

THE INDEPENDENT ARTIST'S HANDBOOK.

How to **Get Your Music Heard** in 2023



DI++O

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FIRST THINGS FIRST...

Establish Your **Release Strategy**

Before you start dropping new music, you should first decide on an overall release strategy.

Your strategy can make or break your release. So establishing this early on (as the very first thing you do!), could be the difference between your tracks getting some serious head-turning attention, vs. getting lost in the black hole of #NewMusicFriday.

What's the best release strategy for new artists wanting to make waves in 2023?

The most widely-accepted theory is that newer artists need to release new singles regularly to keep their audience engaged and test the waters, before dropping a bigger project like an album.

This is what's known as the Waterfall Strategy.

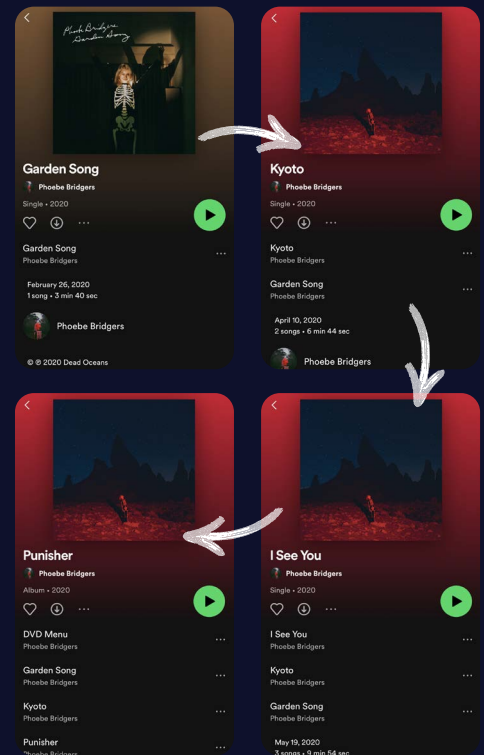


What is the **Waterfall Strategy**?

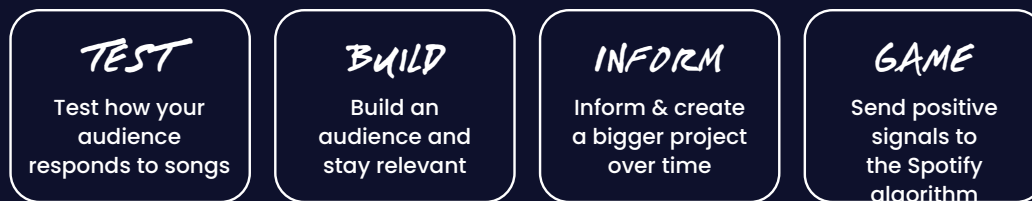
The waterfall strategy is when an EP or album is released gradually, adding a new track with each new release alongside all previously released songs.

Use the same ISRC and metadata for all previously released tracks to keep stream counts and playlist placements, before removing the older releases from platforms once the new one is live.

RELEASE ONE RELEASE TWO RELEASE THREE EP OR ALBUM



Why use the **Waterfall Strategy**?



This strategy has been shown to be effective again and again. But there's one *big problem* – about 24,000 new songs are released on streaming platforms *EVERY. SINGLE. DAY.*

That's where your release & promotion strategy comes in.

A well-planned release strategy can help you cut through the noise, get the industry's attention & make your music stand out.

Let's start at the very beginning...

Upload **Your Music** to Ditto Music

Upload your music to Ditto's music distribution platform well ahead of time. We'd recommend doing this around **6-8 weeks before** your planned release date.

Uploading your tracks to Spotify, Apple Music, TikTok, Amazon and hundreds more global music platforms is easy with Ditto Music.

You'll keep 100% percent of the rights to your music as well as ALL royalties you earn. You can also get free pre-save links for every release, automatically split royalty payments with your collaborators and more.

Hit the link below to learn more and try Ditto for free with our 30-day trial.

GET STARTED



Sign Up to Artists Services & Claim Your Profile

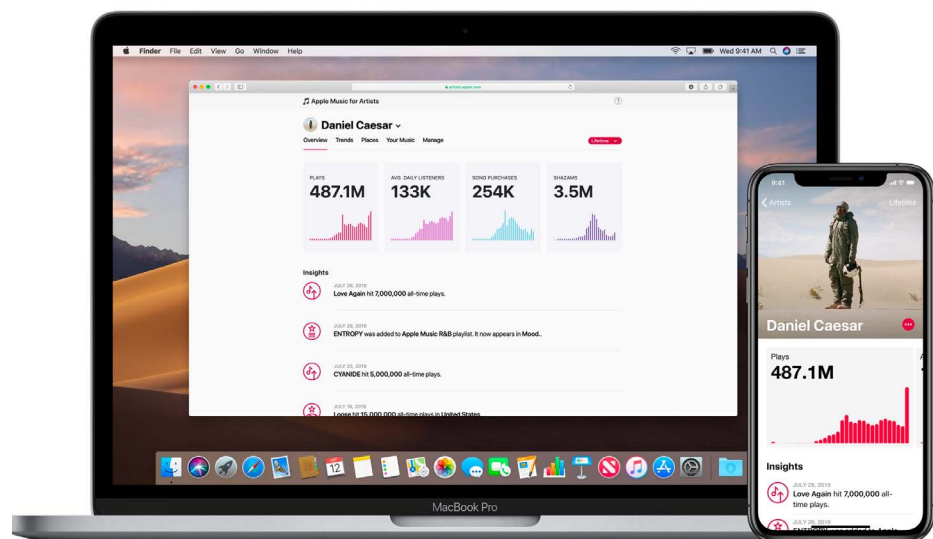
Signing up to services like Spotify for Artists gives you access to exclusive features, reserved solely for artists releasing music on streaming platforms.

Signing up to artists services allows you to:

- Customise your artist profile
- Pitch for playlists
- Upload your own track and album artwork
- Access data about your listeners

But for the majority of these platforms, you'll need to both sign up & claim your artist profile to get access.

