

# ARTIST BRANDING & IDENTITY

WHAT IT IS. WHY IT MATTERS. WHAT I DO.

# INTRO

Branding is not decoration.

It is the system that makes people recognize you before they press play – and remember you after they do.

Thousands of tracks are uploaded every day. The music alone is not enough – if someone does not see it, they will never hear it. The visual layer is what makes the difference between being discovered and being scrolled past.

This document explains what artist branding actually consists of, why each part exists, and where I come in.

# PART 1

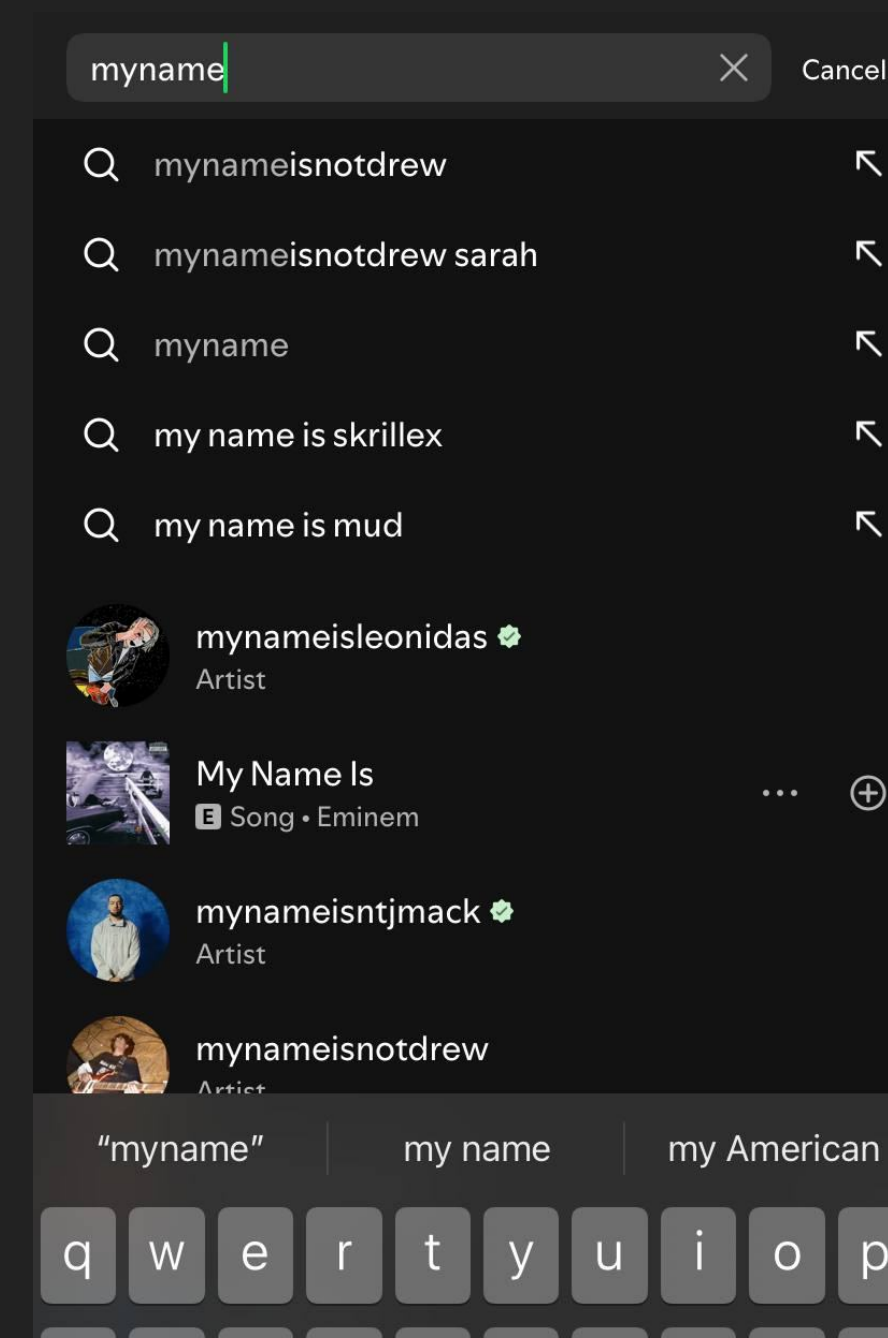
FOUNDATION

# NAME

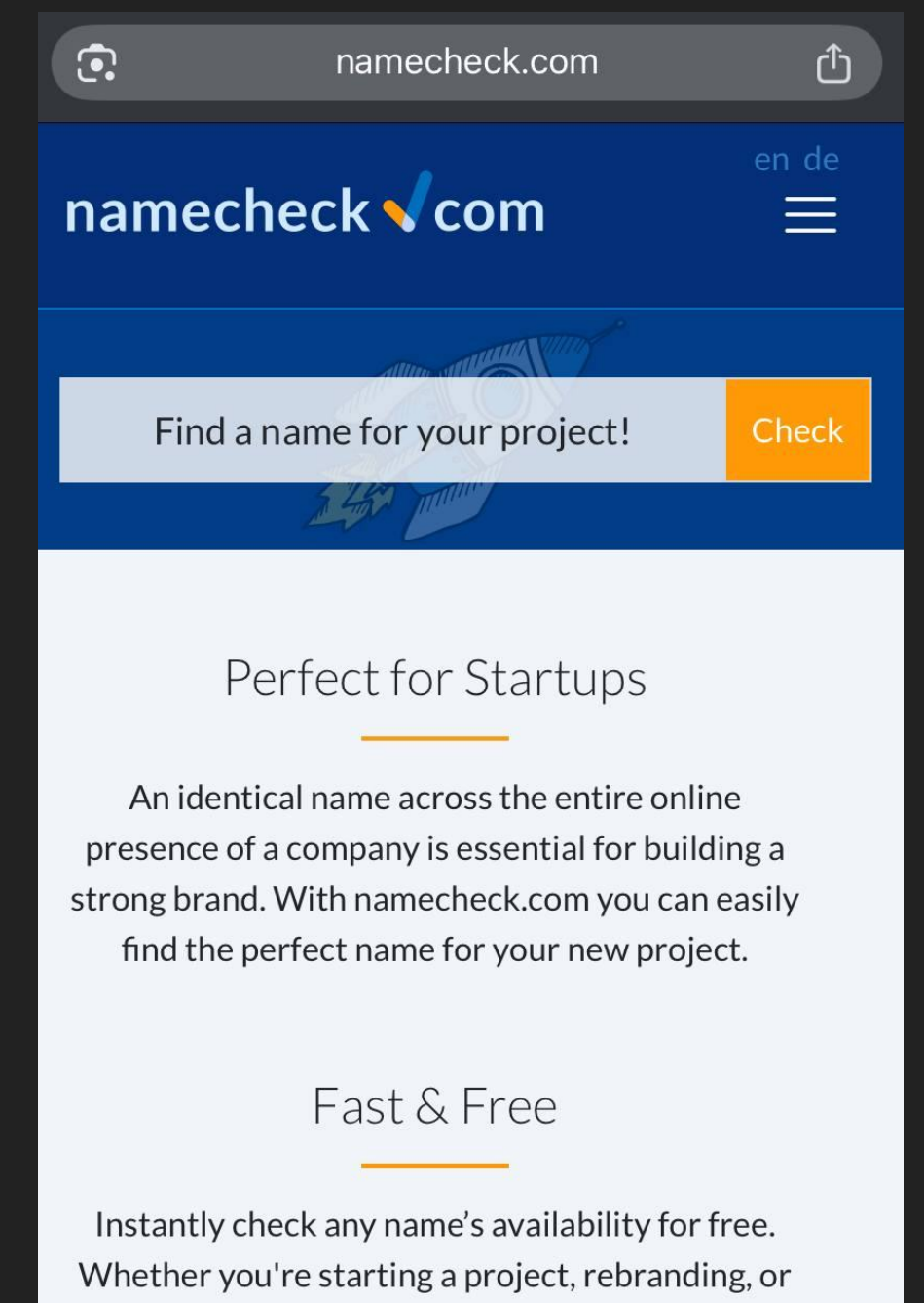
The first question in any music project is not what you sound like. It is what you are called.

A name is the anchor. Everything visual will carry it, surround it, or represent it. Changing it later means rebuilding from scratch.

Before committing to a name, verify it is not already taken – by another artist, an active project, or anyone with a significant audience. Competing with an established name is a battle you cannot win. The audience will always find the other one first.



