

THE SONGLAB: MUSIC BUSINESS DEJARGONISED

RELEASING YOUR MUSIC



**How To Structure and Build Your
Campaign On A Small Budget**

STEP 1: CAMPAIGN PHILOSOPHY

- Understanding the state of the algorithmic digital sphere is critical when considering how to release and promote your music.
- Using a waterfall type release strategy is hugely important for algorithmic growth on audio streaming platforms due to how people consume music in the modern era. In short, singles are the way to go rather than one big marketing punt on an album.
- A common concern from many artists is “My album tells an entire story so it needs to drop as an album”. Emerging artists need to get used to telling that story over a prolonged period of time in order to gain a greater sense of visibility in a crowded market place.
- The starting point here is creating a campaign that holds strategic purpose. Think about the purpose of a campaign. Is the main aim to launch an artist? Is it to help an artist grow into new markets? Is it to build seasonal momentum ahead of the festival circuit? Purpose gives meaning and it helps to understand what the strategy might look like. For instance, it could be 7 singles over the course of 12 months with the aim being to introduce an artist. Those singles might fall inside two EPs. The next campaign could then be another 7 singles over the course of 12 months which then land on a debut album alongside 5 extra tracks.
- Regardless of the specific number of releases and the specific period of time, it is important to build a sense of purpose and expectation around a wider campaign. It is after all, what a record company would be doing if you were signed to them. In fact if your aim as an artist is to sign with a record company then setting yourself up with a sense of strategic thinking will make you much more appealing to them as a business prospect.
- So step 1 is getting the campaign organised before it begins.

STEP 2: DISTRIBUTION

- Deciding on your distributor is the 2nd step in this plan.
- See the **DIGITAL DISTRIBUTION** doc to help you further on this subject.
- Do you want to work with a distributor that can work with you for a long term strategy? Perhaps you wish to hire a distributor but regain complete control over when you exit from them?
- Think carefully about what kind of analytics are offered to you from your distributor.
- Also think carefully about what stores they deliver to and how quickly they can deliver.
- Once you've decided on your distributor of choice and you have built a strategic outline of your wider campaign, you are ready to get going on the next step.

STEP 3: PRESS RELEASE

- **Once your single is ready to go you'll need to gain press for when its released. Press can be in the form of radio play, blog features, editorial features and an array of other digital outlets such as podcasts, radio shows and playlist curators. (See DIY PRESS RELEASE doc for more help on this).**
- **It is important to try and engage with taste makers that have an audience. Good examples of this are social media influencers, YouTubers, streamers and curators.**
- **In order to achieve the above two points you will need a press release.**
- **A press release will provide information on the artist, the song, the genre, who it appeals to and when it is released.**
- **Once this document is pieced together with useful links to social media you'll need to be able to make your song available to potential interested parties but your song is not released yet. Create a soundcloud account and upload your song to a private link. Include this private soundcloud link in your press release.**

STEP 4: PRE PROMOTING THE RELEASE

- Now that you have a press release in place you have a tangible offering to submit to taste makers, blog writers and other interested parties who may wish to provide you with press opportunities.
- It is important to start this process approximately 6 weeks prior to a fixed release date.
- There are plenty of resources and options on the internet where you can gain or buy access to the contact details of music bloggers and there is nothing to stop you from politely emailing them with your press release and a short summary of your release and the purpose of your email.
- There are centralised platforms that may be more suitable in successfully driving more effective results. MusoSoup offer the opportunity for independent artists to upload their press campaign on to their website for a small fee for a fixed period of 45 days. This is then accessed by a wide variety of bloggers, social media influencers, YouTubers, playlist curators and radio stations who then either create free or paid coverage in their platforms.
- SubmitHub is also a popular international platform to submit your song and press release to. SubmitHub is a credit based platform where tokens are bought in advance. Tokens can then be used in order to submit to specific taste makers including YouTubers, Spotify playlist curators, music blogs, radio stations, social media influencers and even record companies.
- It is essential to try and gain momentum ahead of your release date.

