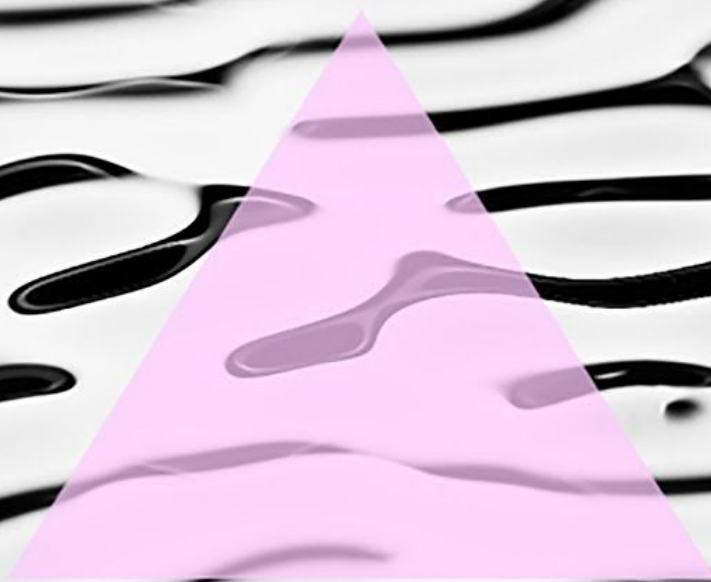


THE NEW PROMOTION

How To Win Fans And Influence People
BPI Insight Sessions - Report



How To Win Fans And Influence People BPI Insight Sessions - Report

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- 2 Critical Takeaways
- 3 The Landscape
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The BPI Insight Sessions typically explore the relationship between technology, socio-cultural trends and music, and how they can shape consumer behaviour and the consumption of music.

The BPI hosts around three sessions a year, sometimes in conjunction with the Entertainment Retailers Association, and typically curated by a respected industry media and insight provider or thought leader.

Past events, which are often also supported by a detailed report, have covered a broad selection of subjects ranging from In-Car Technology, Blockchain, Artificial Intelligence, and Virtual Reality to Smart Speakers, Generation Z, and the Album in the Post-Streaming Era (for National Album Day).

The Sessions can be attended free of charge by BPI members and guests, and industry associates are able to purchase tickets. This report was commissioned by the BPI as part of its Insights Sessions. An event was held at the BPI 28th March 2019 and this report captures insights from the research process undertaken hand-in-hand with the event.

The work was done by music industry strategists/marketers Keith Jopling and Eric Karsenty - see biogs at the end.

1 INTRODUCTION

An everyday conversation in music marketing teams, is how to harness the power of influencers and curators to grow an audience for artists and songs. This has become even more important as playlist pitching has evolved, and now requires a formal track submission process, rather than personal relationships.

To build an audience for a track, the major gatekeepers - radio and playlist programmers - are harder to reach. On the other hand, laying the groundwork with music influencers looks even harder. With more and more touchpoints, it may take longer for a 'hit' song to surface. However, in this report (and its twin event held at the BPI) we argue that working through influencers may also help the song and artist have a longer-lasting impact. We aim to help reduce the reliance on pitching to the major platforms and radio, or at least supplement these traditional promotional channels with some more thoughtful, innovative approaches.

PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

This report aims to help improve understanding, inform label marketers/owners on the current state of the music influencer landscape, and suggests a more strategic template for working with the community of curators, influencers and creators out there that are building significant audiences.

Through reading this report, music marketers will:

- Get a better understanding of the music influencer landscape and how it is evolving
- Be empowered to bring music influencers into their artist marketing plans
- Take away ideas about how they can work with and help develop, the music influencer space and reduce their reliance on playlist pitching and radio plugging
- Understand influencers' strategies and requirements (from labels, artists etc.)
- Have a clearer view of business models and the validity/credibility of influencers

2 CRITICAL TAKEAWAYS

Through the research process and learnings from the New Promotion event held at the BPI, we found a number of factors critical to success for working with the music influencer and curator community and building an organic fanbase from an early stage.

Nurture relationships with curators and influencers: make time to find the right curators and help them help you!