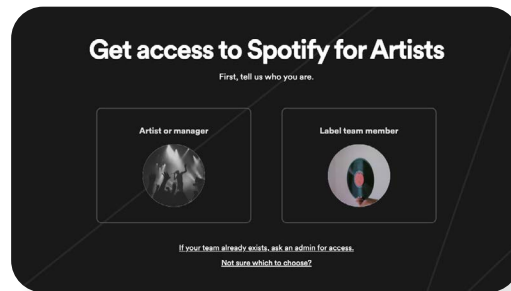
Let's take a look at Spotify's dedicated artist service, Spotify for Artists, as an example.



How to Claim your **Spotify** for Artists Profile

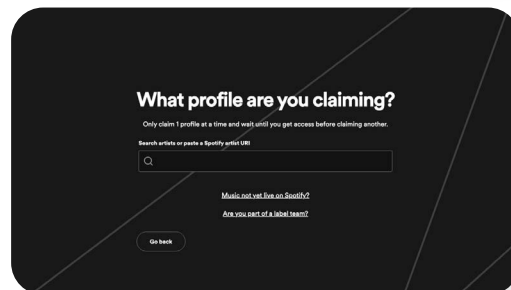
STEP ONE

Tell Spotify who you are.



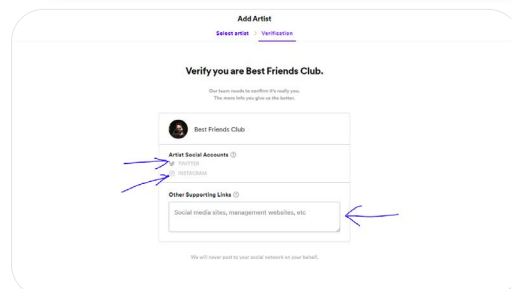
STEP TWO

Select your Artist Profile.



STEP THREE

Verify with your socials/email.



Head to artists.spotify.com to get started.

But it doesn't end with Spotify. Make sure to claim your profile on all the other platforms to access their exclusive artist tools & features.

Useful links:

[How to claim your Apple Music for Artists profile](#)

[How to claim your Deezer for Creators profile](#)

[How to claim your Amazon Music for Artists profile](#)



Craft Your **Promo Plan**

An EPIC music promotion plan is at the heart of every successful release.

Give yourself at least **1 month** before release day to make sure you've got every part of your marketing strategy pinned down, across socials, visuals, email, press coverage & beyond.



Build A Mailing List & Email Your Fans

Email marketing is too often overlooked. But unlike other channels, it offers *direct access to the people who want to hear from you*. They subscribed to your list for a reason!

Once you've collected your fans' email addresses, you've got a one-way, direct line to fans that you can use to send updates about your new music, upcoming shows, limited merch or whatever else.

Here's how to take advantage of email marketing to promote your next release:

1. Choose an email marketing platform
2. Collect emails on your website
3. Collect emails manually at gigs or on social media
4. Send out your emails

Useful links:

[How to Set Up a Mailing List with Mailchimp for Musicians](#)

[3 Awesome Email Templates to Send Fans](#)

TIP:

Mailchimp is one the most popular email marketing platforms. And **it's free to use** if you have fewer than 2000 subscribers.



Create Engaging **Visuals & Assets**

We all know a visual speaks a thousand words – and it's no different when it comes to the assets you'll be using to promote your release.

Press shots are a great place to start.

Why? You can repurpose them for use across social media, music streaming platforms, as well as in any online or print media coverage about your new release.

Here's some of our top tips for taking some quality music press & promotional images.



1. Showcase your identity and be YOU!



2. Set the scene and mood



3. Be consistent with branding



4. Create visual interest with different poses and groupings

Shoot a **Music Video**

While promo images are always necessary, *video marketing* is on the up.

Making a music video and uploading it to YouTube is another great way to get your music in front of a huge, video-engaged audience.

Plus – it'll serve really well as a core piece of AV material that you can edit and repurpose to use across different platforms & touchpoints.

But we get it. Shooting a killer video can be expensive. So here's some tips to keep your spend low without compromising on quality.

How to Make a Music Video **On a Small Budget**

1. **Be unapologetically DIY**

Check out OK Go's video for ['Here It Goes Again'](#) for one of the most iconic examples of this.

2. **Get organised**

Making a music video is a big project. The key is *practice and preparation*. Without these, your shoot will be chaos.

3. **Recruit friends or other creatives**

Have a look at your own creative connections and see who you could rope in. You'd be surprised how willing a fellow creative may be to lend a hand. Trust me, it's been done (see [Lil Dicky's '\\$ave Dat Money'](#) video for reference).



4. Get crafty with your concept

Examples of some good visual hooks include:

- A unique story
- An interesting visual or graphic element
- Well thought out choreography
- Outlandish outfits or cool props
- Warped time or direction

Find one thing that works and centre the video around that concept.

5. Choose ONE location & stick to it

Choosing a single location will not only keep it easier for yourself and others, but it'll also keep the costs down on travel to and from various locations.

6. Consider your camera operation

You really don't *need* to go out and buy a whole load of really expensive camera equipment. But if you've got the budget and want to invest, you could looking into getting any of the following:



DSLR Camera



Gimbal



Tripod



Low budget Camera

7. Allocate editing time post-production

While editing and colouring will make all the difference to your final video, the good news is you can learn how to *do it yourself*. Download some free video editing software such as *iMovie*, *Lightworks*, or *DaVinci Resolve*.

8. Upload your video to VEVO

Uploading your music video to Vevo offers a great way to reach new fans, showcase your new music to a worldwide audience and make some *extra cash* at the same time.

Useful links:

[How to Upload your Music Video to VEVO](#)

[How to Add a Video to your Spotify Canvas](#)



Optimise for your audience

Now you've got awesome press shots and an incredible music video, make sure they're optimised for use across different social and music platforms!

