360 Deal—A business relationship between a record label and an artist where the artist shares with the label money from all revenue streams in exchange for advances and label support services. This kind of agreement allows the label to make money off of the artist’s touring, merchandise and other revenue streams historically not included in record label contracts.

8-track tape—Consumer format using magnetic tape sound recording technology in an endless loop cartridge. Popular in the mid-60s to mid-70s in the United States.

ADC—Analog-to-digital converter: a device that converts an analogous signal (usually electrical) into digital data through a process known as sampling.

Advance—Money given by a music publisher (to a songwriter) or a record company (to a recording artist) that is a draw against future earnings. In that sense it is a loan.

Agent—Sometimes called “talent agent” or a “booking agent.” An agent is a person who finds jobs for various people in the entertainment or broadcast industries, including musicians and recording artists.

Analog—In audio, analog recording methods store signals as a continuous signal in or on the media, such as magnetic tape. Vinyl records, 8-track cartridge and cassette tapes are among consumer products that use analog storage.

Art Department (Record Label)—Creating all of the visual images needed by the label including cover artwork, company logos, advertising, displays, etc.

Artists & Repertoire Department—A&R for short. Responsible for finding and developing new recording artists.

Artist (or Product) Development Department—Develops the creative side of the label’s recording artists.

ASCAP—American Society of Composer and Performers, a performance rights organization.

Big Three Record Labels—Sometimes called “major labels.” They are currently Universal Music Group, Sony Music Entertainment and Warner Music Group. Each contains many sub-labels.

BMI—Broadcast Music Incorporated, a performance rights organization.

Business Affairs Department (Record Label)—Handles all accounting, payroll and other financial matters for the company.

Cassette tape or compact cassette—Consumer format using magnetic tape sound recording using two miniature spools. Popular in the early 70’s to late 90’s in the United States.
Catalog—The catalogue of a publisher refers to the works (i.e. songs) they own publishing rights to.

Clearance—In the world of music publishing, it refers to the right to use music that must be cleared with the copyright owners.

Compressor—A device used to control the dynamic range or volume of a sound. It may be an outboard piece of equipment or a DAW plug-in.

Compulsory Mechanical License—A mechanical license whose rate is determined by the “statutory rate” set by law, which is periodically increased to reflect changes in the economy. It is currently 9.1 cents per song, per unit sold.

Copyright—The exclusive legal right, given to an originator (such as a songwriter) or an assignee (such as a publisher) to print, publish, perform, film, or record literary, artistic, or musical material, and to authorize others to do the same. Its protection starts from the moment of creation of the work and continues until 70 years after the death of the author or artist.

Cover—A song recorded by an artist who did not write it, nor initially release it.

DAC—An abbreviation for Digital-to-analog Converter, a device that converts digital data into an analogous signal (usually electrical) that can be used with speakers or headphones, for example.

dB—Abbreviation for the word “decibel,” a unit of measurement used to express the intensity of an audio wave, heard by humans as volume or loudness.

Demo—Short for demonstration. A recording of a song that demonstrates the capabilities of a recording artist or a song or both.

Delay—An audio effect in which the original signal is played back at a later period of time. The delayed signal may either be played back multiple times, or played back into the recording again, to create the sound of a repeating, decaying echo.

Digital—In audio recording, it refers to a digital representation of an analog sound wave made possible by a technique known as sampling, which takes thousands of minute snapshots of the sound in order to represent it in digital form. This is done using an analog-to-digital converter, also known as an ADC.

Digital sampling—The conversion of a sound wave (a continuous signal) to a sequence of samples.

Disc mastering—The creation of a manufacturing disc for vinyl records.

DIY artists—Do-It-Yourself artists, also known as indie artists or music entrepreneurs.

Dub—Short for “overdub,” a term used in audio recording to describe the process of adding a track to previously recorded tracks.

Dynamic range—The range of possible volumes within an audio file. Compressors are typically used to control dynamic range.

Echo—A reflection of sound, arriving at the listener some time after the direct sound.
**Editing** - The modifying of an original recording through use of one or more sound processing possibilities.

**Equalizer** - A device used to shape the frequency content or tone of a sound. It may be an outboard piece of equipment or a DAW plug-in.

**Exploit a song** - To find as many uses for the song as possible, including, but not limited to: artist covers, print music, synchronization license, radio advertisement.

**Fair Use Doctrine** - Permits limited use of copyrighted material without acquiring permission from the rights holders.

**Frequency response** - Frequencies that are increased or decreased by a device used in the recording chain, such as a microphone. This is usually depicted by a graph.

