



The Importance Of YouTube.

YouTube is not just for music videos.

It's no secret that in the Australian / New Zealand music landscape, artists, independent labels, and music industry operators, all dramatically underestimate and undervalue the power of YouTube. Not only as a global streaming service, but as a premiere artist discovery tool, YouTube is a user generated content platform that is brimming with growth potential for independent artists in every genre. The topic of this article is to discuss the importance of the platform and the different ways that artists can utilize it (outside of just flat out ignoring it) or posting pointless music videos that frankly, don't really do that much to build an audience compared to the financial input that an independent artist must front to create it in the first place.

Before diving deep into the importance of YouTube, how to utilize it and why - if you are an artist who has released / distributed music on digital stores, have not created a personal Youtube profile and think that you do not have an artist profile, you are wrong. you absolutely do have a profile. When artists distribute music to digital stores for the first time the platform (in this case YouTube) will create an automatic profile for them regardless of the fact they may or may not have a pre-existing profile, and host their releases on it. These automatic channels are called '**topic channels**'.

Generally speaking, if you are signed to any form of record label, or a 'person-led' distributor, your topic profile is 'normally' merged with your actual artist profile (if you have one). If you don't already have a profile, the label will gain access to it and the topic will become your artist profile. For independent artists who are distributing their music through 3rd party distributors such as CD Baby, Tunecore, DistroKid etc, the process can become a little more complicated. As they are not communicating directly to a distributor, often artists only have access to a generic, help email as opposed to an actual person that can assist them in merging / claiming the topic profile.

NOTE: If you share an artist name with another artist somewhere on the planet (which is surprisingly more common than you'd think) your topic profile will not be listed under your artist name but under 'various artists'

So if the above is you, once you finish reading this article please go through the steps to merge / claim your topic profile listed below.

First things first you'll actually need to locate your topic profile which *is* easy:

1. *Go to YouTube.*
2. *In the search bar, type in your artist name- single name and the word 'topic'*
3. *The results should take you directly to your topic profile.*

Once you have done that you can follow the instructions to merge / gain access in this article [here](#).

NOTE: If you do not hear back directly from YouTube, send an email to your distributor who will be able to help you.

Merging profiles does multiple things, firstly, all views, subscribers and metadata will all be amalgamated, meaning artists don't lose anything. Secondly, it creates one place audiences can go to find artist content, which avoids confusion, and lastly, it ensures that every time an artist releases music it will be uploaded to the right place, which in turn creates profile activity.

Now that we have all merged or claimed our YouTube profiles, let's dive into why it's important for independent artists. Youtube as a whole has **more than 2.6 billion** active users. YouTube Premium and Music together have more than 50 million subscribers in the world. More than ¼ of the world's population use YouTube every month, compared to Spotify, which as of the first quarter of 2022, had **182 million** premium subscribers worldwide. By those numbers alone, it is clear to see that as a global reach and discovery tool YouTube can give artists access to a greater number of people, if used correctly. Now, we feel we need to be extremely clear, we are not saying that based off the above you should stop focussing on Spotify and other platforms and focus all of your attention on YouTube but we do want to highlight that by not having some form of process or strategy in place for the YT platform, artists are missing out on a vital piece of their global development.

In terms of monetization and royalty payments, as of 2022 Spotify pays out an average of \$0.0033 per stream, while Youtube Music pays an even lower \$0.002 per stream. This does not account for artists monetizing their channel as a creator, which can also add to artist project earnings and ultimately sustainability. So for specific artists who have strengths around visuals or even just performing and uploading bits of content can (over time) ensure they can create sustainability.

To monetize, artists need to claim their **Content ID**, which is YouTube's automated, scalable system that enables copyright owners to identify YouTube videos that include content they own. YouTube only grants Content ID to copyright owners who meet specific criteria. Artist distributions / labels generally handle this for artists, but again for artists using 3rd party distributors this can sometimes become an issue. For more information around using Content ID see Google Support [here](#).

“A channel with exactly 1,000 subscribers could reasonably expect to bring in \$10 to \$300 in monthly AdSense revenue.”

- Shaun Poore (professional software developer, (With a focus on Blogging, YouTube, and Virtual Reality).

- For more on monetizing YouTube read Shaun's blog post [here](#).
- For more on distribution royalties and music revenue, read our 'Understanding finances' article [here](#).

Almost all of the communications we have with artists about YouTube begins with us asking what their strategy is around it, which is always followed by a blank look on the their face, and almost always followed by the same 4 comments:

“I just want to focus on Spotify”

“Oh, I use it personally, but don't share anything on my profile”

“I just use it to post music videos and that's it.”

“It's too expensive to do music videos every release”.

The mindset of most artists (in this territory) is that YouTube is primarily for longform visual content which normally comes with high financial cost, and also a massive investment of time. Although we do see the merit in this content (for specific artists), we don't really advise that it is a sustainable or effective way to grow a project on the platform.

Content will always, and should always come at the discretion of the creator, i.e if you are not comfortable in front of a camera you shouldn't feel forced to create an overly produced bit of content with the hope of views. We advise all artists to knuckle down on what they are comfortable with and fully lean in on that area to grow. So if that means you are uncomfortable getting in front of a camera consistently, challenge yourself around what you can do to navigate / grow on YouTube that isn't necessarily you being at the forefront. With all that being said, not using Youtube in some way because you're an 'introvert' or uncomfortable is not an excuse. The idea is to become comfortable with creating and distributing content consistently, like you would with any other social platform.

