



CARTEL MANAGEMENT AUSTRALIA

### **Getting Play On Radio.**

*Be good at the part of the process that you are in control of.*

Getting consistent radio play / additions is a major focus for artists releasing music in the 2021 Australian landscape. The purpose of this article is to inform artists on what the different types of radio are, and how to create processes in order to build into consistent radio play.

Let us start (as we always do) by explaining that if you are an artist that wishes to gain consistent radio exposure, then you need to be on a consistent release schedule. You will not gain the results you are after by releasing one single every 6 months. Our advice to you is to create a back catalogue of music and strategise the releases to allow you to remain active in the minds of radio editors and music teams.

Before getting into thick strategy, let's distinguish the different types of radio as not all will be applicable to all artists.

#### **Community Radio:**

Community radio usually is a short-range, not-for-profit radio station or channel that caters for the information needs of people living in a particular locality, in the languages and formats that are most adapted to the local context. In terms of pitching to community stations, it is often something artists overlook. Due to the target audience being local to the station, generally community based campaigns are great when you have a solid understanding of where your audiences are located. They are great for tour promotion in certain areas, as well as gaining an understanding of area tastes outside of metropolitan areas.

#### **Digital Radio:**

Digital radios are the stations that do not transmit on an AM or FM frequency, and can be found through syndicated stations on the internet (for example triple j unearthed). Being present in all areas of the digital space is important when considering your artist development and digital radio often allows for artists to create assets such as soundbytes for third party endorsement and proof of play to share across artist social platforms.

#### **Commercial Radio:**

Arguably the most popular form of radio broadcasting commercial radio deal in mainstream music. These stations often follow strict guidelines around codes of practice and broadcasting is primarily based on the practice of airing radio advertisements and television advertisements for profit. It's here where the most popular worldwide music is being played.

#### **College Radio:**

Campus or widely referred to as college radio is a type of radio station that is run by the students of a college, university or other educational institution. Programming may be exclusively by students, or may include programmers from the wider community in which the radio station is based. When looking to expand your base outside of the Australian market, college radio can be a great tool to target audiences outside of Australia depending on their musical taste. This is not something that we would recommend until you have a firm grasp and understanding of who your audience is outside of Australia as pitching it everywhere can be both costly and time consuming.

Now that we all understand the differences of the above types of radio, let's talk about the process that is actually landing them for both rotation and one off play. The end goal for most artists is to gain consistent additions on every release to maximise their reach to new and existing audiences. The problem here is that no artist is guaranteed placement on any given station as it is a highly competitive market with which you (the artist) have absolutely no control over. So the first thing to think about when you are actually in the creative process we challenge you to ask

yourself;

*“Is what I am making suited to radio?”*

If the answer is no then do not worry about reading on.

If the answer is yes then ask yourself:

*“What types of stations should I be aiming for?”*

Once you have answered the above it will become easier for you to understand what parts of the process are actually applicable to your project.

### **Triple j / Triple J Unearthed (Australian based artists only):**

It's worth noting that within the Australian territory that Triple J (for independent artists) is seen as a sort of gateway into the world of recognition and industry support. In some ways that is true, but we advise all artists that it is not the be all and end all when it comes to radio success for your campaign. Triple J, (for applicable artists Double J) & Triple J Unearthed should be a part of your servicing but only considered as one small section for your push to overall radio. With that being said it is our view that a long term approach to navigating Triple J overall is the approach that needs to be taken. Rather than uploading one song to the unearthed platform and hoping the presenters like it enough to play. That is not the way to create sustainability and grow meaningfully across the platform. We suggest that most artists utilise triple J unearthed first.

So roughly (depending on the artist) your long term plan utilising multiple pieces of music should be:

#### **1. Upload and create a dialogue with relevant presenters. Prioritise feedback:**

*Upload to unearthed at least 3x weeks prior to your release:* If you are organised you should have had your song in distribution for a week already.

For more information on specific release plans read our Release Plan Article [here](#).

You are probably thinking *“why would I put it up there so early before my release date?”*

A few reasons as listed below:

- Unearthed is an industry-based platform and to give your single the best opportunity to be seen / listened to by the J presenters, managers, booking agents, artist representatives, labels etc. the earlier you upload the better.
- The actual process of uploading to Unearthed and the single going live, can take anywhere from 2 days to a week.
- Once the single is uploaded, the 3x week time frame you allow yourself enables you to email and connect with Triple J and Triple J Unearthed presenters for feedback and review. This is a vital stage of understanding your radio journey with the station.

Every time you release you should be emailing relevant unearthed presenters to you. Your communication to them should never mention play, but simply asking for feedback. They may not reply to you on your first communication and that should be expected, if you're releasing consistently enough sooner rather than later a dialogue will begin and that's the basis of growing your network on the platform. When emailing them the single, be sure to send them the unearthed link, if you send them something else all they are going to do is ask for the unearthed link.