See music influencers and curators as strategic rather than tactical activity: influencer fans are opted in, not bombarded with paid advertising and promotion, so make the community a key part of marketing strategy

Strategically manage your assets as a music creator: access to you/the artist, all the content you make, the data about you that can be gathered and the way you release this content: make the most of these activities through roadmapping, scheduling and windowing using appropriate project management tools

Embrace niches and local influencers with very high engagement: consider release windows to relevant audiences, or reaching out to some of the new local and genre-based zines with an exclusive

Build a network of advocates who know you - artist or label - and will be keen to share your content and stories with their networks and followers (think Creators → Advocates → Followers → Fans)

Be authentic. There is no point to blanket or blind pitches, or trying to push content to influencers who may have a large following but are otherwise not connected to you or your music

Pay attention to 'Digital Branding' - build a narrative around your music/release: Who are you? What's the story behind the music? Who & what are your influences? Support this with a consistent look & feel to the content you create and distribute across all platforms and social media

Set goals. What do you want to achieve next? Is it doing more gigs, getting signed, building a catalog for sync, landing on big playlists? Focus the activities on specific goals so you can increase your chances of success

3 THE LANDSCAPE

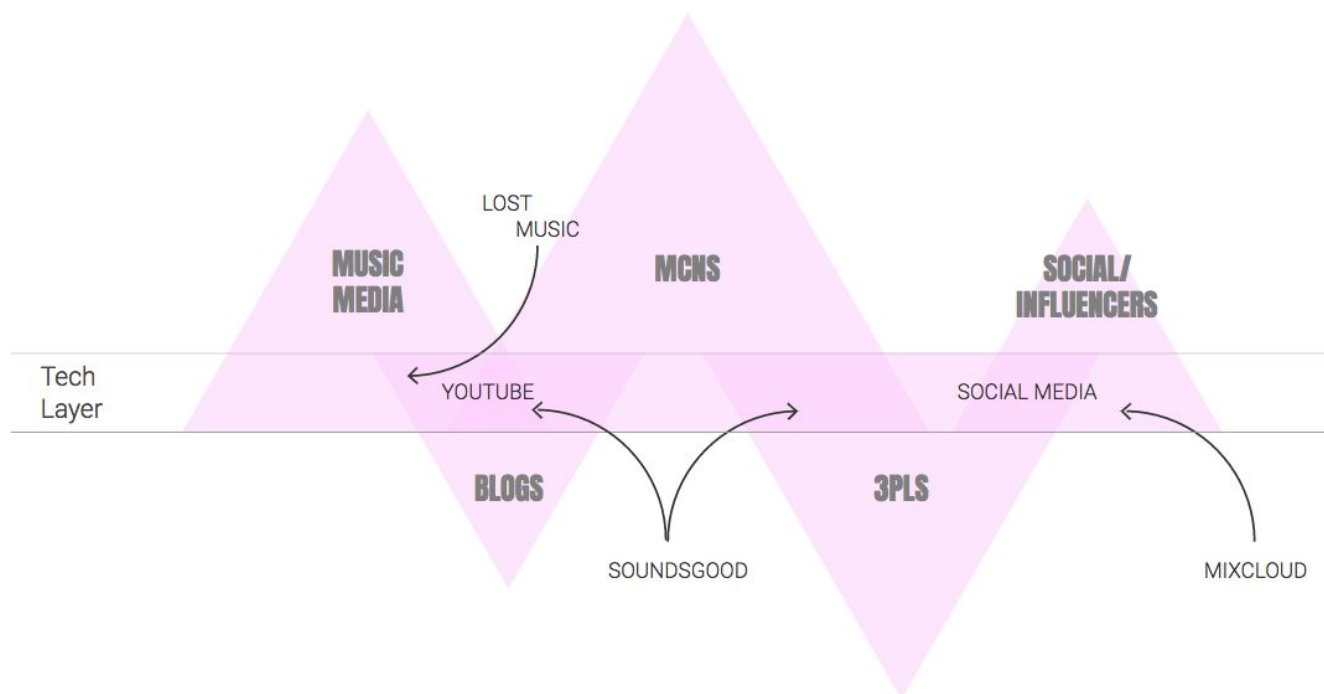
What do we mean by music influencers? We include the following categories:

- Music Media Brands (Pitchfork, UPROXX, Noisey)
- Music Blogs (there are over 100 bloggers with significant audiences, such as Pigeons & Planes, Line Of Best Fit)
- Music Multi-channel Networks (MCNs: The Districts, AEI, Boiler Room)
- 3rd Party Playlist curators and aggregators (3PLs: Indiemono, PlaylistPush)
- Social music-based influencers (HeardWell, Alex Fantano, artists themselves!)
- Influencer Tech Layer: Lost, Soundsgood, Mixcloud and of course, YouTube & social media

We look at each of these sectors and how they have changed and developed. Who are the new entrants in each of these sectors and what are they doing differently? How can artists and labels work with these communities as part of their release roadmap and promotion & marketing strategies?

Figure 1: The Music Influencer & Curator Landscape

This chart shows the main categories we explored during the research, and illustrates how they overlap. The chart also shows the relative size by audience reach, approximately.



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MUSIC MEDIA

The world of music media has changed dramatically in the last 20 years. Music journalism is [‘changing’](#) - some say it’s in a crisis. Online technologies drove two main shifts:

1. Iconic titles like NME and Clash withdrew from print to go digital only.
2. Music titles evolved into a lifestyle brands, covering broader topics to engage audiences, such as fashion, technology, business, food etc.

Of the 12 most well-known media platforms only four still focus on music only.

Brand/title	Owner	Category
Billboard	Billboard-Hollywood Reporter Media Group, a division of Eldridge Industries	Music
Pitchfork	Conde Nast	Music
Drowned In Sound	SilentWay Ltd.	Music
NME	NME Group	Music
FADER	Fader Media Group	Lifestyle
I_D	Vice Media	Lifestyle
NOISEY	Vice Media	Lifestyle
HYPEBOT	Bandsintown	Artists Career/Tech
UPROXX	Warner Music	Culture and Entertainment
CLASH	Music Republic Ltd.	Music/Fashion
Dummy	Dummy	Lifestyle
The Ransom Note	The Culture Space Ltd.	Culture

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Jon Cohen, co-founder and CEO of The Fader, the urban music and lifestyle website and bi-monthly magazine, says:

*I] ZgZ] Vh`cZkZgVZZc V`VZiiZgi b Z`id`VZ`XdccZXiZY1 1] Xj aj gZ`VcY1 dg 1 1] VgVcYh
i] Vi VgZ] Vk`e\ id`cVk^ ViZ`Yg/b Vi X`h] [ih`c`] dl i] Zn`gVX] Xdchj b Zgh#9kZgh[n`e\
VcY`XdkZg`e\ kVgdj h`ide`Xh`VXgphh`Xj aj gZ`Vadl hj h`id`VZ`gZkVci VcY`Xj gZci!1] X] `h
I] Vi VgVcYh VcY`Vg`hih`VgZ`ad` e\ [dg#i Vahd`Vadl hj h`id`XgZViZ`Xdb eZa`e\ XdciZci
I 1] i] Zb VcY`Zi`id`V1 e`l e`l e`h1j Vi`dc#*

*Add` e\ VWX` Vi`i] Z`a`hi`i] gZ`nZVgh`dj gb dhi`hj XXZhhj aXVb eV`ch`VgZ`i] Z`dcZh
I] ZgZ`Vg`hih`Xdb Z1 1] V`hi`g`c\ Xj aj gV`ahidgn`VcY`cVgV`kZ!1] X] `kZh] hi] Z`W`at`n`id
[eY`i] Z`g\] i`eVg`cZgh`VcY`Vj`a`i] Z`b dhi`gZkVci VcY`Zc\`V e\ XdciZci #*

A counter-trend in the past three years has seen the return of the hard copy magazine/fanzine. The collapse of advertising rates coupled with the complexity of search engine optimisation (SEO) makes it challenging to maintain a high quality website with any meaningful revenue.