CHECK SPOTIFY



NAMECHECKR

## MUSIC STREAMING PLATFORMS NOW HOST QUARTER OF A BILLION TRACKS. WHERE DOES IT END?

148  
SHARES



 JANUARY 14, 2026  
BY MURRAY STASSEN



Credit: Shutterstock AI

There were 253 million music tracks sitting on audio streaming services at the close of 2025.

Yep: **over quarter of a billion**. Some milestone.

According to new data from **Luminate's new annual report**, that was up by **37.9 million** tracks YoY – an average of **106,000 uploads** per day.

Most of this music was far from popular:

## MUSIC NEEDS A «FACE»

Once the name exists, the next question is: who – or what – appears behind it?

People do not just follow music. They follow the person or persona behind it. They remember a face, a character, an image – something they can attach an emotion to. A track that plays with no visual anchor is forgotten the moment it ends.

This is not about vanity or aesthetics. It is about giving the audience something to hold on to. The visual identity is what transforms a listener into a follower.

# THE OPTIONS

## Your face

The most direct and effective form of connection. People follow people. A face builds trust, familiarity, and relatability in ways that nothing else can replicate. For most artists, this is the strongest starting point.

## A mask

A deliberate choice to make the mask itself the identity. Done with commitment, it becomes more recognizable than a face – Daft Punk, Marshmello, Deadmau5, Claptone. The visual becomes the persona. The mystique is the brand.

## A character or avatar

Particularly relevant for electronic and experimental artists. The character exists independently of the person behind it – it can appear in cover art, videos, merchandise, and promotional material in ways a photograph cannot. The audience builds an emotional connection with the character. It also opens a much wider creative space for future visual work.

- Each of these works. The choice depends on the project, the genre, and how the artist wants to be perceived over time.

# FULL ANONYMITY

There is always the option to hide behind a name and nothing else. No face, no mask, no character. Just the music.

Nobody is stopping you. And you will be joining millions of other artists who made the same choice - and who nobody has ever seen or heard of.

There are exceptions. Artists who are known by a logo or a name alone - where most listeners could not tell you what they look like. But for every one of those, there are hundreds of thousands who tried the same approach and never made it past the algorithm. We do not know their names precisely because they gave us nothing to hold on to.

Full anonymity can work. But without a face, a mask, or a character - without something for the audience to connect to - the music has to do all of the work alone. And in a world of thousands of new releases every day, that is an extremely difficult position to be in.

