

Dear Friends,

I created this special information letter for you, to share with you guidance, pointers, and advice on how to inexpensively mail CD-Rs of your own original homemade music, noise, and audio art.

Many of you might ask:
Why CD-Rs?

Many people still prefer to put their audio art and noise on cassettes. Cassettes are cool! I like them!

I have thousands of them that I have received from my friends over the last 40 years.

But in 2026 it is expensive to mail cassettes! If you live in the USA and you mail a cassette to a friend in the USA it can cost you \$4.47 for Media Mail to \$7.30 for USPS Ground Advantage to mail one cassette.

That is not too high of a price to pay for a friend. But the cost to mail a cassette to a non-USA destination is prohibitively expensive - two to four times the value of the cassette itself!

Some of my friends who still love cassettes have told me that they have long since given up on trying to mail their cassettes internationally.

A lot of people I know just trade and sell cassettes at noise shows and other events. They do not even try to mail cassettes. This hand-to-hand person-to-person approach is appealing and positive.

For those of us who still like to mail our music on a physical medium there is an alternative.

In my opinion, maintaining an international community is of utmost importance. And with today's troubled international political situation it is as important as ever for us artists to show solidarity.

For me personally, it is inconceivable to NOT share my music with friends anywhere on Planet Earth!

The current political crisis which grips the planet does make it impossible for me to share my music through the postal mail with people in Russia, Belarus, and numerous countries in the Middle East. Fortunately, I am still able to share my music digitally, through streaming and downloads, with anyone anywhere who has an Internet connection.

I currently share most of my music releases (solo, splits, collaborations and many compilations through Bandcamp). To be honest, this is the most efficient, most accessible, and least expensive way to share music in 2026. I know that many people like to use The Internet Archive and Soundcloud.

In spite of my above comments, I still love to send my music to friends through the postal mail! Every year I mail hundreds of CD-Rs of my audio art to friends and comrades in the USA, Canada, Europe, and Asia, and almost all of those were sent by me for free, as gifts. I

rarely sell my CD-Rs. I prefer to trade! I always love to receive packages in the mail containing discs and tapes of homemade music from my friends all over the world.

I will continue to mail out and exchange music through the postal mail for as long as I am able to do it!

We all know that the postal services of our countries do not provide the high quality of service that they did in the past, probably because the demand for and use of postal mail has declined so drastically!

These days most of the time the only things we find in our mailboxes are bills and junkmail. A lot of people have gotten out of the habit of sending mail to anyone for any reason, let alone to mail fun stuff like music! And some people have never started! Some people do not even know how to send music through the postal mail.

I created this information letter to help you, encourage you, and get you excited about mailing fun audio goodies!

It can be done!

But it requires patience, learning new skills and procedures, and quite frankly a financial investment. Mailing stuff costs money! There's just no two ways about it! It is not as simple or inexpensive as putting your music on Bandcamp. For a lot of you on restricted budgets, Bandcamp (and similar services) is the way to go.

Burning discs, laying out covers, printing them, packaging it all up to go in the mail is also time-consuming. I spend all day long every day creating music and corresponding with my artistic friends.

I am retired from working at a job, so now I get to be a cultural worker 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year! For many or most of you this has not happened yet, so being able to find time to prepare items to send through the mail can be difficult.

Having said all of that, let's move forward with procedures for success and strategies on how to send your homemade music, noise, and audio art through the postal mail.

What I am going to write in the pages to come will mostly apply to friends of mine who live in the USA. I do not know all of the postal rules and regulations of all of the countries of everybody who will receive this information letter. But perhaps my international friends will get ideas from these pages.

Later in the information letter I will share tips and tricks that friends of mine in the UK and Europe have used to mail CD-Rs to me at low cost.

Did you know that people living in the USA can send any piece of mail that is less than a quarter of an inch in thickness by Letter Rate regardless of the destination? And of course Letter Rate is a lot cheaper than sending a piece of mail by any of the various Package Rates or even Media Mail.

A cassette is at least half an inch in thickness, which means that it must be sent by Package Rate.

A CD-R is flat!

