



Music stars argue contract freedom

BBC - 9/6/2001

- “The big issue is California's so-called ‘seven-year statute’, which ties musicians to longer contracts than anybody else in the entertainment business. A controversial 1987 amendment to the California labor code gave music labels the right to sue artists for undelivered albums at the end of seven years. . . . [M]usicians, including former Eagles vocalist [**Don**] **Henley**, singers **Sheryl Crow**, **Alanis Morissette** and **Tom Petty** . . . oppose the rule. They claim that young artists are often forced to accept such terms in the bid to get a recording contract, leaving them later with little control over their careers.”

The Pandemic Changed How Musicians and Investors See Royalties

Huck Magazine - 6/25/2021

- “Royalty payments have long been an issue in the music world. Record labels usually took the lion’s share. The move to streaming, which broadened audiences but sharply curtailed revenues, cut further into many musicians’ earnings. The pandemic shook things up further. Without live performances, artists were forced to rethink how they were managing their finances.”

What Kesha’s legal battle tells us about record label corruption

Huck Magazine - 7/29/2021

- “Tales of terrible record deals and labels essentially holding their artists hostage via legal strongholds are as old as time. While **Kesha**’s lawsuit is dominated by accusations of years of sexual abuse, **Sony**’s eagerness to keep her on their books is just another example of the draconian morals of those at the very top of the major record label industry.”
- “There have always been occasional superstars to create public spectacles out of their battles with record execs, but it’s only been in the advent of streaming that the situation has hit its peak. **MIA**, **Angel Haze**, **Wiley**, **Azealia Banks**, **Childish Gambino**, **Sky Ferreira**, and **Amanda Palmer** are just some of the big names to have publicly called out or quit their labels in recent years due to some of the more baffling, damaging or exploitative fine print that threatens their

creative output. . . . Others to have had public feuds and long-winded legal wrangling with their labels include **Metallica**, **30 Seconds to Mars**, **Courtney Love**, and **Prince**[.]”

- “[TLC’s] manager was also, according to their contract, recouping all promotional expenses directly from the band – from the costs of music videos through to basic expenses like travel accommodation and food. ‘Trust me, you can sell ten million albums and still be broke when you have greedy people behind you,” the late **Left-Eye** said.”
- “If you were wondering why incidents like these have gone on for so long . . . it’s because the major-label music industry is essentially the modern Wild West. Unregulated, filled with iron-clad contracts, and always weighted in favor of suits with the most ruthless and expensive lawyers.”

From the Beatles to Taylor Swift: Why It’s So Hard for Musicians to Own Their Music

People Magazine - 7/1/2019

- “For Swift, not owning her music also means control of how and where her songs are used is out of her hands, much like the famous instance of Michael Jackson buying The Beatles’ music in the ‘80s. . . . ‘We literally thought that songs were in the air and everyone owned them. That’s how we met our first publisher, Dick James. He said, ‘Come in, sit down. Is that what you think? Sit over here.’ And that was the deal he did. To this day I’m virtually on that deal,’ [Paul]McCartney said in *Beatles Anthology*. ‘So that meant we were pretty much sewn up from the word go.’ . . . Such tales are, unfortunately, fairly common in the music industry.”

Can Record Labels Really Hold Artists Hostage?

Paper Magazine- 7/29/2021

- “Over recent years, **the general public have become increasingly cognizant of the poor treatment artists can receive at the hands of their labels**. The groundswell of support around the Free Britney movement, and the recent parliamentary streaming inquiry in the UK (which revealed — amongst other things — that record label splits are more often to blame for an artist’s paltry streaming revenue than the streaming services themselves) has contributed to a growing sense of outrage and concern, especially **this poor treatment seems disproportionately imposed on female artists and people of color.**”

What’s it like for musicians whose labels won’t release their music?

Dazed - 7/21/2021

- “[S]ince 2014 [**Raye**] has been on a four-album contract with the label, which is owned by **Universal Music Group** — meaning it’s been a whole seven years that she’s been unable to release a full-length record. It’s hard to think of many more accomplished British pop

songwriters right now as Raye. She has written songs for Beyoncé, Charli XCX, and David Guetta. . . . Her highest-streaming single has over 250 million plays on Spotify.