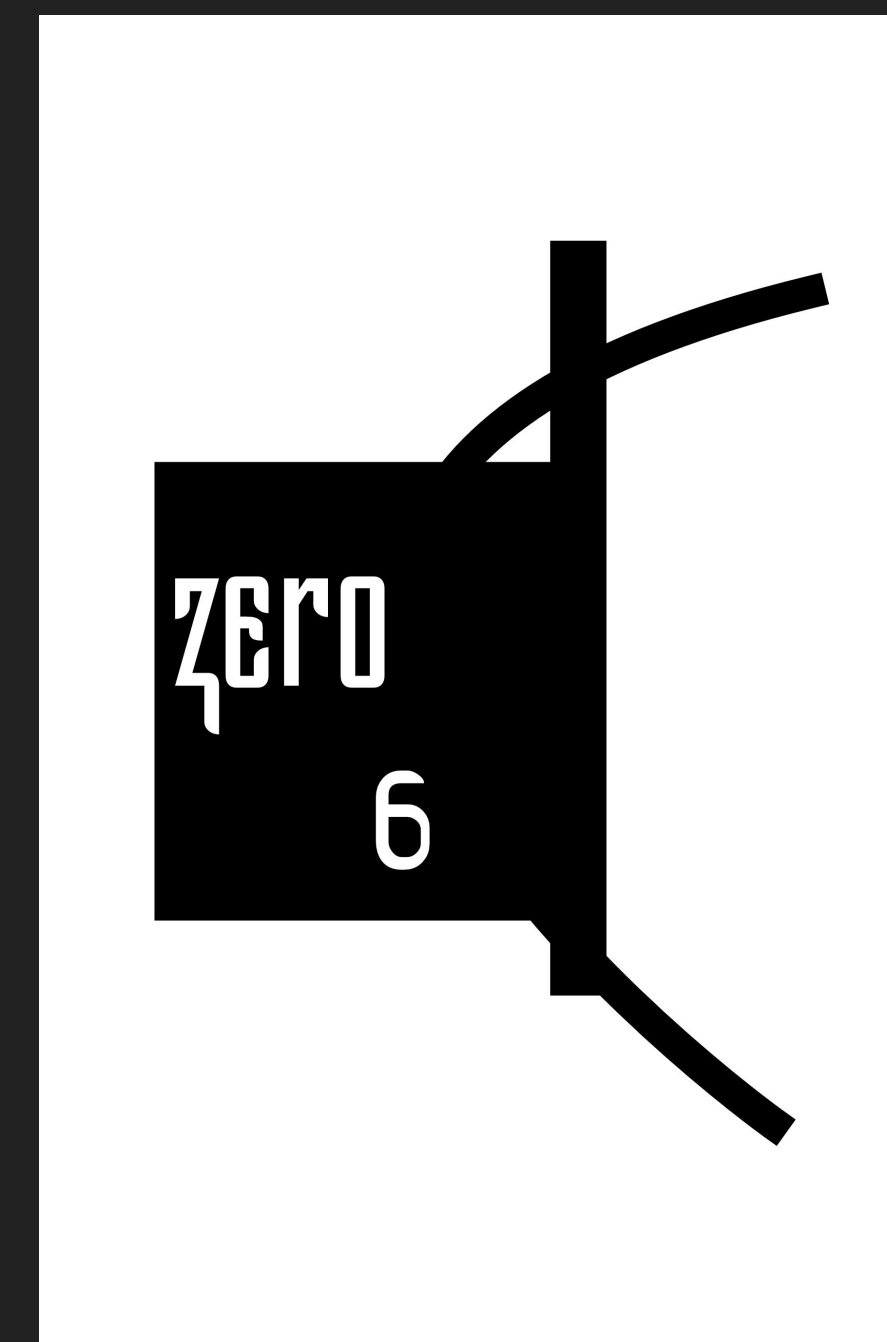
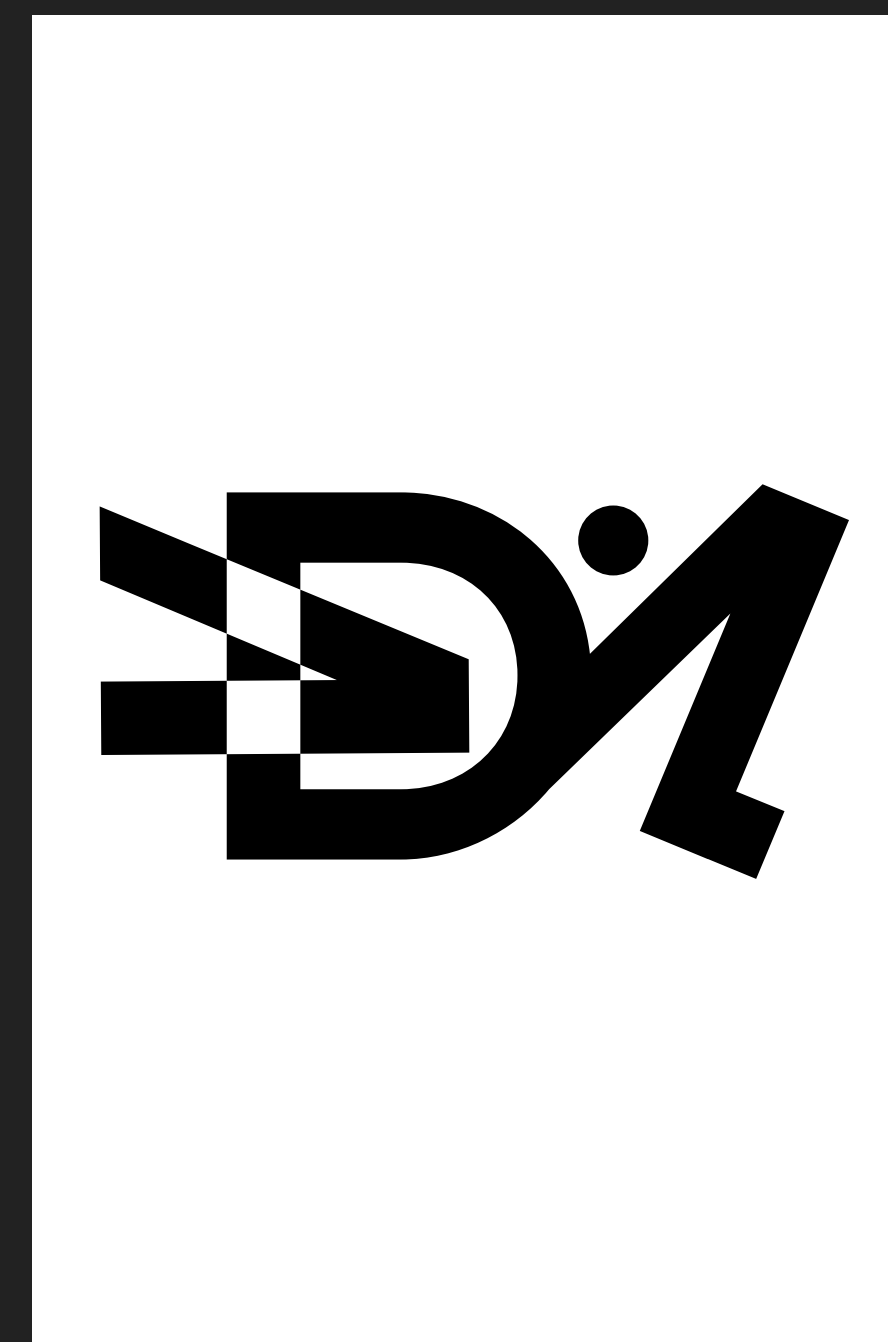
The visual identity exists precisely to make that fight less unfair.

