

NarrateMe

AI-narrated audiobook publishing for self-published English authors. Manuscript in → professional-grade audiobook out in 48 hours, distributed to Audible / Spotify / Storytel. \$299/book or 30% royalty share — vs. \$1,500-5,000 for human narration.

Category	Set 5 · Vertical/Creator
Customer	Self-published English-language authors (fiction + non-fiction) wanting to produce audiobook editions but priced out of human-narration economics
Monetisation	\$299/book one-time or 30% royalty share · \$499 Premium with extended distribution + marketing tools
Build effort	Med
Plan version	v1.0 — 2026-05

Executive Summary

NarrateMe is the English-language self-published author counterpart to Dhvani (Plan 19, vernacular-language audiobook publisher). The opportunity: global English self-publishing produces ~600,000 new titles annually; perhaps 8-12% are released with audiobook editions, gated by the \$1,500-5,000 per book cost of human narration. AI narration in English has reached broadcast-quality level for narrative prose in 2025-2026; NarrateMe productises this at \$299/book or 30% royalty share.

Service flow: author uploads manuscript → selects narrator voice from curated library of 30+ professional-quality AI voices (each tuned for specific tonal registers: warm-female-fiction, authoritative-male-nonfiction, intimate-memoir, dramatic-thriller, etc.) → reviews sample chapter → approves full production → mastered audiobook delivered in 48 hours → distributed via Audible (ACX) + Spotify Audiobooks + Google Play + Apple Books. Royalty consolidation + monthly settlement to author.

Year-1 target: 2,500 audiobooks produced + 800 active royalty-share titles, generating **₹3 crore** revenue (production fees + royalty share) against **₹65 lakh** costs. Cash-positive month 3. The wedge against existing options: human narration is too expensive for most self-pub titles; competing AI-audiobook tools (Speechki, ElevenLabs direct) have weaker voice quality + lack distribution pipelines. NarrateMe combines quality + distribution + price.

The Problem

An English self-published author — a memoir writer, a fiction novelist, a non-fiction subject-expert author — wanting to release an audiobook edition faces severe economics. Professional human narration in English costs \$1,500-5,000 per book (depending on book length + narrator quality + production polish). For a self-published author whose typical book earns \$400-3,000 in lifetime royalties, the audio cost is uneconomic.

The market need is real. Audiobook consumption has grown 40%+ per year through 2022-2026; the audiobook listener segment now exceeds half a billion globally. Self-published authors who do release audiobooks see meaningful revenue lift (audiobook editions often generate 30-60% of total title revenue for fiction). The supply-side gap is the production cost.

Existing AI alternatives are thin. Speechki, ElevenLabs Audiobook, Google Cloud TTS direct all produce audio but with variable quality + no distribution help. The author who tries DIY AI audio struggles with: voice-selection inconsistency, chapter-level audio mastering, ACX submission complexity, lack of Audible relationships needed for distribution. The gap: a productised AI audiobook publisher with curated voice library + mastered output + established distribution pipelines at \$299-499 price point.

The Solution

NarrateMe is end-to-end audiobook publishing for self-pub authors. Author submits manuscript (Word, EPUB, PDF); selects from curated voice library of 30+ voices (each pre-vetted for narrative-prose suitability across fiction subgenres + non-fiction tones); reviews a sample chapter to confirm voice fit; approves production. NarrateMe processes the full manuscript (chapter-by-chapter narration + automated mastering + chapter-marker insertion + ID3 metadata) within 48 hours and delivers mastered audio files. Distribution: submission to Audible via ACX, Spotify Audiobooks, Google Play Books, Apple Books — all via NarrateMe's established imprint relationships.

Pricing structures. \$299/book one-time: author gets mastered audio + distribution + keeps 100% of subsequent royalties. 30% royalty share: no upfront fee, NarrateMe takes 30% of all audio royalties; author keeps 70%. Premium tier \$499/book: includes extended distribution (Libro.fm, BingeBooks, Chirp + niche platforms) + marketing tools (3 promotional clips for social distribution + cover-art audio adaptation + book-launch playbook).

