

UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL NOVEMBER 12th AT 8:00AM UK

Charlie Lexton Appointed CEO, Merlin

London, 12 November 2025. Merlin, the digital rights agency for the world's leading independent labels and distributors, today announced the appointment of Charlie Lexton as its CEO, effective 1 January 2026.

Lexton, who succeeds Jeremy Sirota, has worked for Merlin since its inception, initially alongside founding CEO, Charles Caldas. He has been instrumental in establishing Merlin as a global force in digital music. Most recently, Lexton has served as Merlin's COO since April 2020.

He has been at the centre of key milestones throughout Merlin's history, from the negotiation of its suite of DSP and social media deals to the recent announcement of its groundbreaking partnership with the pioneering AI audio company, ElevenLabs. Beyond these agreements, he has been key to delivering a series of game-changing "moments" for the independent music sector. These include Merlin's settlement of peer-to-peer copyright infringement litigation with LimeWire, the transfer of substantial parts of the Parlophone Label Group to the independent sector following Universal Music Group's acquisition of EMI and the sale of Merlin's equity interest in Spotify, which delivered a pay out of more than \$125m to its members.

Lexton has worked in the music industry for his entire career. He began as a DJ, writer and producer, before co-founding London independent label Dorado Records. After qualifying as a lawyer, he worked at UMG and EMI, where he led Business Affairs for EMEA ex UK. Immediately prior to helping launch Merlin, Lexton ran another London based independent label, City Rockers, as co-owner.

Merlin recently published its accounts for 2024 announcing revenue at a record high of \$1.64bn and its administration fee at a record low 1%.

Commenting on his appointment, Lexton said: "I am delighted at the opportunity to lead this organisation. My focus is on our members—the most significant grouping of independent music companies in the world—and on the Merlin team, our incredibly hard working and dedicated staff. I can do nothing without the support of our team. And without our members, there is no Merlin."

Chairperson of Merlin and Secretly Group Co-CEO Darius Van Arman said: "When we conducted our search for the new CEO, we met a number of extraordinary leaders, however one person stood out. Charlie Lexton has earned the trust of the Merlin membership by consistently delivering immense value throughout the organization's history. I am extremely confident that under his stewardship and

working closely with the exceptional Merlin team, Merlin will reach new heights and further enable the independence of the world's leading music companies."

Marie Clausen Merlin Management Board member and MD North America, Ninja Tune added: "Charlie is a brilliant strategist and remarkable negotiator who has earned the respect of our membership, team, and partners. The industry is at a pivotal moment of change. With Charlie at the helm, Merlin is ideally positioned to turn that change into opportunity. Having worked with him over a decade, I am confident that under Charlie's leadership Merlin is in the best hands."

Outgoing Merlin CEO Jeremy Sirota remarked: "Charlie has been a great partner in evolving Merlin into what it is today. He consistently delivers – from his unwavering commitment to the Merlin team to pioneering the first significant AI deal with ElevenLabs to empowering our members via Merlin Insights. Next year, I'm proud he will champion Merlin Engage to empower the next generation of female leaders for independent music. I'm excited for Charlie and the team to write Merlin's next chapter."

About Merlin

Merlin is the digital music licensing partner for the world's leading independent labels and distributors. We've negotiated premium deals with Apple, Canva, Meta, Spotify, YouTube, and 40 other innovative platforms around the world. Our global membership is from 70+ countries around the world, representing 15% of the global recorded music market. Merlin operates for the benefit of its members, without investors looking for an exit, and is funded entirely by our low 1.5% admin fee. Merlin helps the world's leading independents to own their digital business through world-class deals and white-glove support.

Merlin's membership includes independents such as !K7, anjunabeats, Armada Music Group, AudioSalad, Because Music, Beggars Group, Better Noise, Cinq Music Group, Crypton Future Media, Curb Records, Domino, Epitaph Records, Exceleation Music, Freeme Digital, Hopeless Records, IDOL, Kompakt, Kontor New Media, Lex Records, Mad Decent, MNRK Music Group, Mom & Pop Music, Mushroom Music, Nettwerk, Ninja Tune, ONErpm, Polyvinyl Records, Pony Canyon, Redeye, Reservoir Media, Secret City, Secretly, Stones Throw, Sub Pop, Wagram Music, Warp Records, Zebralution, and hundreds more.

Find out more at www.merlinnetwork.org.