



CARTEL MANAGEMENT AUSTRALIA

**Direct Connection > Awareness.**

*Awareness is not Audience. Being able to go direct to your audience is vital for development.*

In the ever-evolving landscape of the music industry, the path to success for artists has shifted dramatically in recent years. For musicians who aspire to build a sustainable career in 2024 and beyond, it has never been more crucial to cultivate and sustain relationships with real fans.

Real fans are the backbone of any artist's journey. They are the individuals who not only listen to your music but do so repeatedly, invest their time and money in attending your shows, and proudly sport your merchandise. They provide you with the essential support to fund your creative endeavors and sustain your career. In other words, real fans are not just passive consumers but emotionally invested allies in your artistic journey.

*\*Before moving forward, it is important to note that this article is aimed at artists who are interested in developing their project into a sustainable career.*

Unfortunately, the prevailing attitude among many artists, whether local or national, often focuses on pursuing various aspects of the industry, such as recording deals, booking agents, or publishing opportunities. Vanity metrics, like amassing millions of streams and garnering media support through radio and editorial features, have become the central focus.

However, this perspective falls short of understanding the fundamental truth: an audience member does not care about an artist's stream count, radio plays, or the number of sold-out shows. They care about how the music makes them feel. In the eyes of the industry, they are more likely to support an artist who already has a dedicated following. This following signals a financial incentive for the industry, as they are more likely to see a return on their investment.

As we move into 2024 and beyond, artists now have a unique opportunity to form meaningful connections with individuals within the digital sphere. Digital streaming platforms (DSPs) such as Spotify, Apple Music, YouTube, TIDAL, and Deezer have made music more accessible than ever before. These platforms house the entire music catalogue of nearly every artist, available at the click of a finger. Furthermore, current social media platforms, including Instagram, TikTok, Twitch, Discord, and Facebook, connect over 4.88 billion people globally as of July 2023. These platforms are the driving force behind the development of genuine connections between artists and their core fan bases.

Regrettably, many artists, both local and national, continue to rely on outdated development models. They often look up to artists who emerged in a different era, a time that is now

irrelevant to the current music landscape. Consequently, these local artists often fall into the trap of believing that media exposure generates an audience.

It's essential to distinguish between awareness and audience. Established acts with a sustainable income, global tours, and millions of streams do not necessarily need to build an audience from scratch – they already have one. Their focus shifts towards expanding awareness within their existing fanbase to fuel further development and draw in new fans through tours and other avenues. In this context, media support is invaluable in extending their reach to an established audience.

Local acts, often at a grassroots level, do not possess a pre-existing audience, outside of friends and family. Their focus should be on building repeat listenership within their local territory and potentially in other regions. By creating and nurturing an audience over a sustained period, often across a catalogue of releases, artists can generate leverage to venture into other aspects of their development, such as touring, merchandise, and industry opportunities. External media plays a less critical role for local acts since their core audiences do not primarily discover new music through traditional media platforms. When they do encounter an artist through these platforms, it is often a fleeting, passive interaction, insufficient to convert an individual into a devoted fan.

Artists serious about their career should concentrate on two crucial elements:

1. The creative process itself.
2. The ability to effectively communicate that creative work to an audience likely to care.

Nothing else holds the same weight. Local shows will not expose artists to the requisite number of audiences for sustainability. Editorial and external support may provide a quick boost in the short term but often fails to translate into long-term project development.

During the creative process, artists need not focus on their audience (nor should they). Their music is a reflection of their thoughts, inspiration, and creativity. However, when releasing music with the intention of building a lasting career, it is paramount for artists to cater to an audience likely to resonate with their work.

To do this effectively, consider the following:

- Identify what digital and social platforms your target audience uses.
- Understand how your audience utilizes these platforms for music discovery.
- Come up with a specific process that is measurable and actionable across multiple releases.

For instance, in AU/NZ 89% of people consuming music prefer Spotify and 45% of artist discovery on Spotify globally comes from algorithmic playlists (Daily Mixes, Release Radar etc), you have valuable insights into where your audience resides and how they discover music.

Creating a seamless process that caters to your specific audience at every touchpoint is paramount for artist development in 2024 and beyond. It's not just about creating music; it's

about creating connections, fostering engagement, and ultimately building a sustainable and rewarding music career.