

How Can I Make Sure Each Sale Is Counted?

- 1) You must have product placed for sale on consignment at Twist and Shout, Angelo's CDs or another local store that will offer unsigned bands' CDs for sale (which is a wise thing to do in any event);
- 2) You must keep a careful accounting of the quantity of units at what location and on which date, and be able to certify those facts to the store; and
- 3) You must ask nicely. Once the store has entered information about your CD into their computer, it will automatically be recognized and identified by their database. This is true of other record stores as well.

Local record store owners are familiar with the nuances (and problems) with distribution of local music. While obtaining a national distributor to handle your product is beneficial in many ways, it is not without its own set of hassles, including difficulties in receiving payment, etc. Paul Epstein of *Twist & Shout* notes that distributors maintain large databases that retail stores can purchase access to (such as the Valley database) which are updated weekly. If your CD was available through Valley, which is a one-stop, your SKU (Stock Keeping Unit) would automatically be downloaded into any store that buys the database, and almost every single record store in the nation buys SOME database.

Some record stores may be willing to work with you in tabulating the sales of your CDs at your shows. However, make sure that you call them first to see what their rules are and then follow those rules. Also some clubs may be willing to verify that you sold a certain amount of CDs at your show(s). Again, check with the manager/owner of the club to see what their rules are. Keep up on the music business by reading as many music news stories as you can. Billboard is extremely helpful. You will want this information to know whether or not you should be making CDs of your recordings (full albums or EPs), or perhaps branch

More Tips For Unsigned Artists:

If you really want to make it in the music business you have to treat your art as a business. The songs you write are your basic product and you would not sell any product without taking the proper steps to ensure that you make money from your product. Copywriting your songs is easy and you are foolish if you do not do this.

If you are in a band, the band should be "a product" and you want to market the band and its show as a product. Make up a game plan and do your best to stick to it. Learn as much as you can about the business of music by reading books, attending COMBO meetings, seminars, workshops, expositions, and

events such as SXSW and others. Pay attention to what experts in the industry have to say which will keep you from getting ripped off by unscrupulous people. Communicate often with the people with whom you work and listen as well. Good luck and remember that COMBO is here to help you succeed with your Music Business.

Barb Dye, President (2009)

"If you want to be in the business, you've got to know the business."

Jeff Brabec, VP of Business Affairs for Chrysalis Music

Author of Music, Money and Success: The Insider's Guide to Making Money in the Music Industry New York: Schirmer Trade Books, 1994.

Where Can I Get More Info?

Several articles can be found at the COMBO website. If you don't have access to a computer, you might want to visit the local library to read up on the subject. Here is a listing of what can be found at <http://coloradomusic.org/barcodearticles.html>:

- 1) Making Your Record Count
- 2) Do You really Need to Invest in Your Own Barcode?
- 3) The Importance of SoundScan™ for an Independent Artist

(More may be posted as they become available.)

Final Note:

Most of the comments above are directed to the independent artist who is releasing and distributing product on his or her own. If you have made arrangements with a local distributor, you will want to discuss procedures directly with them.

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All About Barcodes for Music Products

Improve Your Musical State

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What Is A Barcode?

Visually, it's the little rectangular image that consists of a series of black vertical bars with numbers underneath that you see on everything from a package of gum to a boxed inflatable Christmas yard decoration.



Universal Product Code (UPC)

Technically, the Universal Product Code (UPC) is a 12 digit, all numeric code that identifies a consumer package. It consists of a number system character, a five-digit manufacturer identification number, a five-digit item code and a check character, as shown above.

Why Do I Need One?

The barcode can be electronically read by a scanner, providing an immediate and efficient method for distributors, retailers and others to track product. Without a barcode, every transaction involving your CD, or other music product such as a DVD, would have to be written down by hand or individually typed into a database. By making it easy for businesses to add your product to their inventory, you increase your chances of successfully marketing it. These days most companies won't accept units that do not have a barcode and thus are not readily able to be integrated into the existing system.

In addition, SoundScan™ will be able to count how many units of your product have been sold.

What Is SoundScan™?

When someone says "that record is number one on the charts" they are usually referring to the ratings published by Billboard magazine, the accepted trade publication of the music industry. For better or worse, the Billboard charts are closely reviewed and heavily relied on by record labels and other industry suits. In years past, the charts were compiled via an informal system whereby record stores and radio stations reported to Billboard through what amounted to an honor system. They would phone or fax the top sellers in, and the charts would be created from that information. For obvious reasons, this led to corruption and payola and a cry went up for a new and deception-resistant method of figuring out what was selling in America at a given time. Thus, SoundScan™ was born as a theoretically disinterested and unbiased company whose job would be to gather sales data and report it accurately to Billboard. SoundScan™ obtains its raw data largely through direct modem access to the sales histories of the music stores throughout the country, although not all music stores are SoundScan™ reporters. The company applies complex mathematical formulas to the data to ensure randomness and to project total sales based on a sampling.

What Does That Mean To Me Here In Colorado?

First, it lets you know that the charts are based exclusively on sales and not on anything seemingly irrelevant to the music industry, such as artistic merit or hard work. Secondly, you should be aware that the SoundScan™ information is extremely important at all levels of the music business. It is used to judge regional popularity and identify growing fan based. All kinds of labels, huge and tiny, local and multinational, use SoundScan™ to keep an eye on the scene. As an artist then, you might want your CD or other music product to have a barcode so that when you sell units they get counted by SoundScan™ and become part of the national consciousness.

Being part of the whole SoundScan™ scene will not make your career, but it can help at least put you on the radar. And it will certainly help to identify Colorado's thriving scene by having a majority of our local acts showing up, even if they're near the bottom of the reports (which is where many A&R types look FIRST when checking out unsigned acts that are doing well on their own). The opportunity to create this kind of buzz within our state is the main reason why the **Colorado Music Business Organization (COMBO)** has taken steps to facilitate

all of this for you! In the past Twist and Shout has been contacted by labels, national magazines, and A&R agents investigating impressive SoundScan™ numbers. Plus, by going through the procedures to obtain a UPC number and registering with SoundScan™, artists will gain knowledge about the industry and how to work within the dreaded system.

How Can I Get One?

Once you have a COMBO membership number, and you have all of the other information about your release (album title, release date, etc.), you can visit

<http://coloradomusic.org/barcode.html> and fill out the form there. Your bar code number will be issued as soon after submission as possible by COMBO's barcode administrator. He will send it to you via return email in the graphic format you have designated. You should print out a copy and forward the file to your graphic designer and/or printer so that it can be included in the packaging for your new product.

It is very important that the barcode NOT be reduced as that may result in the bars bleeding together and the code not being able to be scanned. The image may look large onscreen at 72 DPI (dots per inch), but when printed out — at 300 DPI— it will appear more appropriate.

The size should be about 1.2" by .75" uncropped on the final product. Please note that if you or your package designer are not using professional image editing programs, you may have insufficient control over how the image appears. The same file may print 3" by 2" if the graphics program just passes the pixels along indiscriminately. Thus we recommend that you seek the assistance of people who know graphics—the crunch of getting to press is not a convenient time to start learning those details.

What Else Should I Do?

Once you have a product with a barcode on it, you should register it with SoundScan™ so they know who you are. If you obtained it free through COMBO membership, SoundScan will list COMBO as the parent label and your record company as the sub-label, much the same as Sony Music and any of its subsidiary or distributed labels. This information is merely for statistical purposes. COMBO maintains no ownership or other interest in your music product. There is no charge to be listed.