# LOGO

A logo is not your name written in a nice font. It can be - but that is not the point.

The point is that it is fixed. Whatever form it takes, it looks exactly the same every single time - on a cover, in a profile picture, on top of a Reel, on a poster, on merchandise. It never changes. It is the one constant across everything you put out.

Every appearance builds a small association. Over time that association becomes recognition. The goal is for someone to see the mark alone - without your name, without context - and know immediately whose it is.



# WORDMARK OR SYMBOL

There are two directions a logo can take.

## Wordmark

he artist's name, set in a custom or carefully chosen typeface, used consistently as the visual identity. This is the most common approach in music. The overwhelming majority of artists - across all genres - use a wordmark. The name itself becomes the mark.

## Symbol mark

an abstract shape or icon that carries no text. It stands alone and represents the artist without spelling anything out. This is rarer and harder to pull off, because the symbol has to earn its recognition over time. Aphex Twin's A, Deadmau5's helmet silhouette. When it works, it becomes more powerful than any wordmark - but it requires consistency and patience to get there.

Most artists start with a wordmark. Some develop a symbol alongside it. A few commit to the symbol alone. There is no universal right answer - only what fits the project and what you are willing to build.



VISUAL IDENTITY SYSTEM  
FOR BLACK ASH LIVE SERIES

## VISUAL IDENTITY SYSTEM

The logo represents the artist. The visual identity represents the music.

Color, typography, texture, composition – these are the visual translation of what the music sounds and feels like. The goal is for someone to look at a post or a cover and understand the emotional register of the music before they hear a single note.

When the visual language and the music are aligned, they amplify each other. When they are not, something feels wrong – and the audience feels it, even if they cannot explain why.

A hard techno artist and a classical vocalist can both have strong branding. But they cannot share the same visual language. The visuals are not decoration. They are an extension of the sound itself.

# CHARACTER & AVATAR

For artists who do not want to build a presence around their face – DJs, electronic producers, concept-driven projects – a character or avatar is not an alternative to identity. It is the identity.