As of 2023, here are all the recommended sizings, formats and dimensions for images and videos across *Instagram*, *Facebook*, *Twitter* & *TikTok*.



Don't forget – music streaming profiles have optimal image and video image sizes too! Check out our [Music Streaming platform image size cheat sheet](#) for the most up-to-date info on this.

Secure **Blog & Media** Coverage

Catching the eye of music journalists, bloggers and influencers is really important for generating some exciting buzz and word-of-mouth around your release!

Plus a nice review of your track appearing at the top of Google search results is always a bonus!

Here's some things to consider when trying to get blog & media coverage.



Write a **Music Bio**.

You'll need a music bio for just about any kind of press you're putting out, so this one's a good one to have on file.

Your music bio should include:

- Social proof or anything that proves your existing success
- Some info about you and your story
- A description of your music's style/genre/influences

Remember to keep it brief and easy to read.

TIP: SOCIAL PROOF

'Social Proof' can be the difference between an effective bio and a forgettable one. But what is it?

In layman's terms, Social Proof is the psychological principle that people copy the actions of others because they assume that those actions are right.

The Social Proof could be positive quotes or features from bloggers, influencers or journalists. It could be your follower numbers on social media or any awards you've won or achievements you've earned.

Anything that showcases your existing popularity.

Create an **EPK**

An **Electronic Press Kit** (or EPK) showcases and introduces you as an artist to any potential press or media execs that might want to cover your music.

Journalists and bloggers receive hundreds of pitches every day. So make life easy for them! An EPK can provide all the info they need in one place.



Your EPK should include:

HI-RES PHOTOGRAPHY

YOUR MUSIC BIO

LINKS TO YOUR
MUSIC/VIDEOS

PRESS QUOTES

SOCIAL/WEBSITE LINKS

CONTACT DETAILS



[Learn more about creating an EPK](#) as an artist or musician.

Write a **Press Release**

If you really want to boost your chances of getting great media attention and blog coverage for your new track or music, you *need* to create an awesome press release!

Your music press release should include:

- An attention-grabbing subject line
- Links to your website, press shots & socials
- Links to your music
- A personal touch

Like your music bio & press kit, make your press release easy for the recipient to read.



Check out [our full press release template here](#).

Pitch to Music Blogs

Securing a blog premiere and review of your track is another great way of cutting through the digital noise.

Here's some things to consider when trying to get blog & media coverage.



How to Pitch Your Tracks to Music Blogs

1. Do your research to find the most relevant blogs to your music.
2. Approach your blog of choice in plenty of time.
3. Approach blogs directly via email.
4. Make it easy for the blog/blogger to listen to your track by including a link to your music.
5. Make the most of your premiere by posting it across your socials.
6. Sign up for [Ditto Promo](#) and have your music submitted by our expert PR team.
7. Submit via third party submission websites and platforms like [SubmitHub](#) & [Musosoup](#).

TIP: DON'T SEND ATTACHMENTS

Don't send mp4 or WAV files attached to an email! The majority of bloggers will be reluctant to download files from people they don't know.

Instead - upload your music to **Soundcloud** or **YouTube** as a private link.



Useful links:

[Music Blogs to Submit Your Music to](#)

[How to Get a Blog Premiere for Your Song](#)



Submit Tracks for **Playlisting**

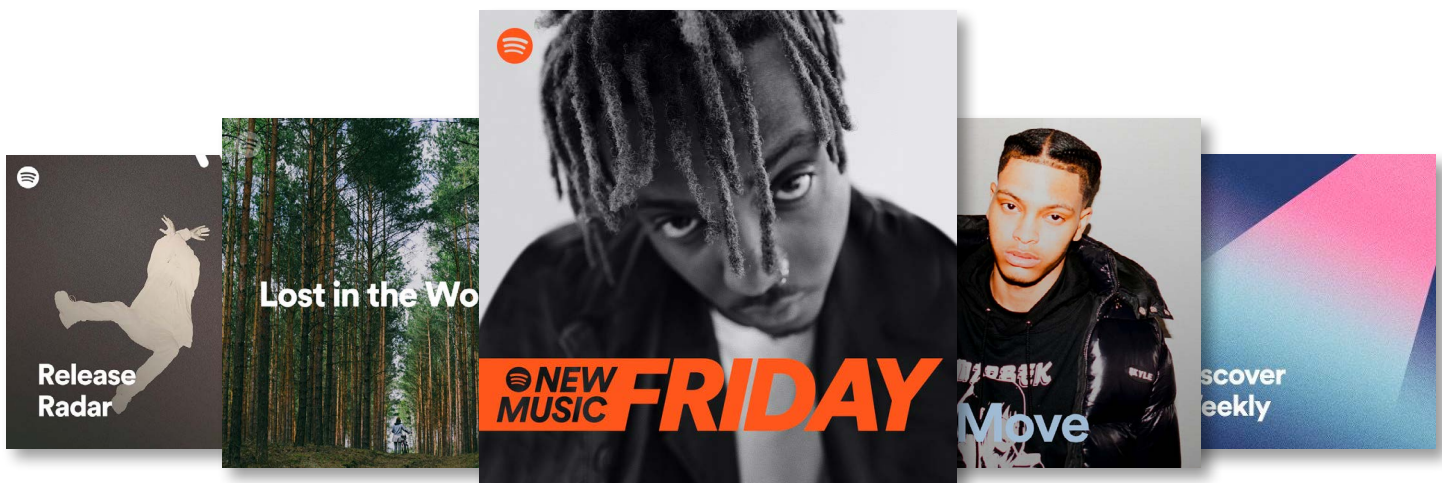
It's hard to understate the boost a great playlist placement can give your music.

Nothing is guaranteed, but here's our advice on how to grab those big playlist features in 2023!



How to get **Playlisted on Spotify.**

Spotify has some of the most popular playlists in the world, so getting a placement early on could set you up for immediate success.



There's **3 main ways** you can approach getting playlisted on Spotify...