If you do not mail a CD-R in a standard jewel case, but instead mail it in a flat cardboard or plastic slipcase or even a digipak, you can easily mail it by Letter Rate. Standard cassette jewel cases allow a nice presentation of artwork inserts and look good on a shelf or rack with all of your commercially-produced CDs. But for our purposes they are no good because they add to the thickness of the package, because you have to use padding or bubblewrap to protect the case from getting broken! And of course the case is designed to keep the disc from getting broken! So using a jewel case kind of defeats the purpose of what we are trying to do.

You can mail your CD-R in a flat housing of your choosing; and if the recipient prefers it in a jewel case they can transfer it to one after they receive it. What we are trying to do is get the CD-R to them via postal mail at a reasonable, manageable expense.

For my CD-R releases I print the cover on card stock paper and then insert the disc and cover into a flat plastic slipcase. I use rigid cardboard mailers. You can find these at office supplies stores or at online sellers. Mine weigh 1.05 ounces (or about 30 grams). The mailers are sufficiently rigid to prevent the packet from getting bent and the disc broken in the mailing process.

The CD-R, cover artwork, slipcase, a letter/note, an info leaflet, plus the mailer usually weigh a little over two ounces.

I have an inexpensive postal scale that I use to weigh packets, which cost me about \$25 when I bought it several years ago.

I do not need to use bubblewrap or additional padding inside the mailer. On occasion a friend tells me that their disc arrived broken, but it does not happen very often! I just mail a new one to them! Even if I have to mail it twice, that is still less expensive in the long run than mailing every disc by Package Rate!

Using this method, I can mail one CD-R to a friend in the USA for \$1.85. This amounts to two First Class Forever stamps (78 cents each) plus a 29-cent additional-ounce stamp.

To friends who live in Canada I can mail a CD-R for \$3.19; Mexico, \$3.89. For friends who live in the UK and Europe, my postal cost is \$5.59. For Japan, Korea, Australia, and Taiwan the price is also \$5.59.

You can purchase stamps in various denominations at the USPS website or your local post office. I recommend buying full sheets of 20 First Class stamps (in various eye-appealing designs); School Bus stamps, which are the additional-ounce stamps that cost 29 cents; plus sheets of 1-cent, 5-cent, 3-cent, 2-cent, and 1-cent stamps.

I affix the necessary amount of postage stamps to my mailers and I deposit the packets in the USPS mail pickup box near the front of my apartment complex.

I DO NOT try to mail my packets from the post office! The clerks will most likely try to charge you for Package Rate!

In fact, one of the great beauties of my methods of sending CD-Rs is that I avoid having to make frequent trips to the post office. I can mail my CD-Rs from home! ... which is a good thing!

For more than 40 years now I have been making HOMEMADE music, and that is very important to me. My releases are neat and tidy for the most part, but it isn't slick or flashy or professional-looking. They look homemade. My music sounds and looks and feels like me, and the packaging and the personal care that I put into every aspect reflect that same attitude and philosophy. That means that I try to do as much as possible from home. For me personally, my audio art is totally integrated with my day to day life. I use lots of recordings from my daily life, including the sounds of me depositing packets into the outgoing mailbox!

I can fit two CD-Rs into one rigid mailer and the postage prices do not go up very much. The additional CD-R makes the packet weigh more than three ounces. This means that for USA destinations I just have to use one more 29-cent stamp. For Europe/UK and Asia the price goes up to \$6.24. For Canada, \$3.89. For Mexico, \$4.64. These prices are still not too bad!

Avoid making the total weight of your flat package exceed 3.5 ounces, because anything above that weight must be mailed at a Large Envelope postage rate, which is of course more expensive.

My friend and long-time audio art through the mail veteran Charles Rice Goff III uses a different but equally effective method. He neatly overwraps the CD-R with a fairly stiff sheet of paper that is double-sided and contains artwork and liner notes. He mails his packets in a square envelope! Square envelopes cannot be sent through the automated sorting machines at USPS distribution centers. They have to be processed manually. He uses a Sharpie and writes NON-MACHINEABLE in big red letters on the envelope. He affixes a Non-Machineable Mail stamp to his packet, and those cost \$1.27. So Goff's method is actually less expensive than my method!

