Rethinking Success in the Age of Digital Streaming: Beyond Editorial Playlists.
If you want a career and your only focus on DSP's is editorial, you are wasting your time..

In an era dominated by Digital Streaming Services (DSPs), the music industry has undergone a revolutionary transformation. Artists and their teams are navigating a landscape where success is often equated with the coveted inclusion in editorial playlists on platforms like Spotify, Apple Music, and YouTube. However, it's time to reevaluate this fixation on editorial support and recognize that these platforms are not just about playlist placements but, more importantly, the direct connection to an audience.

DSP's are simply the 'current' access to the audience but not the audience themselves.

DSPs play a pivotal role in democratising music access, allowing listeners to discover and engage with any artist, anytime, anywhere. The emphasis should not solely be on how much support an artist garners from these platforms but rather on fostering a loyal and engaged fan base. While editorial playlisting undoubtedly brings in streams and broadens awareness, it doesn't always translate into lasting connections with listeners. Spotify themselves have noted that 89-91% of music consumers that ingest music on an editorial playlist are actually ingesting the playlist, as opposed to the artist on the playlist. Therefore we have an influx of streams and awareness, but realistically no fans.

One of the fundamental issues plaguing the industry is the tendency for labels, distributors, managers, and (mostly) artists to tether the success of a release to specific platforms' support. The obsession with editorial playlisting has led to a myopic view of success, overshadowing the more critical aspect—the audience.

The reality is that editorial playlisting, while beneficial, does not guarantee the development of an engaged audience. Too often, independent artists fall into the trap of seeking validation through playlist placements, neglecting long-term growth strategies and sustainability. This validation realistically only feeds into the ego of the artist themselves and does nothing else. It's fantastic to get 1 million streams and 100,000 monthly listeners on Spotify, but if barely any of them translate to tickets, or repeat streamers, what is the point? You can flex it on instagram to friends and family who aren't streaming your music anyway..

Following that, another concerning trend is the fixation on immediate gains from labels and distribution companies. Motivated by short-term financial returns, they will always prioritize playlist placements to boost streams and in turn bring in income, allowing them to recoup and profit. However, the true

measure of success lies in building a dedicated fan base that extends beyond a single release. One that is able to translate into other areas of the project such as but not limited to, touring, merchandising, sync opportunities, licensing opportunities and overall project sustainability.

To counteract this trend, artists must adopt a more comprehensive and sustainable approach to digital platforms. The focus should shift from relying solely on editorial support and developing 'numbers' to optimizing every available asset provided by platforms like Spotify. From Spotify / Apple for Artists submissions to artist profile updates, independent playlist pitches (with specific focuses), and engaging with pre-released catalogues, artists can strategically use these tools to foster growth over time.

By doing so we can then begin to create greater connections with more niche audience groups. Gone are the days where artists need maximum awareness to develop into sustainability. We live in a world of ultimate convenience and the artists who are able to go direct to their audience and foster that relationship, build a small community, will be the ones creating sustainability in the years to come.

Using Spotify as an example, below is a (rough) way to develop over a longer period of time on Spotify.

Please note that every artist is different, has access to different resources, and therefore the below is only a rough guide. If you would like more detail / would like to discuss further and more specifically to your artist project please email: info@cartelmanagmentaus.com

YOUR MAIN FOCUS IS TO SUPPLY THE ALGORITHM WITH DATA AROUND WHO YOUR LIKELY AUDIENCE WOULD BE BY EXPOSING THE RELEASE TO PEOPLE THAT ALL HAVE A SIMILAR TASTE PROFILE, THUS GIVES SPOTIFY DATA TO MOVE YOU UP THE TIER SYSTEM AND PLACE YOU IN 'MADE FOR YOU' PLAYLISTS OF INDIVIDUALS LIKELY TO LIKE YOU.

THIS DOESN'T RESULT IN MILLIONS OF STREAMS, BUT IT WILL CONTINUE TO SURFACE YOU TO THE 'RIGHT' AUDIENCE GLOBALLY AND OVER A SUSTAINED PERIOD AND A CATALOGUE OF RELEASES DEVELOP YOUR OVERALL PROJECT.

Pre release
- Create / update / add to a contact list of independent curators. (Have this ready before release day to remain as organised as possible) value the audience taste profile over numbers here.
- Distribution team 'should' do an initial pitch to all stores on behalf of the artist. Work with them closely around updates for all stores and ensure you are following all advice to develop activity.
- Spotify for artists submission pitch.
- Create / update artist Spotify playlist (generate activity on your own profile pre release)
- Update all imagery, biography, gallery, gigs & merch on profile (utilise everything at your disposal to generate activity within the system)
- Pitch to all other forms of media / radio etc, that have playlists with the intention of updating them when you receive the live link on release day.

- Pitch previously released catalogue to independent curator list (if you are releasing for the first time in awhile)

    Release Day / Week: As soon as you receive the live link
- Reconnect with the playlists you pitched to on the last release (if applicable to the audience of this release)
- Pitch to new independent playlists sourced pre release.
- Share on social media.
- Submithub / Muso-soup / Groover blast specific to spotify playlisting- value the audience taste profile over numbers here.
- Update all other media (that have specific playlists) with Spotify link for addition.

    Post Release 4x weeks post release day
- Review process (what worked, what didn't)- Additions don't matter here, especially if it's the 1st or 2nd time adopting this process. What about the process? i.e. the time you allowed, the platforms you used to source playlisting, are these actions you could commit to over multiple releases?
- Review / Measure growth in Repeat listeners compared to previous releases (Stream / Listener) You can find more information about tracking repeat listenership (Stream / Listener) here
- Review Source of Streams graph, where are you lacking? Where was there growth? Information here
- Streamline for next release

REPEAT ON ALL RELEASES

    What the above does.
- The more additions to independent playlists you get, the more streams and profile activity spikes you get.
- The more activity you spike will determine how far you move up the tier system. Information on tier system here
- The more profile activity spike you get over a short period of time, the more likely you are to trigger algorithmic playlisting.
- Editorial off the back of this is a bonus.

In conclusion, the paradigm of success in the digital streaming era must evolve. Artists should embrace a mindset that prioritizes long-term growth, audience development, and sustained activity over the fleeting gratification of playlist placements. By doing so, the industry can move beyond the limitations of editorial support and build a foundation for artists to thrive in the dynamic world of digital streaming.