



CARTEL MANAGEMENT AUSTRALIA

Release Plans.

Actions to put your music in the best position pre-release.

All artists, at some point in their career are guilty of the 'release and hope' method of releasing music. Finishing a song, releasing it through distribution and watching it daily, hoping for a miracle playlist addition or magazine write up. This method involves no real proactive processes, action plan or timeline to put the release in front of the right audience / industry people. Whether it be through naivety, or a lack of knowledge about how to create brand awareness in a truly saturated market, artists are 'releasing and hoping' - a method that does not work. That is a FACT.

The purpose of this article is to shed some light on a very rough release schedule and pre-release actions that outline what you can do to gain maximum exposure for your music. By consistently following these methods, you are not leaving your music (or your project) up to chance and are being proactive to create a meaningful reaction to your artform.

As with all the articles we share, this is not a one size fits all method, and we must state that results from this do not happen straight away. Consistency is key to this and being proactive across a number of releases is always better than just doing it for one single.

The things we go over in this article are actions / discussions with our management clients and independent artists that we work and consult with on a day to day basis.

Every release is part of a larger plan.

No single / EP / album is the be all and end all of your project. Try to approach releasing music in a way where every release is one small part of a bigger journey. This does not mean that the release isn't important but it allows you to be more versatile in placing your focus and expectation. For example, if a single does not connect with a particular audience - do not resent that audience (as a lot of artists tend to do) - place your focus and expectation on a different audience to achieve a different goal and keep pivoting until you find a strength within that release. This strategy allows you to put actions into place where you limit negative results from happening again, therefore finding your target audience of fans and industry. If you have read previous articles, you will be aware of how important it is to have a back catalogue of finished music to release over an extended period of time.

Creating an adaptable release plan and individual targets for each music product allows you to structure your development as an artist. For example, if you have 3 singles set for release over a 3 month period (1 single per month) and the objective / reason for each single is to gain 3rd party endorsement (blog features, articles etc.), at the end of the period, a realistic goal would be to have a strong online media presence to funnel into your social media to grow your digital presence. That end goal is not to actually gain the online media but to grow the online representation of your brand.

Social Media

We have spoken a lot in previous articles regarding the role of social media. If you, as an artist, are not consistent across every platform (particularly those that best resonate with your target audience) you will make it harder for yourself to be discovered by fans or industry. When it comes to releasing music, we challenge you to think about how your specific audience actually utilises each platform. Within your strategy for social media, please know that posting and hoping for engagement is not useful to grow an engaged community. Spend time to develop a community, and grow your audience over time rather than looking for a short term fix or spike in following.

Lists, Lists and more Lists (prior to release)

All artists want to reach the right people and have them feel something or resonate with their artform in some way. Before releasing any kind of music, we have some homework for you. Develop industry contact lists of those who will best fit your genre / style / narrative, and continually add to that list as you grow throughout the industry. This is one of the single, most powerful things you can do in the backend of your brand. For us, creating these lists are essential for our entire business and are an important building block for independent artists.

- Youtube channels w/ high subscriber rate and following.
- Independent playlist curators (Spotify / Apple Music / YouTube / Tidal / Amazon)
- Online magazines
- Radio presenters
- Other artists (both at your development level and bigger)
- Booking agents
- Artist managers
- Promoters

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.

Release Rollout:

- Before anything else, finish the music.
- Create and compile all creative marketing ideas for social media (cover art, videos, imagery, press releases etc)

Minimum 4x weeks before release:

- Upload single into distribution. Apple Music takes at least 2 weeks to upload into the backend of their system + for other streaming services such as Spotify, YouTube Music etc. the earlier you upload, the more time the editorial teams have to work through it.

- Once you have successfully uploaded into distribution, Spotify will notify you via email that your release is ready and in your Spotify For Artists profile. You are then able to go through your Spotify for Artists submission process which allows you to pitch to the relevant editorial curator.