A big part of this way of doing things is that I am treating my CD-Rs as if they are documents, with no commercial value, which is actually true. I consider them to be personal communication, and I am not trying to make any money from them. In fact, the title of one of my CD-Rs was *A Letter To My Friends*.

Using my methods you can avoid high costs to mail your music in a physical format to friends domestically and overseas. Additionally you can avoid having to stand in long, slow lines at

the post office. If you're mailing stuff to friends in other countries you can avoid having to fill out long, complicated customs forms! Trying to mail a cassette you have high postage cost, hassles at the post office, and lots of tedious filling-out of forms.

I usually send my music on standard size CD-Rs, but a lot of my friends like to use 3-inch round CD-Rs or business card CD-Rs. These are even smaller and lighter weight! They can easily be shipped flat and cost less to mail than my CD-Rs. Several years ago I curated a business card CD-R mail project called *Personal Business* which was a lot of fun.

Friends of mine in the UK and Europe have found ways to work around the restrictions of the postal services of their countries. One friend mailed a mini CD-R tucked inside a holiday greeting card, which was quite ingenious. Others were simply brave and kept their CD-R mail packets as flat and looking as much like a letter as possible, affixed stamps to the packet, and dropped them in an outgoing mailbox. A friend in Italy simply wrote the words "Document. No Commercial Value" on his packet.

In 2026, sending anything of this nature by mail is a fun ADVENTURE and you have to look at it that way, in my opinion. Your packet will eventually arrive at its destination. It might take weeks!

Now some of you are going to protest that using my method and not getting my packets properly digitally stamped at the post office, with tracking, how can I be sure that they will arrive?! I can't, to be honest. But according to my experience, most packets DO arrive eventually. To me, having to pay USPS an upcharge for tracking, which essentially amounts to paying them extra to do their job properly - paying them extra to prove that they actually delivered it and didn't lose it - is ludicrous.

I love pulling a packet out of my mailbox, holding it in my hands, looking at the markings, and smudges and little tears and rips and abrasions, and just imagining what happened to it on its long journey to my mailbox... To me it's all a huge fun mystery! And I'm going to re-emphasize the word ADVENTURE.

Okay, so how do you go about getting your music onto a CD-R? I will admit that the CD-R is an antiquated technology! - but it works (most of the time!). Most newer laptops and desktop computers don't come with CD burners. You will probably need to buy an external CD drive. External CD drives don't cost very much, really. I have an Apple USB SuperDrive, which was about \$80. I also have a top-loading CD burner, which only cost me about \$30. I do not know what media programs each of you use. I export my music from Audacity in WAV file format. I import those WAVs into the Apple Music app (formerly iTunes) on my desktop Mac. I add the tracks to a new Playlist, and then I go File > Burn Playlist to Disc, which is followed by a prompt to insert a blank disc. 4x burn speed is recommended for music. Some of you might have standalone CD burners. I think there are still a few of those in operation!

Let's face it, any way we look at it, producing and mailing CD-Rs is less expensive than cassettes. Back in the 1980s and 1990s we used cassettes because they were cheap and we could buy them anywhere, even drugstores. Instead of having to spend hundreds and thousands of dollars to get a vinyl record pressed, which were big and heavy and expensive to mail, we could make as many or as few cassette copies of an album of our music as we wanted to. That was one of the great beauties of cassettes. Low cost, democracy, and accessibility! Three key words of underground homemade music for several decades.

Nowadays it is hard to find good quality new cassette gear. To me, sending your album out to get it "pro-pressed" on cassette ain't homemade! It's something different! It's fine and it's valid, but it ain't homemade.

Blank CD-Rs usually cost about half a dollar! If one is defective or gets broken or scratched, I just throw it in the trash. The CD-R is NOT a precious cult object like a cassette. It is humble, utilitarian, like a home office product. But the CD-R is also a blank slate, a tabula rasa, that you can make into a personal art object that awaits your imagination. Do with it what you will!

I hope the information in this information letter helps inspire you to share your music on CD-Rs through the postal mail.

For additional information, visit the USPS website and click on Calculate A Price.

your pal Hal

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