- “‘I’ve done everything they asked me, I switched genres, I worked seven days a week, ask anyone in the music game, they know,’ [Raye] pleaded, explaining how her debut album won’t be released until her latest single, ‘Call On Me’, achieves success. She claims to have ‘albums on albums of music sat in folders collecting dust,’ which she is now giving away to other ‘A-list artists’ as she awaits the green light from the label.
- **Shura** is another musician who took to Twitter to talk about her experiences of being signed, saying: “‘I get my masters back from **Universal** in the next ten years. My indie label will continue to own my record after I’m dead. It’s not as simple as major versus indie.’”

What It's Like When A Label Won't Release Your Album

BuzzFeed - 5/12/2013

- “**Ferreira**, who signed with **EMI** in 2008 when she was just 15, has spoken of her difficult early relationship with the label. She struggled for years to put out an album that EMI would approve of. “I turned in five different albums and none of them made sense. It was just one thing after the other and getting shelved,” she told the Phoenix. Ferreira stuck it out, however, with a new team, and more artistic control, to finally produce a successful EP last year.”
- “[A]rtists will resort to public calls for help, like **Bow Wow** did in 2009, when he pleaded on Twitter to be released from his label contract:

‘Yep! It’s true! I want off **Columbia**. I’m asking to be released. NO they not dropping me I’m askn. Not happy there. Been like dis 4 5 years.’”
- “**Lupe Fiasco** went public with his frustrations against his label, **Atlantic Records**, in 2010. He delivered speeches and interviews discussing the three-year process to release his third album, *Lasers*, which he claims was artistically controlled by Atlantic. His fans even organized a protest outside the label’s offices in late 2010. ‘I am a hostage,’ Fiasco told the Chicago Sun-Times the following year. ‘I gave them what they wanted. If I didn’t, at the end of the day the album wasn’t coming out.’”

JoJo Is Officially Free From Her Former Label After A 7-Year Battle

BuzzFeed - 1/15/2014

Behind the music: When artists are held hostage by labels

The Guardian - 4/15/2010

- “Last week, **Amanda Palmer** declared on her blog: ‘I am very happy to announce that I have finally been released from my contract with **Roadrunner Records**.’”

“I lost my identity”: The artists who left major record deals to form their own indie labels

New Statesman - 7/8/2020

- “But major label glory wasn’t all it was made out to be. ‘Once I signed to a major label, everything slowed down... **Kiesza** soon realize that with each new song, her label only expected copies of her first hit. ‘We had a big argument and I realized, maybe I’m just not a major label artist. I want to evolve quickly, I like to have one foot in and one foot outside the box at the same time. But that one foot outside the box is very scary to a major label.’”
- “Even **Taylor Swift**, arguably the most successful solo pop artist of the past decade, is not immune. ... ‘Thankfully, I am now signed to a label that believes I should own anything I create,’ she wrote in a damning Tumblr post, after giving a warning to young female musicians: ‘This is what happens when you sign a deal at 15 to someone for whom the term ‘loyalty’ is clearly just a contractual concept. And when that man says ‘Music has value,’ he means its value is beholden to men who had no part in creating it.’”
- “‘I had to constantly annoy the label to let me go. I had my lawyer send them a message every day.’ [**Kiesza**] says the label would not release her because it was still profiting from ‘Hideaway,’ while she earned just 15 per cent of the profits from her masters, out of which had to pay her producers. ‘Everybody says that’s the standard deal. In my view, it’s criminal.’”

From Prince to Megan Thee Stallion: When record contracts go wrong

BBC Music Reporter - 3/3/2020

- “Rapper **Megan Thee Stallion** claims that her record label is preventing her from releasing new music. The star, who released the platinum-selling single ‘Hot Girl Summer’ last year, says she’s been frozen out since asking to renegotiate her contract.

‘I didn’t really know what was in my contract,’ she explained on Instagram Live. ‘I was young. I was, like, 20. So now they telling [me] that [I] can’t drop no music. It’s really just a greedy game,’ she added. The musician, whose real name is Megan Pete, signed her deal with **1501 Entertainment** in 2018. She only became aware of problems with the contract last year when she hired a new management team.

‘It’s not that I literally didn’t read [the contract],’ she said, ‘it’s that I didn’t understand some of the verbiage at the time. Now that I do, I just wanted it corrected.’”

It's Not Me It's You: Why So Many Artists Want to Break-Up with Major

Labels VICE - 6/04/2014

- “**Sky Ferreira** recently revealed that her time at **EMI**—where she recorded three albums, none of which were released — was characterized by “55-year-old guys telling me what people my

age wanted to hear.”