#1. Pitch for **Official Spotify** playlists

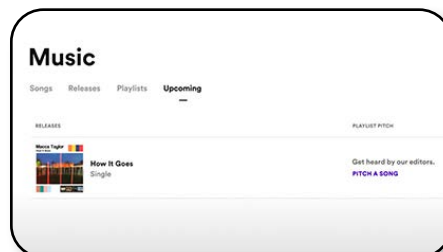
You can pitch your music directly to some of Spotify's official playlists via **Spotify for Artists**.

Simply upload your music and fill out some info about the release and you're good to go!



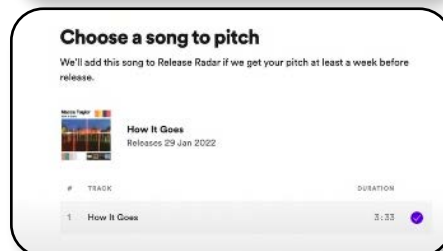
STEP ONE

Find your release on 'Upcoming'.



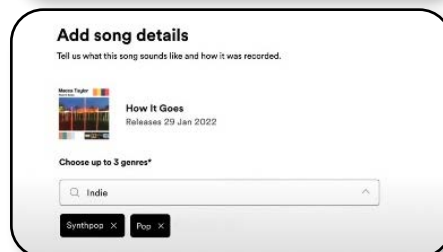
STEP TWO

Choose the track you're pitching.



STEP THREE

Fill in all the details and submit it!



Here's a couple of **key things to remember** when pitching for Official Spotify playlists...

- You can only pitch *unreleased* music
- You must be the *lead artist* on any tracks you pitch
- You should be as *descriptive as possible & tag your music correctly* to make sure it reaches the right playlist editors
- You should pitch *no later* than 1 week before your release date (but the earlier the better!)

#2. Pitch for **Independent** playlists

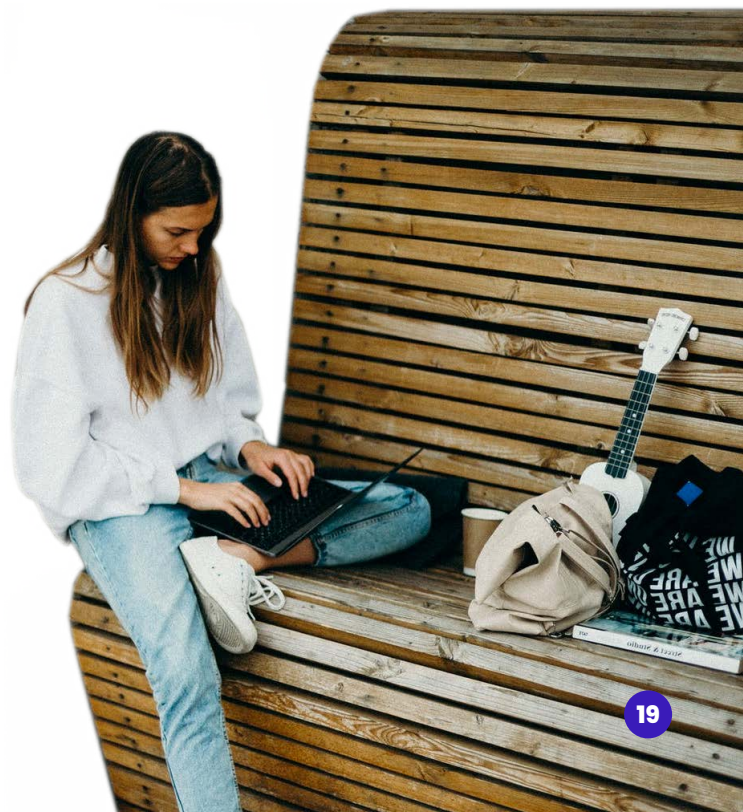
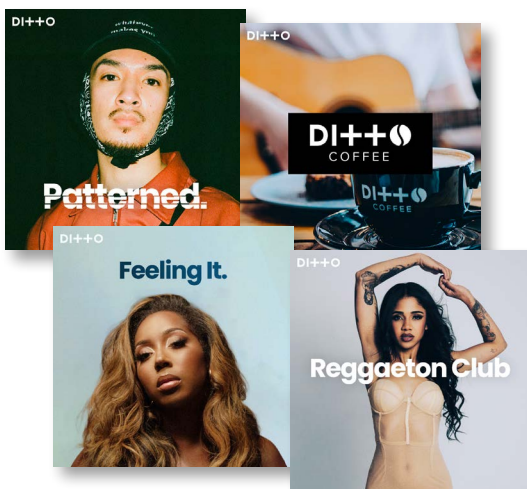
There are thousands of popular independent Spotify playlists out there created by all sorts of curators – from blogs and media outlets to just your average Spotify users.

Spend a few hours searching through Spotify to find playlists that would suit your sound. A bit of Google searching can throw up the contact details you need for your chosen curators. It'll usually be an email address or maybe a submission form on their website.

Make sure to **keep any outreach emails short, polite and informative**, with prominent links to your music on Spotify.

Sign up to third party submission sites like [SubmitHub](#) to pitch to independent curators.

Don't forget to submit your music to the [Ditto Music Spotify Playlists](#) to land a spot on one of our global lists!



#3. Get on **Algorithmic** playlists

Spotify's **Discover Weekly** & **Release Radar** playlists are unique to every listener. Rather than being curated by Spotify's staff, they're created by the platform's algorithms.

*How to get on **Release Radar***

It's simple – **get your listeners to follow you**. Then whenever you release new music, it'll appear in their Release Radar playlist automatically.

*How to get on **Discover Weekly***

This one's more tricky as Spotify curates it depending on each user's unique listening taste and preferences. But there are a few things you can do to send positive signals to the algorithm and boost your chances of a Discover Weekly placement, such as:

- *Getting added to other playlists* – that includes big, small, private and even your own playlists
- Build your Spotify following & generate more streams
- Drive traffic to your Spotify tracks from off-platform
- Complete your Spotify profile

Remember, landing a major Spotify playlist placement can take time. So be patient and don't be too disheartened if it doesn't happen right away. Just keep going!