In the same way that vinyl has resurged in music, we are now seeing more highly qualitative, often local, music magazines offering a 'slow-read' alternative to the saturated content via social media and digital platforms. We have highlighted below some of our favourite (UK-based) examples:

Hd`Naj`c\`: a Glasgow based zine focused on new rock, post-punk and guitar bands

7`Yd`A1d`: Liverpool-based monthly magazine for and about Merseyside's thriving music and creative communities

<da` ; aV`Z`EV`ci`: beautifully designed quarterly magazine focusing on expressing the voices of DIY music communities

8dda7gdi] Zg` originally a university project, this London-based magazine now distributes 5,000 copies and covers music, film, style and culture

Haj`i]` : Vhi`AdcYdc`?dj`g`Va` a free, local, independent culture publication focused on SE London with a distribution of 10,000 copies

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MUSIC BLOGS

Music blogs have seen heavy consolidation over the past 10 years. This is driven by a variety of factors, the most prominent being the huge capture of advertising budgets by Facebook/Google, leaving most smaller music sites to rely on a limited amount of music-focused advertising (non-music brands have almost entirely migrated to major tech platforms) or algorithmic banner networks with very low CPMs (cost per thousand, the rate paid per 1000 impressions/views). Over the past 5-7 years, Facebook has become the dominant source of traffic for many online publishers and has made them reliant on promoting posts with sponsorships, bringing in less revenue than other digital advertising formats.

However, blogs have adapted. Many have developed digital workflows that invite outside contributors more easily. This means that young and new music writers no longer have to start their own blog to develop their craft, even if there has been a reduction in the number of blogs.

Of course, during the same 5-7 year timeframe, listening has shifted to streaming platforms, which provide virtually no outside editorial (Genius has been an interesting innovation however, as has Lost - see below). This shift to on-platform listening has reduced access to new music found through blogs.

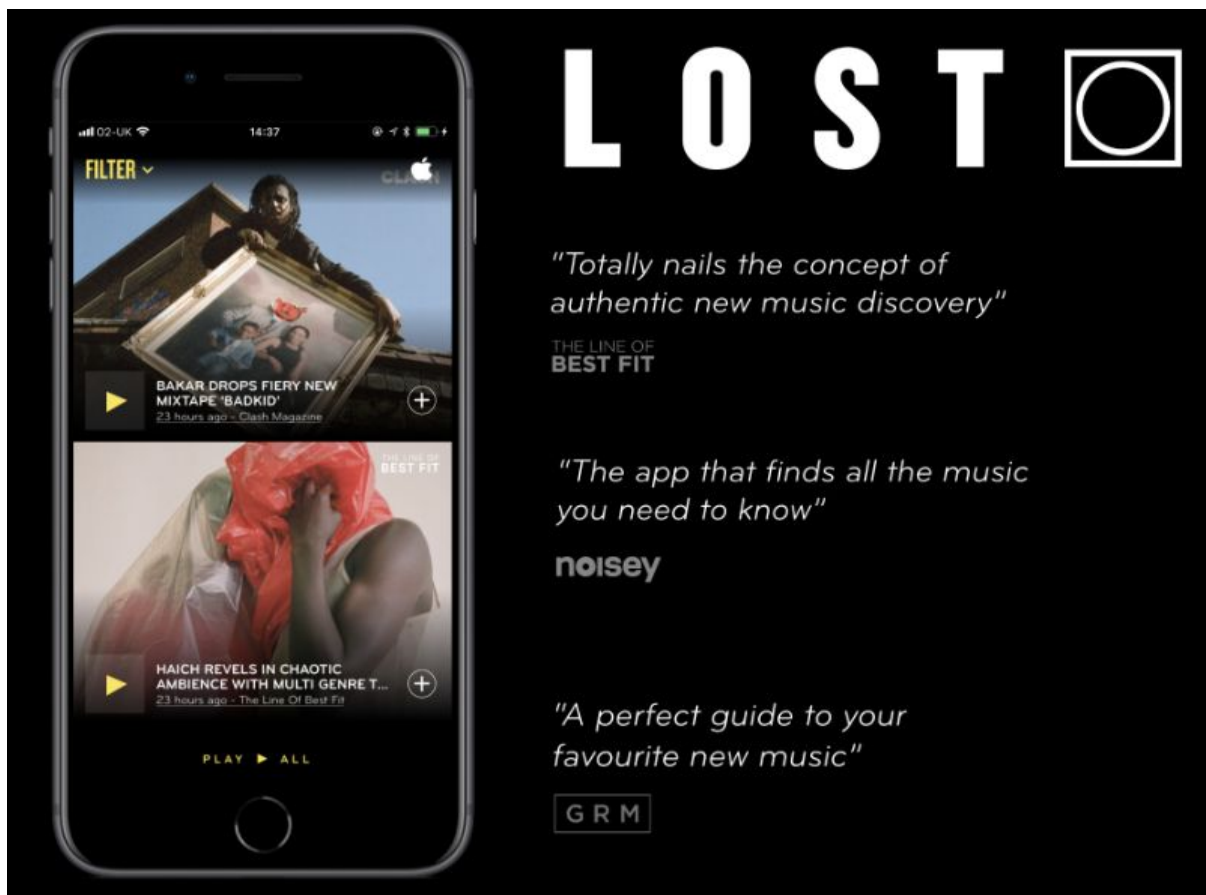
However, we see an emerging opportunity for blogs to focus on their strength - appealing to more engaged, 'lean forward' music fans. Blogs are a key tool to help an artist tell their story and as such, are still very much a valid part of the music promotional and discovery landscape. In fact, blogs might be more vital than ever as the major streaming platforms cater for more mainstream audiences.