*NOTE: Take this seriously as it is your ONLY opportunity to talk directly to the editorial team.

Be as specific as possible in the written section; be sure to write who you are, the name of your single, the date of release, and any and all information that you feel is relevant to the release.

Once you have submitted, the single will be sent automatically to the curation teams who best resonate with your genre / mood.

- Gather and update your lists. Have specific targets of people that you will contact prior to the single / EP release.

- Create a budget for release (Facebook / Instagram advertisement + boosted posts)

- Research and set out location / age / interests of the audience you are looking to reach with advertising.

3x weeks before release:

- Gather pre save link (if applicable)

- Ensure all of your aesthetic branding across your social media platforms is uniform ie. one press shot, the same biography on every platform etc. *Make sure all of your links work.

- Announce the release of the single across socials with carefully thought out content (this can happen closer to release depending on how active your social media accounts are.)

- Upload your single to triple j unearthed (Australian artists only). 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 release 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.

-Reach out via personal email to YouTube channels, online blogs, community radio presenters.

NOTE*: Please do not send mailchimp or other mass email blast-outs, each email should be personalised in order to actually build a unique connection and relationship with that person.

2 weeks before release:

-Consistent content being shared across multiple social media platforms.

-Collate feedback from the prior weeks email blast to industry.

NOTE*: It is important to understand that if you do not land anything, it is okay. The feedback you receive is more important to your artist development. Industry attention in the form of online blogs and radio play etc. will come. Take note of that feedback and potentially apply it to the next campaign if it is applicable. Landing blogs / YouTube premieres and features is fantastic to begin building the online story but it does not need to be a part of your release story every time.

-Now you have a solid idea of how the industry is reacting to the music, it's time to update industry operators that you see yourself working with in the future. I.e. other artists, booking agents, management companies, labels etc.

NOTE*: This should be viewed as building a relationship that can potentially be utilised in the future. Be humble and talk to them about how you can get better as an artist. Do not write your email with the expectation to get signed or represented immediately. Sometimes, you might but other times it leaves you feeling defeated and with the mindset of a failed release.

- Continue to pitch the release to different YouTube channels and online blogs etc.

NOTE*: Be sure to update your pitch and include any positive feedback or confirmed coverage you might have received from Triple J / Unearthed presenters, other blogs or channels or

-1x week before release:

-Consistent content being shared across multiple social media platforms.

NOTE*: You are now building into a crescendo for release week.

-Collate feedback from the prior weeks email blast to industry.

-Usually by this stage you have locked in almost everything you will pre release, so now it's time to organise your content around the press which will roll in the following week.

-Continue conversations with industry operators.

-Get your independent Spotify / Apple music playlist curator email list ready.

-Email the independent Spotify / Apple music playlist curators.

NOTE*: Be sure to let them know that the single is not out yet and you are more than happy to send them a live link once the single / EP goes live on release day.

-Upload single details to APRA /AMCOS (Australian artists only) to ensure you are reimbursed for any mechanical streaming to come.

-Release week:

- The hard work is now done and your main role this week is facilitating any press to ensure you can share it across social media.
- Consistent content being shared across multiple social media platforms.
- Collate feedback from the prior weeks blast to playlist curators.
- Upload the single into AMRAP (Australian artists only)

Release Day:

- Send live link to all relevant Spotify / Apple music playlist curators.
- Facilitate all press going live on the day.
- Upload single to public on SoundCloud (distribution will not facilitate this)
- Run any advertisements / boosted posts with the formulated audience insights you acquired 3 weeks ago.

A few days after release I would be updating industry operators / contacts of any streaming / press success.

Whether you get placement on playlists, blogs, radio stations etc is essentially not in your control as music is subjective and at the end of the day the market will decide whether the music is good enough in a public setting. With that being said you are in control of getting your music in front of as many people as possible, let them make their decision from there and pivot straight into your next release.