**Hz** - A symbol for hertz, a unit of frequency defined as one cycle per second. The frequency of a sound is heard as pitch by the human ear.

**Indie** - Short for independent. Usually refers to a non-major label or artist. For example, an "indie label" or an "indie artist."

**Legal Department (Record Label)** - Handles all contracts and legal issues

**Loop** - Short sections of material can be repeated to create patterns.

**LP** - Long Playing (LP) records were 12 inch vinyl records that played at a speed of 33 rpm.

**Marketing Department (Record Label)** - Creates the overall marketing plan for every project released by the record label.

**Master (audio)** - The final mixed version of a song from a multi-track format, usually in stereo. This version goes to mastering.

**Mastering audio** - The process of preparing the final master audio for distribution. This includes creating the correct medium for manufacturing (CD master, digital master) and may include the following signal processing:

1. Editing minor flaws
2. Applying noise reduction to eliminate clicks, dropouts, hum and hiss
3. Adjusting stereo width
4. Adding ambience
5. Equalize audio across tracks for the purpose of optimized frequency distribution.
6. Adjust volume.
7. Dynamic range compression or expansion.
8. Peak limit.

**Mechanical royalty** - Per-unit payments made by the record company to the music publisher (and songwriter) for the reproduction of copyrighted musical compositions appearing on CDs, cassette tapes, vinyl albums, and other such manufactured formats.

**Merch** - Artist merchandise, such as t-shirts, phone covers, etc., usually sold at live events.

**Mixing audio** - A process where the multiple tracks or sounds are combined into a stereo track for most music applications. When being formatted for film it may be mixed to a number of possible formats including 5.1.
Mono—In sound, short for monophonic. Used in early sound systems and radio, this format uses a single channel of audio for its output.

Multi-track—A recording format that uses more than two discreet tracks.

Music Publisher—A company in the business of acquiring the rights to songs (from songwriters) and then exploiting or maximizing the income on these songs through licensing. The most common agreement with songwriters is to split the revenue the song generates 50/50 with the songwriter and with the music publisher being responsible for licensing the song’s use, collecting all revenue from uses and sending the songwriter their portion (50%). This licensing, collecting and distribution function is called song administration.

New Media Department (Record Label)—Responsible for dealing with newer web-based aspects of music business, such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, etc.

Overdub—An audio engineer term meaning to record an additional part(s) to previously recorded part(s).

Overdubbing—The process of recording additional parts to existing recorded parts.

PRO—Short for Performance Rights Organization, such as ASCAP, BMI and SESAC.

Project studio—A small, personal recording studio usually built to cater to the needs of a specific artist or a non-commercial hobbyist. May also be called a home studio.

Promotion Department (Record Label)—Makes sure the label’s artists are being played on the radio.

Publicity Department (Record Label)—Responsible for the public image of the label artists, usually involves magazine articles, television appearances, etc.

Revenue Streams—Various ways money can be made writing and performing music.

Reverb—Short for reverberation. It is created when a sound or signal is reflected causing a large number of reflections to build up and then decay as the sound is absorbed by the surfaces of objects in the space.

Royalty—A sum of money paid to a composer for each copy of their song sold or for each public performance of their song.

Sales Department (Record Label)—Responsible for the retail aspects of the label.

Sampling rate—The number of little “snapshots” of the audio the analog-to-digital converter takes in a second.

SESAC—Society of European Stage Authors and Composers, a performance rights organization

Song plugger—A position found within a music publisher company that pitches a song behind the scenes.

Stereo—Short for stereophonic sound. It is sound that is directed through two or more speakers so that it seems to surround the listener and to come from more than one source.
Streaming—Internet broadcasting.

Sync license—Short for a *music synchronization license*, sometimes called a “sync”, is a license granted by the holder of the copyright of a particular song or composition, allowing the licensee to synchronize the composer’s music with some kind of visual media, such as film, television shows, video games, advertisements, website music, etc.

Take—A recorded attempt by a musician at a complete performance of the song.

Tour Support—Money paid out to cover the costs of a tour, usually by a record label. It is almost always an advance against future earnings.

Track—A recording of one particular instrument or vocalist that is separate from the other performances for that song.

Tracking—The process of recording initial tracks for a song. This usually includes the drums and bass.

Transducer—A device that converts one form of energy into another. In the world of audio recording a microphone is an example of a transducer because it converts sound waves into electrical energy. A speaker is a transducer in the opposite direction converting electrical energy into sound waves.

Vinyl Record—An analog sound storage medium in the form of a flat disc with an inscribed, modulated spiral groove.