



CARTEL MANAGEMENT AUSTRALIA

Stop Hoping For Editorials. Focus On Repeat Listeners.

Your streaming focus isn't conducive to building an engaged audience.

One of the most concerning habits that we see in independent artists today, is their incessant need for validation through editorial playlisting on digital stores (Spotify, Apple, YouTube, Deezer, Tidal etc). The focus for any artist who wants to create a sustainable career out of their artform should be to continually develop and preserve their audiences, and there is no doubt that the majority of audiences are consuming music via digital stores in every territory. In our previous article titled [Getting Playlists](#), we highlight industry processes when it comes to streaming, but in this, we wish to focus on what's actually important, how do we reach and engage new audiences on DSP's, outside of praying for editorial support that isn't in your control.

For the purpose of this article we will focus heavily on Spotify (in the Australia / New Zealand territory), as it is the most popular streaming service in this realm. We also wish to define 'repeat listeners' as an audience member who listens to an entire artist catalogue multiple times, saves, follows and adds artist music to their own playlists.

Ultimately, as an artist, the intention to navigate stores is yes, to gain as much awareness through playlisting as possible, but also to ensure that your music is getting streamed multiple times by fans.

Editorial playlisting on its own is NOT conducive to gaining an engaged audience.

Let's distinguish the difference between editorial, algorithmic and independent playlists as they all play a role in gaining more audience.

Editorial playlists are essentially what every artist right now is fighting for. These playlists are usually curated by Spotify in-house curators who have selective and specific tastes and it might be harder to get onto their radar. The curators should like the music you submit, but they will also be looking at the data to find great performing songs with the listeners. Gaining editorial support does often lead to an influx of streams but ultimately when artists' music is taken out of the playlist, all activity stops. The power of editorial playlisting comes in the form of leverage. *"Spotify endorses me, because they've added me to X editorial"*

For us, it is quite concerning to work with an artist in any capacity (management, PR, consulting) who are only focused on editorial, with no regard for activity / long term growth. The sad reality as music industry operators is that it is more common than not, to have artists hell bent on getting editorial support. This is a trap many artists fall into - where they assign the success of the release to something out of their control, and it's a belief that needs to change.

For more information on the Spotify For Artist submission + initial pitch from distribution read our [Getting Playlists](#) article.

Algorithmic playlists are basically playlists personalised for each user. For instance, playlists like Release Radar, Discover Weekly and Artist Radio, all showcase music by a user's favourite artists and artists that are similar. A user's favourite artists are determined based on their listening history and based on which artists they follow. This is a heavily misunderstood and underutilised tool for growing artist projects. What's interesting about algorithmic playlists is that they do trigger every time artists release new music. A challenge for artists is figuring out how to work within the internal algorithms to encompass every different release that may attract different audience niches (whilst balancing their content) to effectively surface to the 'right audience'. Spotify 'surfaces' each release utilising these algorithmic playlisting, consequently sharing a new release with an audience who is likely to enjoy the genre. The way to effectively ensure that algorithmic playlists work for your release / artists project is to continuously create activity on your Spotify artist profile and engage with the 'right' audiences.

Independent playlists can be created by anyone in the wider community and are a fantastic way for an artist to develop on the platform. As these playlists are 'user generated' it gives an artist more control to not only source but engage with audiences that are likely to enjoy their music.

If you have read previous articles from us, you will know the importance of developing and maintaining industry contact lists which allow you to connect with industry professionals pre-release to try and garner support. Independent playlist pitching falls under that category, and for you (the artist) it allows total control because you are in command of how many curators you hit up about your release. Let's say for example, you create a list of 500 independent curators and each of those playlists has 1000 followers. Then account for the fact that music is subjective and you may realistically only land a fraction of the amount of playlists that you initially connect with, you have still put the release in the best position possible for streaming success. If you land 20 of those 500 playlists, that's you potentially getting your song to 20,000 people.

This only works if you / your team are putting in the effort to actually find, create and maintain relationships with these playlist curators. Finding the contacts for these playlists / channels is all about doing research, generally if you cannot find an email or direct contact for a submission, the playlist may have a mirrored YouTube channel that will have a contact in the about section of their profile.

We would advise you not to pay for services that guarantee Spotify addition. It is more beneficial to grow your own network over a longer period of time, rather than handballing it off to a service whose playlists may not be genuine for streaming success.

The goal is to create consistency over multiple releases with everything that you do. It is completely unrealistic to expect an artist to source and reach out to 500 playlists on one release. By breaking it down across multiple releases, artists will be more likely to create efficient habits that also allow them to focus on what's important to them (making more music.) So, on the next release potentially aim to reach out to 10 independent playlists, on the next build it to 20, and so on and so forth. Regardless of addition, these user generated playlists are the way to reach and create activity within Spotify, so even if you're not being added right away, it is still important to create and maintain those relationships.