Three structural differences from existing AI audio tools define the wedge. First, curated voice library with quality discipline (30+ voices vetted for narrative suitability, not 200+ generic TTS voices). Second, automated mastering + ACX-format compliance (technical hurdles that DIY authors struggle with). Third, established distribution relationships (we have imprint accounts with Audible ACX, Spotify, etc.; author cannot easily replicate these as a single author).

Market Opportunity

Global English self-publishing: estimated 600,000+ new titles released annually with combined revenue \$1-1.5 billion. Audiobook penetration in self-pub: ~10%. The serviceable opportunity for AI audiobook production: 60,000-120,000 titles/year willing to produce audio at \$299-499 price point.

At blended ARPU of \$400/book (one-time + royalty share blend), the SAM is \$24-48M annually growing at 25%+ per year. Realistic 4-year capture: 8-15% of addressable willing-to-pay = \$2-7M annual revenue.

Adjacent expansion. Year 2: small-press publishers (publishers releasing 20-100 titles/year willing to outsource audio production). Backlist publishing (older titles that never got audio; vast latent market for catalog audio). Year 3: language expansion (Spanish + Portuguese + French + German self-pub markets are smaller but adjacent).

Target Customer

Primary persona: a 42-year-old self-published romance novelist with 6 titles released over 4 years, ~\$45,000/year combined royalty income. Has wanted audiobook editions but cannot justify \$3,500/book human narration. Will pay \$299/book for first 2-3 titles to validate sales lift; will likely shift to 30% royalty share for subsequent titles once economics clear.

Secondary persona: a 38-year-old self-published business-non-fiction author with one breakout title earning \$12,000/year + 3 less successful titles. Will pay \$499 Premium tier for the breakout title with extended distribution + marketing tools; will use \$299 base tier for others.

Tertiary persona: a small-press publisher releasing 35 titles/year, currently outsourcing audio production to a mix of human narrators + offshore production studios. Will use NarrateMe for the 60% of titles where human narration is uneconomic; volume pricing at \$199/book at this scale.

Product

Author upload: manuscript ingestion (Word, EPUB, PDF), metadata capture (title + author + cover art + book description + categories + ISBN), book-style configuration (fiction subgenre + non-fiction tone if applicable).

Voice selection: curated library of 30+ voices, each with sample readings across multiple book types, filterable by tonal characteristics (warm/authoritative/intimate/dramatic), gender, age range, accent (American + British + Australian variants).

Sample-chapter approval: AI generates first chapter with selected voice for author review. Author can iterate voice selection or refine voice direction (slower pace, more energy, lower pitch) before approving full production.

Full production: chapter-by-chapter narration + automated mastering (level normalisation, noise removal, chapter-marker insertion, ID3 metadata) + ACX-format-compliant output. 48-hour turnaround for typical 8-12 hour audiobook.

Distribution: ACX (Audible) submission, Spotify Audiobooks, Google Play Books, Apple Books, all via NarrateMe imprint relationships. Premium tier adds Libro.fm + BingeBooks + Chirp + niche platforms.

Premium tier marketing tools: 3 promotional audio clips (60-second selections of the book's best moments for social distribution), cover-art audio adaptation (visual cover translated to audio-marketing imagery), book-launch playbook (timeline + checklist + sample copy + advertising guidance).

Royalty management: consolidated monthly royalty report across all distribution channels + monthly payout to author bank account.

Author dashboard: production status + performance analytics (downloads + listens + royalty earned per channel) + listener reviews aggregated across channels.

Technical Architecture

Backend: Python on Hetzner cloud + GPU box for narration (RTX 4090 box at █18k/month handles ~8 audiobooks/day comfortably).

AI narration: ElevenLabs Multilingual + curated voice models for the 30+ voice library. ~\$0.60/minute of finished audio in compute cost; ~\$5-7 per audiobook in narration compute cost.

Audio mastering: FFmpeg + Sox + custom mastering pipeline (level normalisation, EQ tweaks, noise removal, chapter-marker insertion).

Distribution integrations: ACX submission (via ACX submission portal — manual process initially, with automation pipeline reducing per-book labour over time), Findaway Voices for Spotify + Apple distribution, Google Play Books direct API.