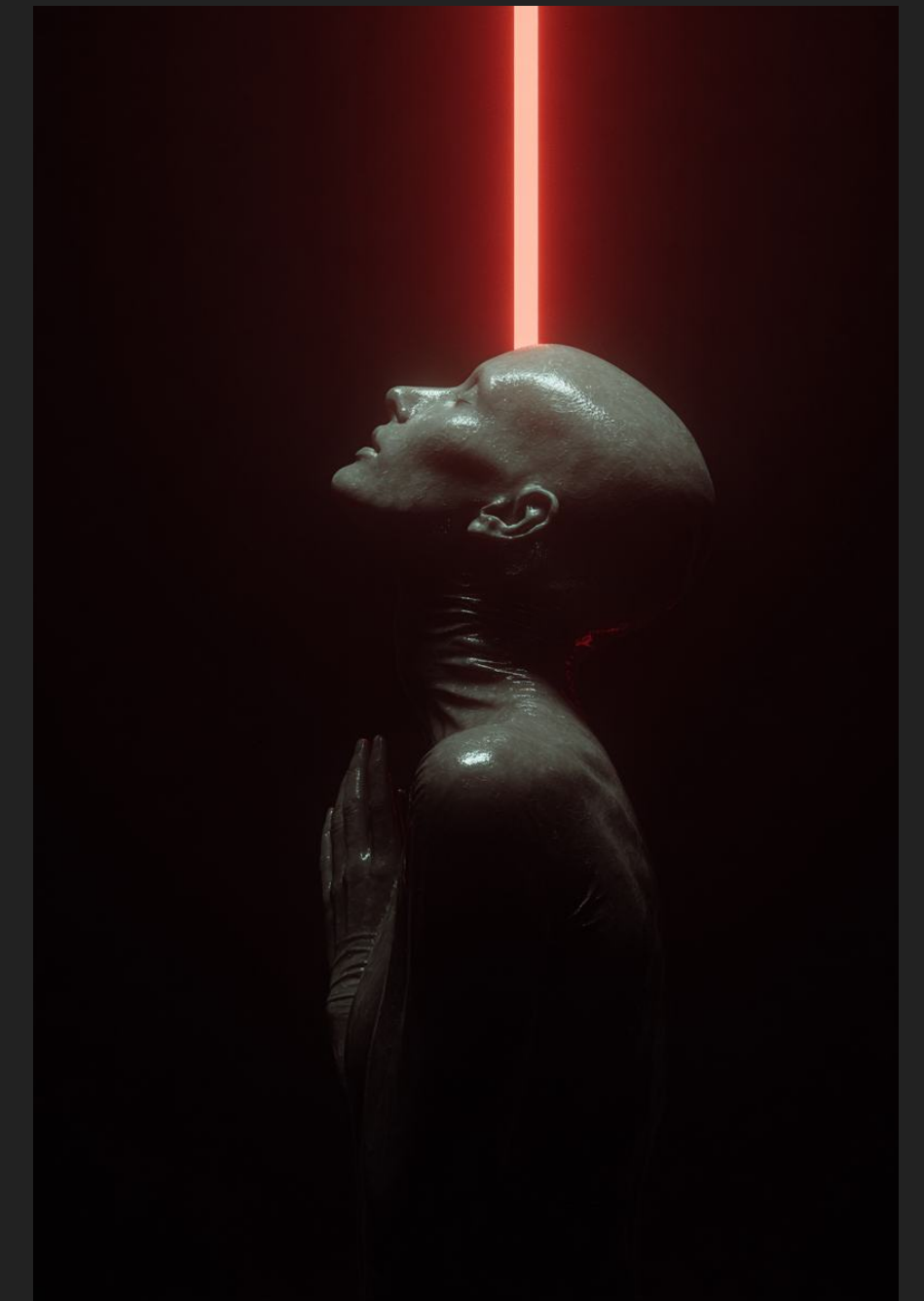
Done well, it becomes more recognizable than a face. It can appear in cover art, social content, merchandise, and visual storytelling in ways that a photograph cannot.

Done poorly, it becomes inconsistent – different every time it appears – and stops communicating anything.

I approach character design as a system problem, not an illustration problem. The deliverable is not a single image. It is a model sheet: defined proportions, angles, materials, and consistency rules that allow the character to be reproduced reliably across all future content.



TECHNO SHAMAN - FOR  
AN ELECTRONIC ARTIST



CHARACTER / MASCOT - FOR  
AN INDUSTRIAL METAL BAND

# PART 2

RELEASE

# COVER ARTWORK

A cover should communicate the tone of the music. Not describe it, not illustrate it literally communicate it. The emotional register, the atmosphere, the world the track exists in.

It tells the listener what to expect and whether that is something they want right now. The right cover does not just decorate the release. It earns the first listen.



# THIS IS PERSONAL.

As someone who works in visual art, this genuinely bothers me – not as a designer looking for work, but as a person who understands what it takes to make something.

You spend months on a track. You obsess over every layer, every detail, every second of it. And then you take a photo of a rock on the floor, or a paper cup on a table, and put it on the cover. No thought. No intention. Just something.