Useful links:

[How to Submit Music to Official Spotify Playlists Directly](#)

[How to Get on Spotify's Discover Weekly & Release Radar Playlists](#)



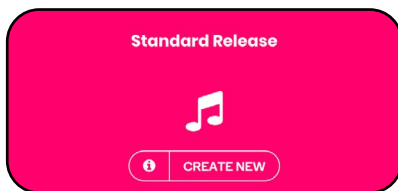
Create a **Pre-Save Campaign**

Never underestimate the power of a well-executed pre-save campaign.

Racking up pre-saves on Spotify (and other platforms like Apple Music & Tidal) can give your track the huge release day boost it needs to snowball into further success - especially if you share your pre-release link across your socials and website.

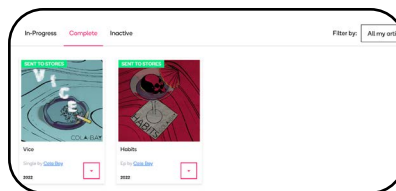


How to find your **pre-save links**



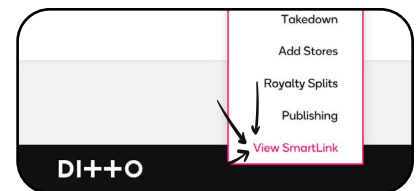
STEP ONE

Release your music to Spotify, Apple Music & Tidal via Ditto



STEP TWO

Log in to your Ditto account & head to 'My Releases'

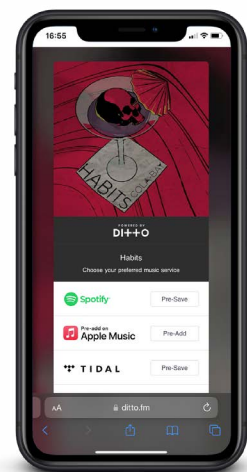


STEP THREE

Select 'View SmartLink' next to the release in question

4 tips for getting **more** pre-saves:

1. Upload your music well in advance of your release date.
2. Plan a pre-save promo campaign with teasers, acoustic performances and other sneak peaks of your new track.
3. Share your links EVERYWHERE.
4. Reward fans when they pre-save with incentives and competitions.



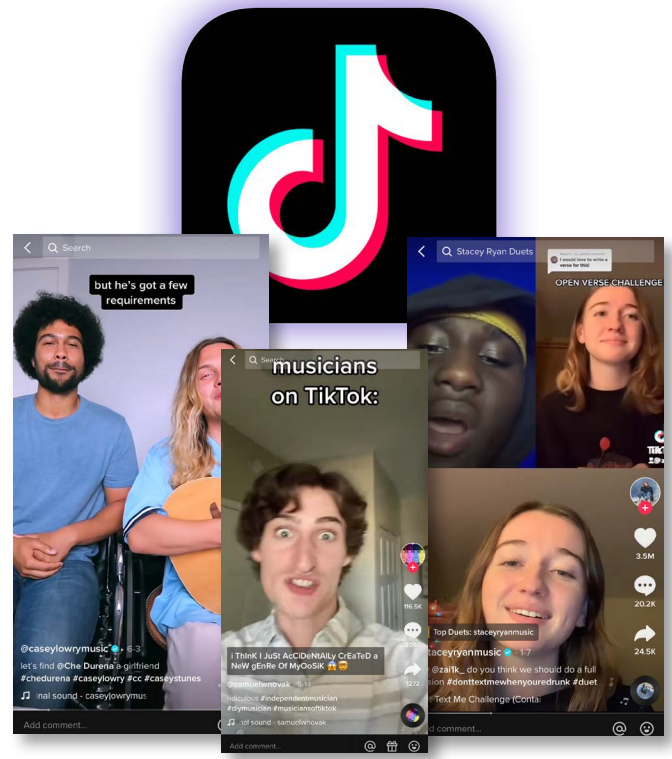
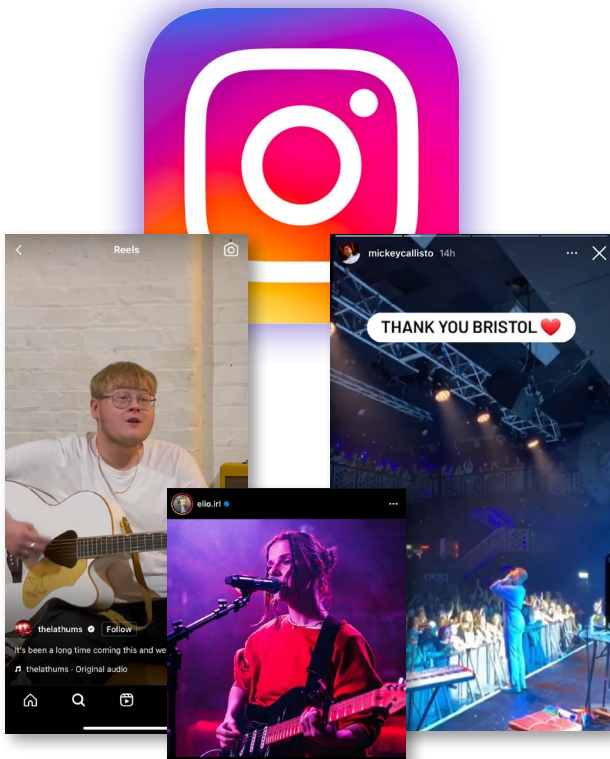
AND THERE IT IS!
All your pre-save links in one place

Use the Power of **Social Media**

This one's pretty much a given.

Social media is a *necessary* part of your music release and promotion strategy.

Instagram & TikTok are both HUGE right now – and they're both made with artists and creatives in mind.



So with that being said, here's how you can promote your release across both platforms to build your audience, engage fans and get your music some good-old-fashioned social media clout...