STEP 5: RADIO

- It could be argued that perhaps radio does not quite hold the same clout that it once boasted when promoting new music. However, it is still a very useful source of promotion to a new audience. There is also algorithmic growth attached to radio plays due to web presence it creates (see the SPOTIFY ALGORITHM doc for more info on that).
- In the UK, BBC Radio is an undeniably admirable constitution that can and does play an instrumental role in the discovery of new music. There is scalable growth attached to having your song in the BBC system and it all starts with BBC Introducing. Consider using the BBC Introducing uploader to submit your song to your local BBC Introducing show. A spin on your local show not only generates a broadcast royalty that is distributed through your PRS For Music membership, it also gains you kudos with local press. Every producer and presenter from each of the local BBC Introducing shows has the authority to refer your song to the national show. This has the potential to lead to national radio play on either BBC Radio 1, Radio 1 Extra, Radio 2 or Radio 6 which can subsequently lead to live sessions, interviews, festival slots and recognition within other areas music industry.
- Amazing Radio is another notable station that aligns itself with emerging artists and music industry professionals. There is a UK and a US version and this brand is recognised as a respectable platform for talent scouting from record companies and artist management companies.
- Don't overlook the importance of any radio station regardless of their size and status. There are a great deal of emerging journalists and broadcasters that host shows on smaller stations who may well be very influential in the years to come.

STEP 6: ONCE YOUR TRACK IS LIVE

- It could be argued that there is a lot more you can do to promote your song once its actually released, especially in the world of audio streaming.
- Once your links are live you can then start pitching to a wide range of playlist curators, many of whom only like to receive live links rather than pre-release tracks.
- There are a huge amount of curators that can be accessed through such publications as The Spotify Bible. There are also free platforms such as SoundPlate, Daily Playlists and MySphera alongside a whole host of independent playlisters. (See THE SPOTIFY ALGORITHM doc for more info on how to excel here).
- Be careful of paying fees to playlist curators. More often than not, it is against the terms and conditions of the streaming platforms. Some services are effective but some are not and you run the risk of being considered to be streaming artificially if you are not careful and this can lead to your track being pulled down from Spotify in particular.

STEP 7: SOCIAL MEDIA SPEND

- Social media marketing is a great way of finding and establishing a new audience for your music. However, it only truly works when you know who to target and that is reliant on you holding a good understanding of who your market actually is. It could be argued that one of the most effective methods for targeting potential fans on social media is by targeting artists that are similar in genre and style to you.
- Patience is very important here as are the right platforms. Facebook and Instagram's algorithm is built around growth and marketability.
- It is important to think about the chronology of steps you take when targeting new fans on social media. For instance, creating likes, traffic and engagement is key to brand awareness and that is an effective starting point before you start to target your new releases at that same audience.

STEP 7: OLD IS THE NEW, NEW

- It is all too easy to consider your song from last year as “old”. It might be old to you but brand new to others.
- When you release a song into the digital sphere there is a great deal of discovery that can take place and it might not necessarily fall inside what you consider to be your release campaign period.
- Try not to get despondent if your release has not gained the number of streams that you first expected. It could be that further down the line, a future release gains a placement on a Netflix show or a place on a major editorial playlist and then all of a sudden your “old” music gets discovered and gains the streams that it probably deserved in the first place. This is why consistent and regular releases are important.
- In an age where we are all being given new music to listen to through algorithmic crowd sourced data it is perfectly possible that your song will pop up as “new” on Spotify’s Discover Weekly 5 years from now for thousands of new fans. Just remember that as you continue through your journey of “new” releasing music.

SUMMARY

- **With a staggering amount of new music being released every single week it is important that you make the effort to compete and the key thing that underpins that is strategy.**
- **Dropping your song next week with no strategy behind it may make it invisible to those that will actually enjoy it.**