



LABEL STANDARD RELEASE PLAN UPDATE 2024.

Breaking down key priorities in a release cycle from the point of distribution to post-release

In the fast-paced world of music releases, having a clear and structured plan is crucial to maximising your impact and building long-term success. While each artist may have different strengths, weaknesses, and goals, this article outlines a label standard release cycle—a bare minimum structure designed to help artists in the AU/NZ territory navigate the social, digital and media landscape effectively.

This plan covers the key priorities from the moment your music is ingested into a distribution service up until release day and beyond. It's aimed at artists looking to build demand for their catalogue and ensure the sustainability of their artist projects.

In 2024/2025, successful artist releases hinge on three main points of connectivity: Social, Digital, and Media. Together, these elements form an overarching Communication Plan that drives discovery and fan engagement.

SOCIAL: The Heart of Audience Connection

Your social platforms are your primary connection point with your audiences. They are not just channels for content distribution but for building community and enhancing your narrative. A robust social strategy goes beyond merely posting content. It focuses on identifying your niche audience and engaging them meaningfully.

Consider the following when developing a social strategy:

- Listener Behavior: How does your audience interact with the platforms you target?
- Audience Discovery: What is the journey of an audience member discovering your music?
- Artist Strengths and Weaknesses: How can you leverage your strengths and address your weaknesses?

The main priority for social media should always be communication, not just content. Repeated exposure leads to discovery, and discovery generates fans.

DIGITAL: Ensuring a Seamless Discovery Journey

Building on your social strategy, your digital strategy ensures that the journey of discovery on platforms like Spotify is seamless and targeted. This might include optimising your profiles or using paid promotion to push your music to the right audiences. This part of the process ensures that you are supplying each platform with specific data around who your niche audience is + have a process to develop and navigate it.

For independent artists, understanding your budget and priorities is crucial before committing to digital ad spend. It's not always necessary, but when used strategically, it can enhance your reach.

MEDIA: Enhancing Awareness Through Third-Party Platforms

Media, including playlist placements, online magazines, and radio airplay, is often where artists focus most of their attention. However, it's important to remember that media is the least controllable and the least impactful part of the release cycle. While it can provide valuable exposure, it should be viewed as a supplement to your existing strategy rather than the foundation.

The Five-Week Release Cycle

The release cycle begins five weeks before your intended release date. Uploading your music to a distributor 4-6 weeks in advance is essential to ensure it's available for editorial consideration on streaming platforms as well as confirming your release date ahead of time (allowing you to seamlessly action everything you need to prior to release day).

5 WEEKS OUT (SETUP WEEK)

- Finish mastering your recording (WAV, MP3, AIF versions).
- Prepare a clean edit if needed.
- Ensure all assets (cover art, press images, social tiles, videos) are ready.
- Update media/industry databases with all contacts you plan to pitch to.
- Update DSP/social profiles with uniform images, bios, and links.
- Develop a press release.
- Craft your Spotify for Artists submission pitch.

4 WEEKS OUT (UPLOAD + INITIAL PITCHING WEEK)

- Upload to your distribution service.
- Upload to Triple J Unearthed and SoundCloud or DISCO (private).
- Register with APRA/AMCOS for royalties.
- Submit to AMRAP for community radio outreach.
- Begin your social outreach, engaging with niche audience accounts.

3 WEEKS OUT (RADIO WEEK)

- Pitch to Triple J and relevant community/digital stations.
- Continue social outreach and schedule your pillar content posts.

2 WEEKS OUT (REPURPOSE WEEK + SOCIAL ANNOUNCE WEEK)

- Gather and analyse feedback from your pitches.
- Adjust your strategy based on what's working.

WEEK OF + POST-RELEASE

- Facilitate any media coverage.
- Pitch to indie user playlists and update your distributor on early digital/social metrics.
- Consider digital ad spend (if applicable).
- Continue pitching to independent Spotify playlists, focusing on audience discovery rather than stream counts.
- Follow up with all media contacts with live links to your song.

A well-structured release plan can streamline the process and help you build a sustainable artist project. By focusing on social, digital, and media strategies, and adhering to a disciplined five-week release cycle, you can ensure that each release is a step forward in developing your audience and your career.