

🎵 Music Rights Breakdown

Use music without getting sued.
For filmmakers, content creators, and production teams.
 By Lex Nova Lawyer x Thoolie

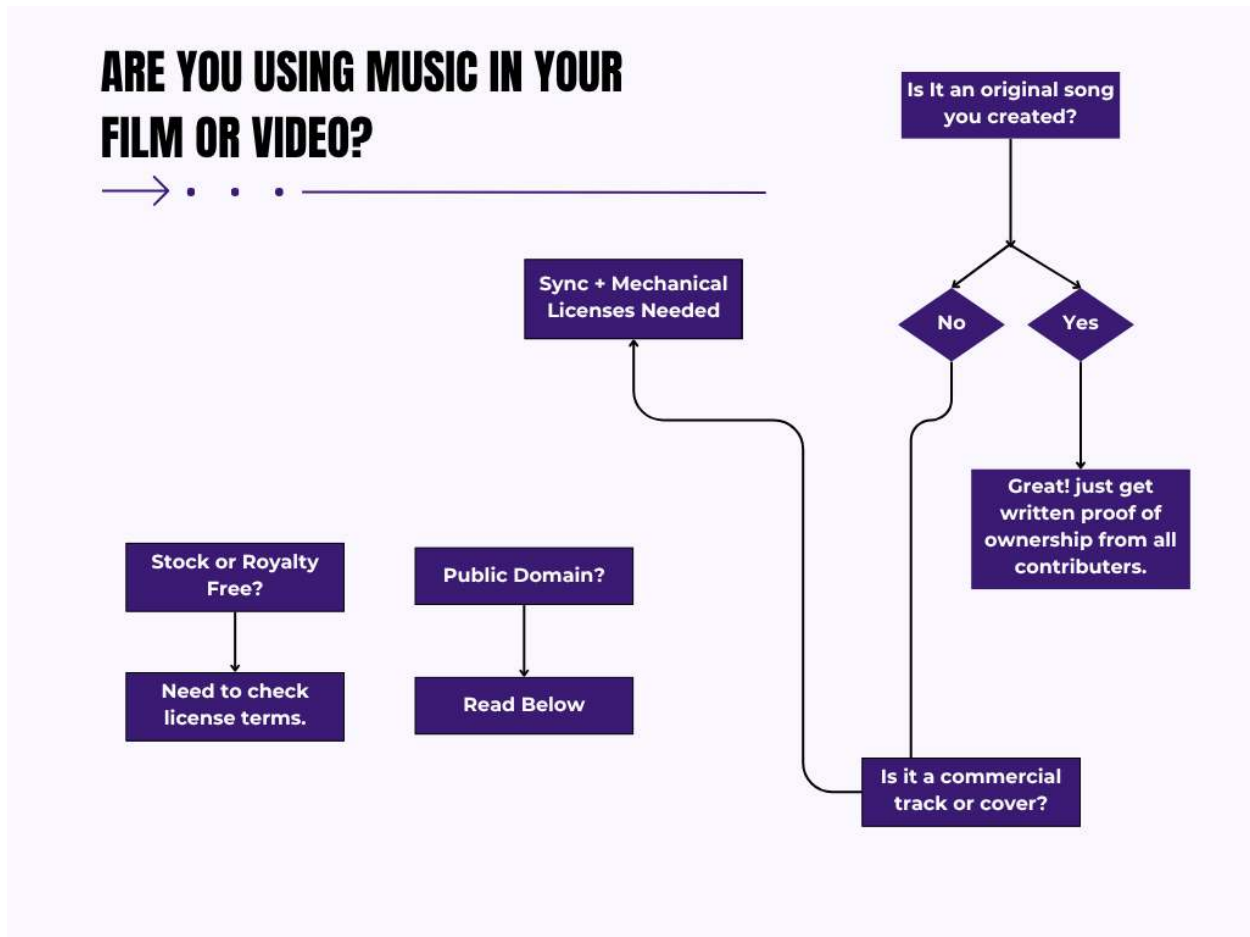
WHY THIS MATTERS

Using music without the right license is one of the top reasons films get pulled from festivals or blocked on YouTube and streamers. Here's what you *actually* need to know (and what to get in writing).

🎵 Types of Music Rights

Right Type	What It Covers	Who to Pay / License From	When You Need It	Sample Clause (Plain English)
Sync License	The composition (lyrics + melody) when used in sync with video.	The publisher or songwriter . Often via a PRO or directly. Try: ASCAP , BMI , SESAC	Anytime a song is used <i>with video</i> (even background music).	<i>“Producer must secure a synchronization license before using any music in the film.”</i>
Master License	The specific recording of that song. (Ex: Beyoncé’s version.)	The record label or owner of the sound recording .	If you’re using an existing song recording.	<i>“Producer will obtain a master use license for each existing recording used.”</i>
Mechanical License	The right to reproduce/distribute a cover version of the composition.	The music publisher , often via The MLC or Harry Fox Agency .	If you’re recording a cover or including it in a soundtrack.	<i>“If Producer records a cover, a mechanical license will be secured before distribution.”</i>
Festival/Temp Use License	Short-term rights for festival screenings, pitch reels , or limited use.	Varies. Could be composer, label, or music library , like AudioJungle or PremiumBeat .	If you want to screen your project at festivals <i>before</i> getting full rights.	<i>“Licensor grants temporary non-exclusive use rights for festivals and private screenings only.”</i>

"Do I Need a License?"



⚠️ Public Domain vs. Royalty-Free — Don't Get Burned

Public Domain

No copyright. No license needed. Use freely.

BUT — only if the **composition AND recording** are public domain. Beethoven's *music* is free. A 2021 recording of it is **not**.

Tip: Use sources like [IMSLP](https://imslp.org/) or [PDInfo](https://pdinfo.net/) to verify.

Royalty-Free

Pay once. Use repeatedly.

BUT — often *not* cleared for YouTube monetization, ads, or commercial film. You still need to read the fine print.

Tip: Check if the royalty-free site allows: Commercial use? Monetization? Editing or remixing?

Try sites like:

🎵 [Artist.io](https://www.artist.io)

🎵 [Epidemic Sound](https://www.epidemicsound.com)

🎵 [Soundstripe](https://www.soundstripe.com)

 **Bonus Tip: Use This Clause In Your Contracts**

“Producer shall obtain all necessary synchronization, master, and mechanical licenses for each piece of music used in the project. Producer warrants that no music will be used without a valid license or assignment of rights.”