8VhZ Hj Yn ADHI Bj hX

LOST is a music discovery app first launched in 2016 as a blog aggregation site. However more recently, the start-up has pivoted towards being an app to surface tracks trending on taste-making blogs on the web as well as playlists on Spotify, Apple Music, Soundcloud and YouTube. LOST integrates with Spotify and Apple Music via APIs, so that users can play (and create playlists of) the songs surfaced through the app, on their preferred music service.

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Curators include The Fader, FACT, HotNewHipHop, Noisey, Stereogum, Clash, UKF, GRM Daily, Hypebeast, Hunger and The 405. According to Founder Crispin Futrille:

*ADHI h\`dVá'h'id'deZc V'cZI 1 éYdl `dc Y'hXdkZgn! VWhZY'dc Vgç\`é\
i] dhZ1 1] V'eVhh'dc [dgXj gM'dc id i] Z'hj gVXZ! 1 1] é'i] Zj hZgh
eg[ZggZY'b j hX'hZgk XZ #*

7ad\h'J hZlj aGZhdj gkZh

The Hype Machine is still the world's blog aggregator of choice and its [Index](#) of global blogs is still kept up-to-date.

[MidiNation's](#) 100 Blogs to submit to is another useful resource.

[SubmitHub](#) claims to have 680 active blogs & labels using the platform, with a combined reach of 80.8m fans.

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MULTI-CHANNEL NETWORKS (MCNS)

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A multi-channel network (MCN) is a media company affiliated with YouTube that provides services for creators in exchange for a slice of advertising revenue. MCNs oversee channel monetisation - usually claiming to generate a higher CPM for their clients, cross-promotion, funding, partner management, digital rights management, audience development and production-streamlining. MCN's include Vevo and major label properties, but we focus on video channels that have been built up from passion projects or from being curators.

The boom in MCNs peaked between 2014-2016, a year in which major media companies acquired MCNs: Maker was acquired (for \$500M) by Disney, Awesomeness was acquired by Hearst in 2014 and then Viacom in 2016. After that initial boom period, YouTube native media brands like Fullscreen grew more organically into media companies (although Fullscreen sold a majority stake to Otter Media in 2014, and was recently wholly acquired by the group). There are still some acquisitions occurring in the MCN space: in September 2018 children's channel Little Baby Bum (17m subscribers) was acquired by Moondog Media.

In music, one of the most successful first MCNs has been SBTV which was acquired by Base79, subsequently acquired by Rightster (for \$50m) in 2014. In 2017, Warner Music acquired [Spinnin' Records](#), a Dutch 'digital label' with a major YouTube presence, specialising in electronic music.

