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All You Need to Know About the Music Business

All You Need to Know About the Music Business is a book about the legal side of the music industry. The author, Donald S. Passman, is a graduate of the University of Texas and Harvard Law School, and is the foremost lawyer in Hollywood specializing in the music business. He is a partner in the law firm Gang, Tyre, Ramer & Brown, Inc.

He will *not* tell you how to write a hit record. What he *will* tell you is how to avoid a nasty contract that takes advantage of your naïvete.

Passman wrote the book in plain English with as few technical legal phrases as possible, even using a little humour, which certainly helps the reader stay awake during the complex parts. There's a UK edition which features sidenotes pointing out the differences between American and UK law as far as the music industry works.

For me, this book confirmed what I already suspected was all I needed to know about the music business: that I should stay away from it. For those of you more stubborn, however, it's an indispensable guide to read before signing any contract with a record label.

Although it's mainly for an artist about to be signed to a record label, it would probably appeal to anyone curious about how the industry works. Many people claim that the music industry rips off the artists as well as the customers, but far less people know how they actually do it.

A good example of how the industry rips off the artists is given in the section about royalty computation. Royalties are only paid for each record *sold*. Rather than sell a hundred records to a shop for 85c each, the record label can sell eighty-five records for \$1 each and give them the last fifteen for free. While this makes absolutely no difference in reality, it means the artist is only paid royalties for eighty-five records rather than the full hundred. These are called *phoney free goods* and about half of the record companies engage in this practice.

Passman fills the book with interesting information like that, and will either put you off the industry altogether or convince you to get a lawyer to carefully read *anything* a record label wants you to sign. Either way, his book will help you avoid being ripped off.

The ISBN of the UK edition I've been reading is 0-140-29947-5.