Promote Music on **Instagram**

Instagram has more than 1 billion active monthly users. So as well as releasing your music to Instagram, it's well worth investing some time in creating and maintaining an awesome Insta profile.

The best ways to promote on **Instagram**

1. Fill out your profile

Profile Picture – Make sure your profile picture has the right aesthetic and conveys your brand identity and image.

Get verified – Getting Instagram verified is another great thing you can do to boost the legitimacy & authenticity of your Instagram persona.

Your Bio – Perhaps the most important part of your bio is the link. Instagram doesn't like links, and your bio is the only place you can share one with your followers, so make it count!

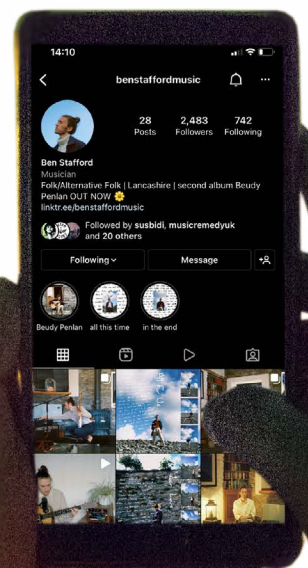
2. Post great content

It could be backstage photos, clips of your live set, music promo graphics, funny memes, inspirational posts, pictures of your musical heroes... the list goes on..

Remember – keep it authentic, keep it engaging, keep it real.

3. Look the part

Invest some time in your graphic design skills. Make sure all your graphics and album art looks professional and eye-catching, and convey a slick and consistent brand identity.



4. Schedule & plan ahead

Scheduling and planning ahead is a particularly good idea. You can create and plan your posts and graphics in advance, then schedule them to go live when you release your track.

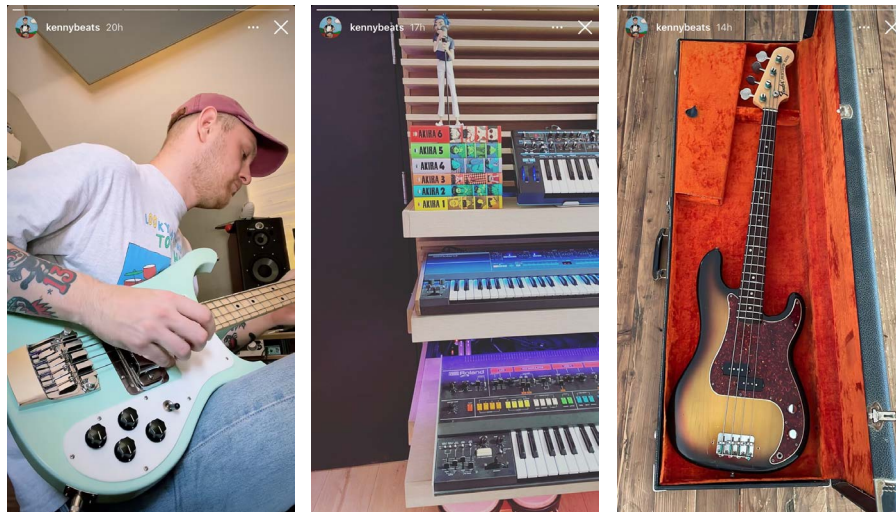
5. Use hashtags

The max number of hashtags you can use on Insta is actually 30, but start out using around 10-20 while you're still building a following. You don't want to come off as too spammy or posts can lose their authentic feel.

6. Tell Instagram Stories

Use your Stories to share live news & updates as you're releasing new music.

Tap into the fleeting and real-time quality of Stories to give your followers a truly authentic look at your musical journey.



Useful links:

[How to Promote Music on Instagram Reels](#)

[How to Get Verified on Instagram as a Musician](#)



Go viral on TikTok

Recent years have seen artists like Lil Nas X, Doja Cat, Ava Max & more blow up thanks to TikTok.

Like Insta, the platform now has over 1 billion active users globally, so it's no surprise that trending on TikTok can do big things for your next release.



How to **BLOW UP** on TikTok

1. Release your music on TikTok

You can't go viral on TikTok without actually uploading your music to the platform first. [Learn how here.](#)

2. Focus on TikTok-friendly tracks

Study your track and narrow down the 15 seconds that have the most "TikTok virality potential".

3. Use a mix of hashtags

Choosing popular or highly searched hashtags will boost your chances of your video appearing in TikTok's "Discover" & "For You" tabs.

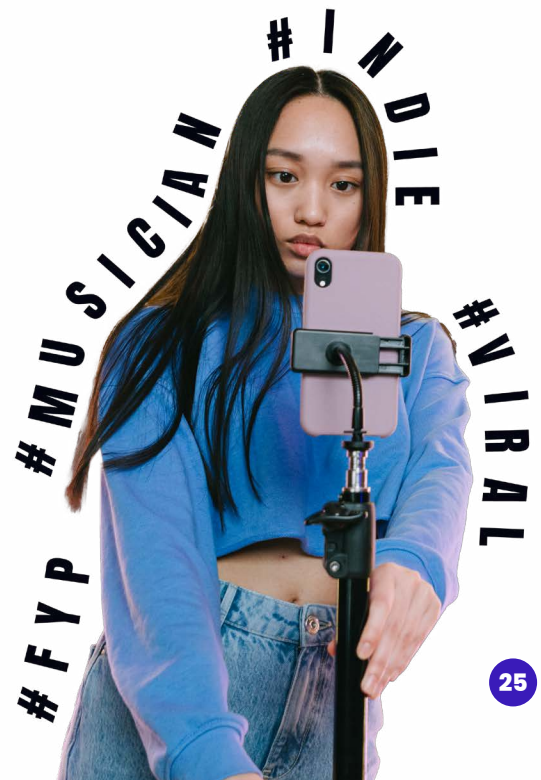
4. Create challenges & contests

Some of the most popular challenges on TikTok usually involve:

- Dance routines
- Lip syncing
- Costumes
- Comedy memes

Tip:

Pick out any **catchy lyrics** or **rhythms** that lend themselves to a **short dance routine**.