Other active and respected MCN's in music include Berlin based Colors, London based Mahogany/Covers and AEI Networks, whose aggregated brands include UKF, The Sound You Need and Drum & Bass Arena. Y [|lã, ã^ÁOT ÉÁ ~ } á^áÁ^ ÁÖá^•Á^c!•[] Á ÁGEFÍ Áe ÁeÁ |æ| |{ Á } á^!•*!| ~ } áÁ ~ •æÁ^ [{ ÁÁÁ ç^!Á@Á [|lãÉÁ Áe [@:ÉV@Á:æ áÁ@e Á^&á^áÁ } áá * Áe áÁ] |æ| |{ Á ~]] |lã [{ ÁÁ^Áe } •-!Á á^Á^V!æ } •-!ÉV@•^Á çæ] |^•Á^ { [] •dæ^ÁQ, Á ÔP•Á æ^ÁeÁ@áÁ [•c^~&ç^Á @ } Á & •^áÁ } ÁeÁ æcæ |æÁ æ@ÉÁ @ @:Á@eÁ^Á^ } ;^Á |ÁÁ { |{ æÁQ È ÉÖ [|lã •qá ç &ç^Á^••á } •ÉÁ

A recent trend has been for MCN brands to create "starter-audiences" for new artists, bringing in networks of artists that can produce content to a ready-made audience as a first-step on the ladder. Some of these are now becoming potential A&R networks too - examples being Audiomack, Music Crowns and Funnel Music.

8VhZHj Yn/] Z'9higXi

The District has grown organically, as an ecosystem of influential music channels or 'music sharing communities' - shown below. Collectively its brands reach an audience of over 65

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million followers and generate 1.3 billion monthly streams for independent artists and record labels. We spoke to Josh Carr-Hilton, The District's Founder and CEO:

Q: How have music-focused curator channels evolved on YouTube?

B j hX'dc'Ndj I j VZ] Vh'ZkdakZY'hZeVgViZan'[gfb i] Z'VgdVYZg'Ndj I j VZ'ZXdhrhiZb 'd[B 8Ch'VcY'Ndj I j VZ'EVgczZgE'gd\g/b b Z'ENEI'Xg'Vidgh#] Z'B 8C'heVXZ'] Vh'VZzc [dg'ZY'id'gZ'[cZ'VcY'g'v] a'IZ'fh'dl c'eg'Xi'XZh'VZXVj hZ'd[1] Vi'>1 dj a'XadhZan'gZ'a'IZ id' hj hiV'c'W'VZ'[h] c\ # dd'b Vcn'b V_dgB 8C h'ej h] ZY'[dg'g'VX] 'dkZghZgk'XZ'VcY'i] Z Xg'Vidg'V'hZ'i] Vi'i] Zn'gZ'aZY'dc'1 Zg'V'W'Z'id'hZZ'i] g'j \] i] Vi#