Some ideas:

- *Creating topics like videos: Cover art with artist music over the top.*
- *Utilizing the short feature to share all Instagram Reels / Tik Tok / Stories consistently. (there already there so you might as well post it on another platform*
- *Lyric Videos (Can make easily in iMovie for free)*
- *Photo generation videos (Collation of photos in video form)(Can make easily in iMovie for free)*
- **Depending on genre* Creating a 24hr rolling channel that plays your music on loop / with an animation or cover art being your only real expense.*

- *For the more forward facing artists: All of which can be filmed on an iphone and edited in iMovie*
- *Performance videos*
- *Covers (A MASSIVELY underrated tool)*
- *Show recaps / aftermovies*
- *Day in the life*
- *Song Breakdown*
- *Some form of gimmick / recurring series specific to channels outside of artists own music that explores interests of their niche audience. *A great reference for this would be the [Colors Show](#) by Colors X Studios. Artists who sit in front of a different coloured wall and perform music. These guys have built their profile to over 6 million subscribers just repeating that content.*

With YouTube being such a massive platform, and consistent content being posted (outside of music) 24/7 around the clock, it is simply not enough to just post content and hope for people to come across it. Furthermore the way people actually utilize the platform does not correlate with audience engagement growth coming to profiles randomly. The general way people actually use YouTube as a platform is very similar globally.

- They start off watching something they are relatively interested in*
- Then they go to the next video on the side bar, or the next automatically loaded video.*
- That cycle repeats.*

This is commonly referred to going down the 'rabbit hole.'

On average, users spend around 18 minutes on YouTube every day browsing at least eight different pages on the platform. The platform algorithms are also designed to remember every video that individuals watch. YouTube can use this history to make better recommendations for new videos you might want to see. This then eliminates the need to use the search bar, for the average 18 minutes you are utilizing the platform.

What does that mean for independent artists? **Put simply, no one is putting your artist name in the search bar to find you.**

With the above in mind, artists need to create their own strategies and processes to ensure their awareness on the platform is consistently growing. There are multiple ways artists can do this, but for the purpose of this article we want to focus on two, that are completely in the artists control.

Profile Specific

The first puts the focus on content that is shared on your profile. Remember, even if you don't physically post any content, you still have a new topic video everytime you release a new single.

A tool that we have used consistently for artists & labels we work with is [VIDIQ](#). It is an online education website that offers video tutorials and analytics on YouTube channel growth. The website also has a Google Chrome extension, which allows users to analyze YouTube analytics data.

The key for artists here is to ensure that their content is being placed in the right rabbit holes, and essentially what vidIQ can help artists do, is ensure that their content is automatically placed, after a video that a potential fan will view.

What you'll need to do:

- Do a bit of research into how similar artists (who have a high subscriber following) structure the title and description of their videos
- Look into what keywords / tags they are utilizing
- Apply this to your video
- vidIQ will then give you a percentage of how many times your content will show up in comparison to your similar artists search.

EXAMPLE:

*-X artist is a hip hop act who has just released a single that takes a lot of inspiration (sounds like) Drake
-Drake has 26.7million active subscribers on his YouTube profile, and average 1.8 million views on every bit of content.*

-X artist utilizes vidIQ in the above manner.

-Whenever anyone watches content from drake on YouTube, X artist has ensured that their topic video for their new single is the next automatically loaded video after drake content.

What X artist has achieved by utilizing vidIQ, is narrow the target audience on YouTube, from everyone, to an audience who is actually likely to like what they are doing. It is important to note that exposing their content to this target audience will not boost their views and subscribers dramatically. They are likely to see a slight boost but nothing too major. The return comes when an audience member comes past X's content 5-6 times, which creates a situation where the audience member feels like they have organically discovered X rather than X pushing their music onto the potential fan.

An audience member that feels like they have discovered you are more likely to 1. follow you and 2. go to other platforms and engage with you.

Ultimately what this allows artists to do is escape the feeling of posting content and hoping for the audience to come across it. It allows them to post and actively target their niche in an organic way. vidIQ is a paid platform, but we would suggest trialing the free subscription, as that is all artists really need to utilize this strategy.

Channel Placement

The second way we suggest for artists to utilize YouTube, has nothing to do with the artist posting content to their own channel. Getting music shared across other peoples YouTube channels that have a similar audience target as what artists are looking for is a fantastic way to not only build awareness, but also to gain 3rd party endorsement for the artist project.

To do this, artists need to create and maintain relationships with channels as they would with any other media source. 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 a contact list of YouTube channels 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.

It is important to note as we do in multiple articles, that these channels may not reply to you instantly, and that's ok. Developing relationships takes time, so when hitting up these channels, always come from a place of asking for feedback. This works if you are consistent across multiple releases. As always, the bigger you grow your list over time, the more chance of placement, the more placement the more awareness artists can gain. Normally these channels do not require pre-made videos, in fact all they require is a downloadable link to the master audio file. These channels then go about creating their own content with the music as the backdrop.

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.

Once relationships are established, and artists are beginning to get shared across larger channels, it is on the artist to create a connection point between themselves and the audience of the channel. Once the video is live and the audience is engaging, artists should be logged into their YouTube account and replying to every single comment on the video. This is VITAL as it creates a personal bridge between the artist and the content. This can help to create a bridge between other platforms like Spotify / Apple music and ultimately help grow awareness on those platforms, all the while creating and fostering a community online.

No matter how you slice it, utilizing YouTube is an absolute must when developing an artist project. For all of the reasons above, artists need to understand that there isn't just one way to utilize it as a platform. If you can take anything from this article at all, let it be that artists can be just as creative on YouTube as they can be in the actual creative process. New features such as YouTube Shorts are also paving the way for quick release content on the platform and should eliminate any doubt that YouTube is a major platform.