5. Follow, follow, follow

Following other TikTokkers is the best way to start building an audience on TikTok.

It'll also give you a chance to scope out the platform's other creators to find content ideas that you can use yourself.

6. Do a duet

TikTok's 'Duet' feature lets you put two videos together side-by-side playing simultaneously.

Use it to collab with another creator or react to a popular influencer's videos to reach new listeners.

7. Authenticity rules

TikTok is all about authenticity so don't worry too much about perfect lighting and framing when creating your videos.

Just focus on making it fun and unique!

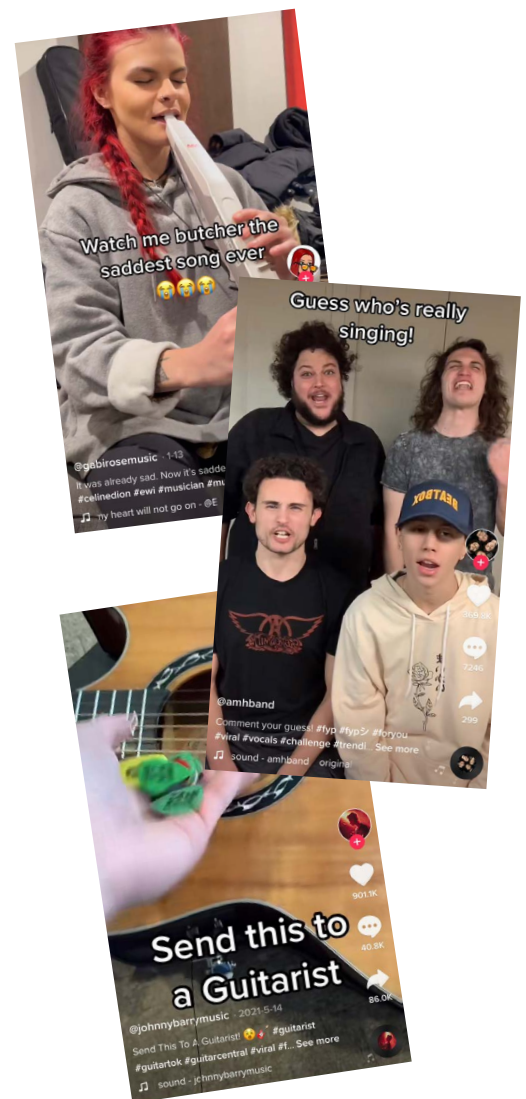
8. Visuals & memes

Aside from the music, **two** more things that have helped TikTok grow into a huge platform – **easily imitated visuals** & **generally funny or inspiring content**.

If you can turn a snippet of your track into an easy-to-copy, 15 second video or funny meme – *it has the potential to go viral on the platform*.

9. Share across other platforms

Sharing your content across more social platforms is a simple way to reach even more people with your TikTok content.



10. Start local. Go global.

TikTok is great at providing localised content. And TikTok users respond well to authentic content that they can personally relate to.

Where better to start than where they live?

11. Use TikTok Analytics

Access important data and metrics about your content and engagement for free, via the analytics dashboard within your TikTok account.

To view, select the 'Creators tools' tab from your account settings. Then select 'Analytics' and you'll get access to stats about video views, likes, comments, shares and so on.



12. Convert followers into music fans

Uploading your song to the TikTok 'Song Page' allows you to include a link to your song on Spotify or Apple Music, so TikTok users can go and listen to the full version on your chosen music streaming platform.

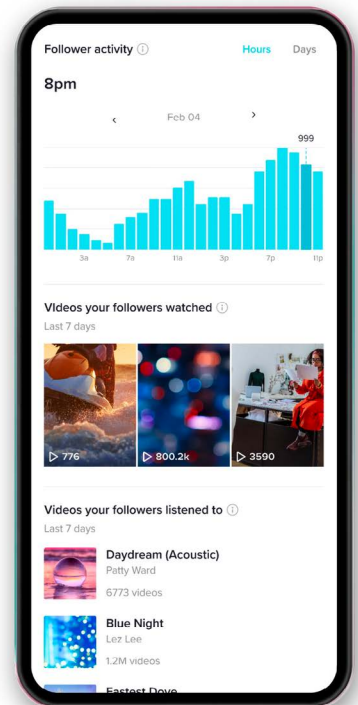
Plus it also includes a link to the artist's official TikTok account!

So make sure you have an **official account** that can act as a conversion point between TikTok and other music platforms.

Useful links:

[15 TikTok Content Ideas to Grow Your Following](#)

[How to Make Music Go Viral on TikTok](#)