If you're now asking the question, *“How do I find these contacts?”* The answer is pretty simple. RESEARCH. Take one hour out of your studio time every day and research all of the above. Consider this an admin role that needs to be done every day / every week.

#### **2. Presenter Reviews Matter:**

Getting presenter reviews allows you to enter the charts on the unearthed website at a faster rate than

normal people leaving reviews. As stated above, include the unearthed link in your initial communications to presenters that gives them an opening to leave their feedback on your profile which gives you a boost in charting.

**3. *Charting is leverage:***

Charting on the unearthed platform is not overly difficult. It is something we would suggest to prioritise prior to release day as charting is industry leverage for the release before it comes out. This is where presenter reviews come in handy as well as looking more meaningful on your profile. As well as the presenters we would suggest contacting friends and family (as many people as you can) to leave a review on the site. Do not openly post on social media asking people to review, message your circle privately to ensure the reviews look as though they are organically grown. It's important to consider that on social media your focus is to push all of your traffic to the buy link on release day. You do not want to push the bulk of your audience to unearthed prior to release, and then attempt to do it again on the day of release.

**4. *Move into play- then move into an addition:***

Charting and communicating with unearthed presenters / producers consistently over time builds your network of support. Once you have gained enough traction from charting multiple times, presenters may choose to play your music as a one off. There is no guaranteed time limit or amount of reviews before you get played, it purely comes down to consistency and network. So prioritise the parts of the process you can control which is essentially all of the above. Once you are getting played consistently over the next few pieces of music the focus would be to move into a triple j unearthed addition to rotation.

**5. *Once added to rotation on unearthed:***

Congratulate yourself, take a second to look back on the process and marvel at the steps in development you have taken. Once you have done that, do it again, and again, and again after that. Doing it once is great, but doing it for multiple singles allows you to grow your support to different presenters and producers on the platform. You will find during this time that you will be more likely to be included into things such as feature artist / spotlight artists etc. These should be accepted by you when approached but it's important to understand that you are not in control of attaining them. The music team has specific boxes they need to tick off on weekly due to different world wide and music trends which lend into their decision making on these things. So try not to prioritise things you cannot control.

**6. *Main Station (Double J for applicable artists only):***

When you feel like you have a solid enough hold on unearthed and consistent additions are becoming easier to achieve, it's time to focus on the same process and begin to build into the main stations triple J & Double J. When contacting presenters begin to contact producers and presenters from the main station. Focus on shows that are relevant to you only. Continue the same process and grow into play, then into spot rotation, then into full rotation.

**The Community Radio Process:**

Once your piece of music is in distribution with a confirmed release date, we recommend you begin the process of hitting up as many community radio stations as possible. A really cool tool for you to use to gain access to all stations is [AMRAP](#) (Australian Music Radio Airplay Project). Simply put, Amrap is a community radio initiative that distributes and promotes contemporary Australian music to community radio stations nationwide. Once uploaded into their system your music will be sent to music directors at relevant stations based on the genre / topic / mood of your music.

We suggest doing this for every release, AMRAP is a free tool that is easy to use so there should be no excuse to not do it. We also suggest connecting with the music directors at the stations that back you and play your music. By having an actual contact to reach out to each release as well as doing AMRAP, allows you to cover all bases for your release to be exposed to the right audience.

**The Commercial Radio Process:**

As you could imagine the process for commercial radio is quite in depth and is only for artists that are already receiving copious amounts of industry and media support. We would urge any artist who wants to build into a

commercial radio station like NOVA 100 or 2DAY (Fox FM) to first focus on getting consistent streaming and shazam success, as they are both major factors taken into account when commercial stations are selecting for programs. For more information on playlisting read our article Getting Playlists [here](#).

Pitching to commercials should be done by a PR (communications expert) who already has in-depth knowledge of the pitching process and relationships with the stations. Previous leverage through media, streaming, shazams and live shows all play a major role as well as the music fitting into the right mould for that particular station. Commercial radio is something you are after as an artist, make it the last thing you consider.

Generally and in our experience working with commercial stations, songs generally get tested on late nights prior to getting additions across multiple programs on the station. They are more likely to want to test you if you as the artist can guarantee an audience response which is why we urge artists to have major leverage prior to working on this.

Commercial radio stations 'should' play a minimum of 25% Australian music during peak times (6:00am-6:00pm), The parliamentary report into the Australian music industry, released in early 2021, has called for clearer and simpler rules around Australian content, and an overall boost to Australian music quotas.

Radio over can be a major asset to your project depending on your genre / tone and most importantly audience. Always view your approach to radio as ever growing and value the process over any one result. Putting all of your eggs into the basket of *"my song is good so triple J will play it"* is a very careless and outdated line of thinking for artists. Focus on developing over time, never compare yourself to other artists as all projects are vastly different and there is no one size fits all method to growth.