Activity system (internal to Spotify):

Internally, the system for artist growth on Spotify works in a tier system. Imagine a ladder, and each step on the ladder being representative of another tier. Each tier equates to a different amount of activity artists generate. For example, they can take into account how active your profile is within Spotify, how much activity you are creating

out of the Spotify platform (on socials) that will ultimately bring people onto Spotify, and how much revenue you generate. Notice, that none of these mention what kickdrum you are using, or what octave you are singing in.

At the bottom of the ladder, is a pool of the locally sourced artist projects. New projects, artists that have little to no experience, activity or are overly inconsistent. At the top of the ladder is all of the globally recognised artists, Ed Sheeran, Adele etc. These guys are situated high on the platform for the amount of activity / revenue they generate within and outside of Spotify, and in turn, are automatically editorially supported.

At the end of the day, Spotify does not care about the artist. As a platform, their main priority is to the users who pay \$15.99 a month, ensuring that they remain happy will ultimately keep them on the platform. The job of an artist is not to see how much playlisting they get, to inflate their ego, it is to actively create activity over multiple releases to ensure that their music is being put in front of the RIGHT people and that their project has linear progression through the teer system. Getting the right music in front of the right audience, consistently, allows artists to create repeat listeners, rather than inflated numbers that mean nothing. In turn, creating repeat listeners creates the base for financial and creative sustainability. A repeat listener is infinitely more likely to buy a ticket to a show, buy merchandise, engage with your other music & social platforms.

Tracking Repeat Listeners

Understanding the numbers that are given to you in the back of your Spotify For Artists is pivotal. For the purpose of this article, and until you feel as though you have an engaged audience who is ready to invest in your project, the most important statistic you should be looking at is 'Stream / Listener'

Finding Stream / Listener numbers

- >Click into Spotify For Artists
- >Click into Audience
- >Click into Audience Engagement

Stats this period ?

Sep 18, 2022 - Oct 15, 2022 - Worldwide

Listeners	Streams	Streams / Listener	Saves	Playlist adds
35,906	76,238	2.123	940	1,601

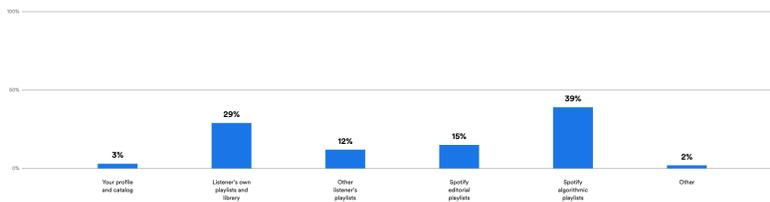
As you can see in the image above, the Stream / Listener stat is at 2.123. For this particular artist, that means that for every listener that comes to their profile, on average listeners are listening to 2x songs of the artist catalogue.

It is in the best interest of artists to grow that number as high as possible, for the simple reason that the more a listener streams the catalogue, the more likely they are to invest over a longer period of time, which will ultimately grow the project.

The next statistic you should look at is Source of 'Streams'

Finding Source of Streams graph

- >Click into Spotify For Artists
- >Click into Audience
- >Click into Source of Streams



As you can see in the above image, this particular artist receives streams predominantly from algorithmic playlisting, followed by Listener's own Library. What this means is that the algorithmic playlisting is heavily triggered by a mixture of independent playlisting and the 'type' of listeners that are coming onto this specific artist's profile. Spotify is able to collect the data of the 'type of listener', listening to this artist's and thus can surface the algorithmic playlists to the right audience.

If in your Source of Streams graph you see that you are getting almost all of your streams from one of those 6 things, and not a somewhat even spread, then you are not optimising the platform and we would heavily suggest re-adjusting your strategy.

Process to create repeat listeners

Below is a rough process to develop over a longer period of time on Spotify. If you would like more detail / would like to discuss further and more specifically to your artist project please email: info@cartelmanagementaus.com

The overall idea is to optimise every asset Spotify allows the artist access to.

- Your Spotify For Artists
- Your Spotify Artist profile
- Editorial, Algorithmic, Independent playlisting
- Your pre-released catalogue

Pre release

- Create / update / add to a contact list of independent curators. (Have this ready before release day to remain as organised as possible)
- Distribution team 'should' do an initial pitch to all stores on behalf of the artist.
- 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
- Pitch to new independent playlists sourced pre release.
- Share on social media.
- Submithub / Muso-soup / Groover blast specific to spotify playlisting

- 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)
- Review Source of Streams graph, where are you lacking? Where was there growth?
- Streamline for next release

REPEAT ON ALL RELEASES

What the above does.

- The more you reach out, the more chance of addition
- 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.
- The more profile activity spike you get over a short period of time, the more likely you are to trigger algorithmic playlisting.
- Once you trigger algorithmic playlisting and your profile activity spikes consistently, the more likely you are to get in the face and push for an addition on editorial playlisting, and ultimately maximising repeat listeners.

In closing, we feel it's very important for the artist mindset around stores to significantly change. Instead of focussing on inflating numbers and 'hoping' for editorial support (that will never be in your control) focus on developing and sustaining activity over time. Building over multiple and consistent releases and having artists rely on the merit of the actual process is more beneficial than hoping and continuing to be let down by something you are not in control of.