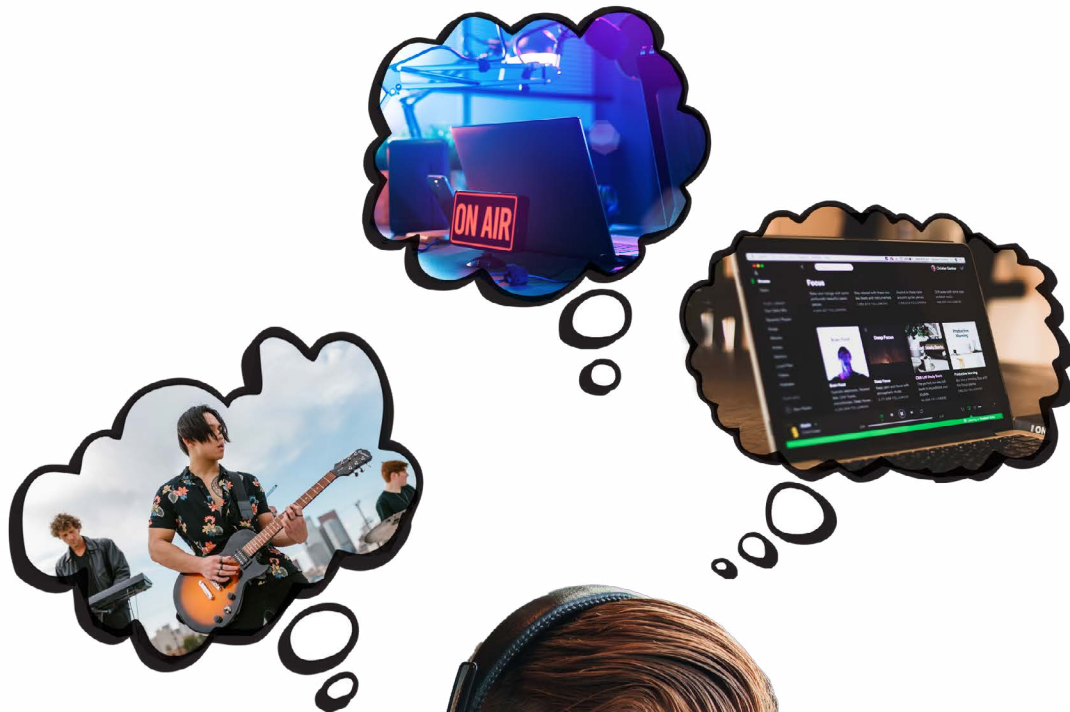


Keep Up **the Momentum!**

So you've released your new track – that's amazing!
But the work doesn't stop there.

Promoting your track post-release is almost as
important as the before stage.

As well as using all the tactics we've gone through so far,
there's loads more you can do post-release, including getting
booked for shows, hosting live streams, securing radio play
and more!



Promote your music on **Streaming Platforms**

There are good strategies, bad strategies and downright terrible strategies when it comes to promoting your music on streaming platforms.

But here's 6 things to keep in mind when promoting your music on streaming platforms:

1. **Analyse listener data** and use it to tailor your marketing.
2. Ask your fans **to follow you**.
3. **Share & embed** your music everywhere.
4. Submit to **playlists**.
5. **Don't buy fake streams!**



TIP: AUDIENCE LOCATION

*Make use of your analytics tools like **Spotify for Artists** to see where your listeners are based.*

*For example, If you discover you've got a lot of listeners in **Germany**, you can use this knowledge to **adapt your strategy** and spend more of your marketing budget in that country.*



Useful links:

[How to Get More Spotify Streams in 2023](#)

Play **Live Gigs & Shows**

Playing live gigs is one of the most obvious ways to grow your fanbase and get fans to really engage with your new release in the most intimate and upfront way possible.

How to **Get Booked** for Live Gigs

1. **Build & maintain your brand**

Before you can get booked for gigs, you need to be 'bookable' – which means looking and sounding the part.

The first thing a promoter or venue is going to look at is your social media accounts & streaming profiles – so make sure you're active and your profiles are complete.

2. **Update your EPK**

Again – it's all about looking the part, being professional and making life easy for whoever you're reaching out to.

So an up-to-date EPK will be yours (and a promoter's) best friend.

3. **Scout venues, promoters & festivals**

If you're just getting started, stay local.

But if you want to cast the net a bit wider, there's a tonne of websites and resources out there designed to connect artists with festivals, promoters and venues – such as [Gigmit](#), [Sonicbids](#) and [Gigstarter](#).



4. Network & make a good impression

As a musician, you're selling yourself as well as your music. You want people to remember you in a good way and be happy to work with you over and over again.

So show up on time, be helpful and make a good impression.

5. Connect with other musicians

Networking with industry people is important. But getting to know other musicians – especially those in your scene – *is just as important.*

Organise jam sessions, gig swaps and collaborations with other musicians to build relationships and reach new audiences.

6. Be unforgettable on stage

Every time you play live is a chance to win over new fans.

Turn potential fans into hardcore fans by being unforgettable on stage.



Useful links:

[How to Get Gigs in 2023](#)

[How to Find a Music Promoter](#)

[Easy Ways to Improve Your Live Set](#)



Submit for **Radio Airplay**

Getting your music played on the radio can hugely impact your post-release period (and your overall music career).

So it's important to approach radio stations in the right way, to give yourself the best chance of making it onto the airwaves.



How to Get **Your Song on the Radio**

1. Know who to approach

When it comes to approaching radio stations, you need to know who to contact.

This could be a specific DJ, or the station's producer, program director or music director.

2. Know *how* to submit your music

Sending out a press release, your EPK or a one-sheet including links to 1-3 of your best tracks is the most common way to approach radio stations.

3. Target the right stations

Radio airplay is incredibly competitive.

But it's ok to start small. There are plenty of independent, student and internet radio stations accepting submissions from up-and-coming bands and artists.

Tip:

Anyone can upload their music to **BBC Introducing or Amazing Radio** for the chance to get played on these **major stations**.

BBC MUSIC
introducing...
amazing



4. Consider your online presence

Building a strong presence on social media and creating online visibility for your music can do wonders when it comes to deciding who gets that coveted airplay spot.

5. Create a buzz

Ultimately the most effective (but also most difficult) way to get radio airplay is to create hype around your music organically, develop a loyal fan base, and force the radio stations to take notice.

6. Hire a radio plugger

If you're still struggling to get the radio airplay you deserve, it could be time to hire a radio plugger.

These are industry professionals who have an existing relationship with radio tastemakers, giving them more influence and sway when it comes to radio stations, DJs and decision makers.



TIME TO GO MAKE IT HAPPEN!

Now you've got all the steps and knowledge you need to drop and promote your next release in 2023, the best thing you can do now is get stuck in!

Starting is always the hardest part, but once you've pinned down your release strategy, you're already halfway there.

The more singles, EPs and albums you put out, the more experience you'll build up releasing and promoting your own music, which will give you a greater advantage when it comes to releasing bigger projects down the line.

But remember – it doesn't end here!

Head over to our [Unsigned Advice blog](#) to discover even more tips, tricks and useful info about promoting your music, growing your audience and building a long-term, successful career as an independent musician.