I do not understand what I am supposed to feel when I see that. And neither does the listener.

**You made a cake. You spent hours on it. Put the cherry on top.**



A SHORT CLIP - TO SHOW THAT  
THIS TRACK HAS A MUSIC VIDEO

## SPOTIFY CANVAS

Canvas is the only place on a streaming platform where something moves while the track plays. A looping visual, 3–8 seconds, running behind the music.

Most artists either skip it or treat it as an afterthought. That is a missed opportunity – because it is the one moment where you can add a visual layer directly to the listening experience.

It can be a fragment from a music video – a signal that more exists. An abstract animation that matches the mood of the track. Or simply something that holds attention just long enough to get the listener past the first few seconds and into the hook.

A small detail. But one of the few visual tools the platform actually gives you.



AN ANIMATED LOOP - TO REINFORCE  
THE ATMOSPHERE OF THE TRACK



## SOCIAL CONTENT - RELEASE

A quick guide to killing your profile: release a track, post nothing, and wait for the next one. That is a speedrun to being forgotten.

Most musicians do not enjoy social media. Nobody particularly enjoys producing content on demand. But this is how the world works now - social presence is no longer a marketing add-on. It is a core part of how artists are discovered, followed, and remembered. There is no way around it if the goal is to grow.

The good news is that the visual side of it - the content itself - does not have to come from you. That is exactly what I am here for.

Everything should be ready before the release date. Posts, stories, visuals - planned and produced in advance, so that on the day itself there is nothing left to figure out.

# RELEASE DAY

This is the most important day in the release cycle.

Every platform - streaming, social, video - pushes new content on release day. The algorithm is working in your favour for a narrow window. What you do in that window determines how far the release travels.

Maximum coverage on release day means more interactions. More interactions mean the algorithm shows it to more people. Which means more interactions again. The curve compounds - but only if there is enough content to feed it.

This moment cannot be recreated. You cannot go quiet for a month and then try to restart it. Release day happens once.



## POST-RELEASE

After the release, the curve starts to drop. That is inevitable - algorithms move on, attention shifts. But how fast it drops depends on what you do in the weeks that follow.

Post-release content keeps the track in circulation. Every post, every reel made with the track's audio, every piece of visual content tied to the release tells the algorithm that the account is still active and the content is still relevant.

