attract the attention of record labels or anticipate numerous album sales, you should register your album with SoundScan (www.soundscan.com).