Storage: Cloudflare R2 for audiobook files (typical 400-700 MB per audiobook).

Payments: Stripe (international) + Razorpay (India) for production fees; bank-payout infrastructure for royalty payouts.

Business Model & Unit Economics

Two structures. One-time production (\$299 + 0% royalty share): author pays upfront, keeps 100% of subsequent audio royalties. Royalty share (no upfront fee): NarrateMe takes 30% of audio royalties (70% to author). Premium tier (\$499 + 0% or 25% royalty share with extended distribution + marketing).

Conversion economics: trial demonstration (free first-chapter sample to evaluate voice fit) converts at 32%. Distribution: 65% one-time production, 30% royalty share, 5% Premium tier.

Per-book gross margin. One-time production at \$299 — direct costs ~\$8 (narration compute + mastering + distribution overhead) + ~\$15 amortised infrastructure = ~\$23 cost = 92% margin on production fee. Royalty share at 30%: ~92% margin on the royalty share.

Customer LTV: authors who succeed on first book typically commission additional audiobooks. Average 1.8 books per author over 18 months.

Unit Economics (Year-1 base case)

Year-1 audiobooks produced (target)	2,500
Year-1 royalty-share active titles	800
Year-1 revenue (production + royalty share)	\$370,000 (~₹3 crore)
Gross margin	85% blended
Customer acquisition cost (CAC)	\$28
Payback period	Single transaction
Year-1 all-in costs	~₹65 lakh
Year-1 net contribution	~₹2.2 crore

Go-to-Market

Channel 1 — Self-publishing author communities (40%): KBoards (Kindle Boards), self-publishing podcasts (Self-Publishing Show, The Creative Penn), 20BooksTo50K Facebook group, ALLi (Alliance of Independent Authors). Direct community presence + member-discount partnerships.

Channel 2 — Content + SEO (25%): substantive content on audiobook production economics, self-pub audio strategy, ACX submission guidance.

Channel 3 — Author-coach + author-platform partnerships (20%): partnerships with Reedsy, Draft2Digital, BookFunnel for cross-promotion + integration in author workflow platforms.

Channel 4 — Successful-author case studies (15%): first 100 successful audiobooks become case studies driving subsequent author inbound. Strong word-of-mouth in tightly-networked self-pub community.

Roadmap (first 12 months)

- Month 1-3: Voice library curation (initial 12 voices), ACX + Spotify distribution pipelines established, MVP launched. 200 audiobooks produced.
- Month 4-5: Voice library to 24 voices, royalty-share tier launched, 700 audiobooks cumulative, ₹50 lakh annualised revenue.
- Month 6-8: Premium tier with extended distribution + marketing tools, voice library to 30+ voices, 1,400 audiobooks cumulative.
- Month 9-10: Small-press publisher tier with volume pricing, 2,000 audiobooks cumulative.

- Month 11-12: 2,500 audiobooks produced + 800 active royalty-share titles, ■3 crore year-1 revenue.

Key Risks

- Audible / ACX policy changes regarding AI-narrated audiobooks — currently ACX accepts AI-narrated submissions but the policy has shifted before. Mitigated by multi-platform distribution (Spotify + Google + Apple alongside Audible) so no single platform dependency exceeds 60% of revenue.
- Voice-quality plateau or backsliding: AI English narration is good for narrative prose but weaker on dialogue-heavy fiction + poetry. Mitigated by clear positioning (we excel at narrative + non-fiction; weaker at heavily-dialogue or poetic work) + sample-chapter approval gates.
- Author resistance to AI narration: literary author segments view AI narration as artistically inferior. Mitigated by transparent positioning + voice-quality demonstrations + acceptance that some author segments will continue preferring human narration.
- Royalty-collection complexity across 4+ platforms with quarterly settlement variance — operational overhead. Mitigated by automated royalty-reconciliation tools + finance specialist from year-1 onwards.
- Reputational risk from low-quality output going viral as 'AI audiobook is bad' — mitigated by quality discipline (sample-chapter approval + curated voice library + author-final-approval before publication) + by 10% QA sample on every production.