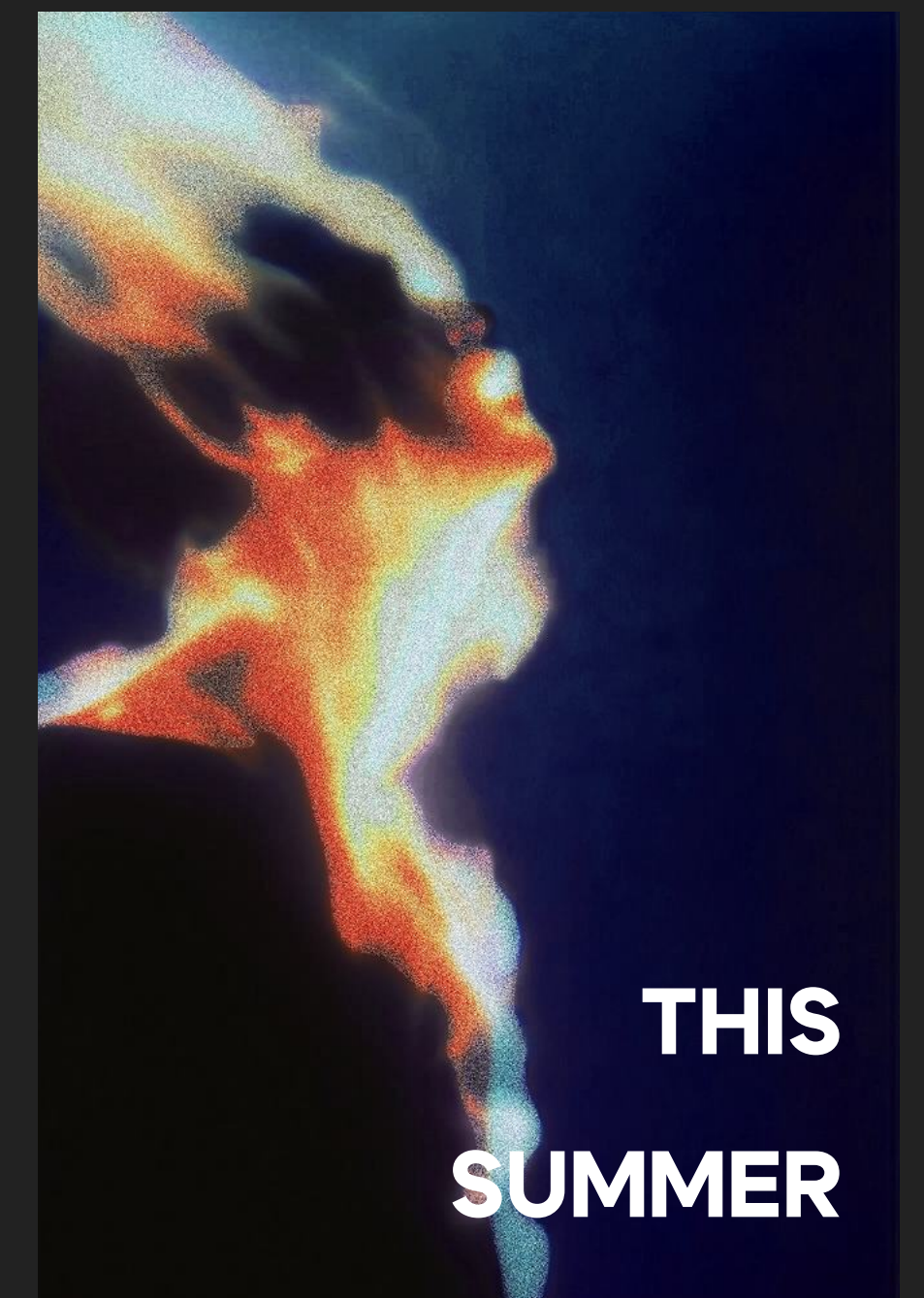
The goal is not to stop the decline. It is to slow it down - and to keep the track visible long enough for it to find more listeners.

# ANNOUNCING THE NEXT RELEASE - THE OVERLAP

At some point the post-release curve has dropped enough that a new push is needed. This is the moment to start announcing the next track - not after the account has gone quiet, but while there is still an audience paying attention.

The existing audience - even those engaged with the previous release - generate interactions that the algorithm reads as ongoing interest. That activity carries over into the announcement of what comes next. Old listeners help reach new ones.

This overlap is what keeps a profile alive between releases. The worst thing you can do is go silent and wait. By the time the next track is ready, there will be nothing left to build on.



# PART 3

PRESENCE



# BETWEEN RELEASES

Releasing a track and announcing the next one covers two moments in the cycle. Everything in between needs to be filled – not with silence, and not necessarily with promotion.

This is where everyday content comes in. It does not have to push the track or ask anyone to go anywhere. It just has to show that something is happening. A work in progress, a behind-the-scenes detail, a visual that fits the style of the project, an atmospheric post that uses the music as a backdrop.

Some of this comes from the artist – moments from the process, things worth sharing. Some of it can be prepared in advance by a designer: visual content that reinforces the identity of the project and gives the algorithm something to work with.

The goal is simple. Keep the profile alive. Show people – and the platforms – that this is an active artist, not an abandoned page.

# THE RELEASE CYCLE

A music career is not a series of individual releases. It is a cycle that repeats - and compounds.

Teaser → Announcement → Release → Post-release → Presence → Teaser → ...

Each cycle builds on the one before. Recognition accumulates. The visual language becomes more familiar. The audience grows a frame of reference for what to expect.

When the visual system is built correctly from the beginning, each new cycle runs with less friction. The preparation is already done. The style is already defined. The musician can focus on the music - and the content does its job in the background, without getting in the way.

# WHAT I DO?

I take the visual side of a music project off your hands completely.

- Building the identity from the ground up - name, logo, visual system, character if needed
- Producing all release materials for every track
- Creating content that keeps the profile visually alive between releases
- Ensuring that everything, across every platform, looks like it belongs to the same artist

I do not manage social media accounts. I handle what goes into them visually - not when or how they are run.

If you are ready to stop sitting on tracks and actually put them out – that is where I come in





[daniilmelikhov.com](http://daniilmelikhov.com)