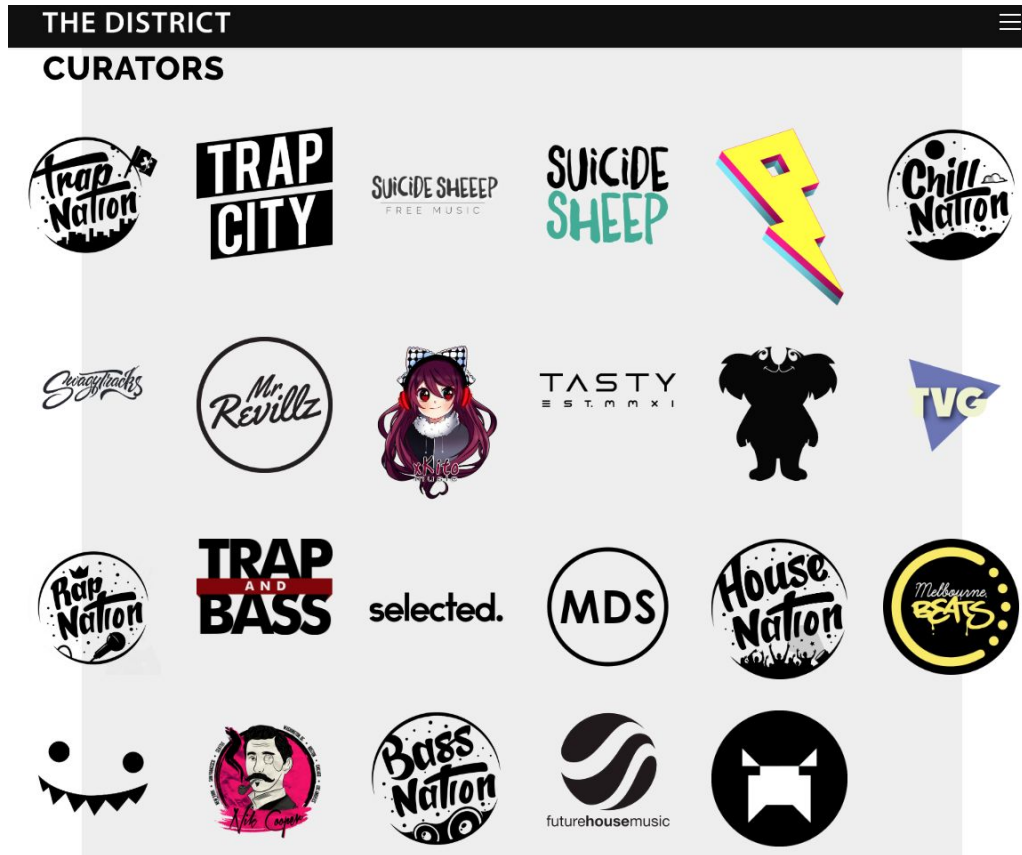
B j hX'ZkdakZY'Y'[Zg'Z'cian'dc'Ndj I j VZ'VcY'B 8C h'dj ih'YZ'd[1] Z'9'higXi'ine'XVan [dXj h'dc'g\] ih'b Vc\Zb Zci'#] Z'9'higXi h'egb Vgn'dVa'h'id'Xj g'IZ'Xdc'Zci'c'Vc Z[[dg'id'Xg'VIZ'Xj aj g'Z#L Z'[dXj h'dc'Vj'g'c\ gZ'a'i'dch] 'eh'1 ^] 'c'YZeZcYZci'VcY b V_dgg\] ih'] da'Zgh'VcY'1 dg' id\Zi] Zg'id'h] Vg'Xdc'Zci'id'V'YZY'XViZY'Vj Y'ZcXZ'adnVa id'V'V'V'cY'i] Zn'ig hi [dg'YZakZg'c\ \g'Vi' b j h'X#>XV'ail] Vi'1 Z'Yd'V'h'rh'Zb 'd['] j b Vc X] d'XZh'g'i] Zgi] Vc'Va'dg'f] b 'X'eg'ZY'Xi'dc#

Q: How did you come to work with and represent so many curator brands?

7g'cYh'hj X] 'Vh'1 g'e'c'Vi'dc!'B g'hj 'X'YZH] ZZe!'Hl \n'l g'X' h!'B g'Zk'ad'ne'ad! B V_Zhi'X'8V'hj VaZi'X#V'aih] Vg'Z'h'b 'g'V'dV'h'VcY'1 dg' id\Zi] Zg'dc'V'YV'an W'h'h'h] Vg'e' \ 'YZV'h!'Xdc'Zci'VcY'h'ig'i'Z\ 'Zh'id'] Zæ'ZVX] 'di] Zg'g'Z'heZX'i'kZan g'Z'VX] 'cZl [Vch#L ^] '9'higXi'dj g'k'h'dc'h'id'Xdc'c'j Van'Zne'VcY'i] Z'[ddieg'ci d['ZVX] 'd['] ZhZ'V'V'cY'h'V'Xg'd'h'h'kVg'dj h'Vj Y'd\$'k'hj V'aea'i[dg'b h'VcY'c'kZhi'c' cZl 'V'kZcj Zh'd['g'kZcj Z'h] Vg'e' \ 1 ^] 'g\ ih] da'Zgh'VcY'Vg'h'h#

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Q: What is the monetisation strategy now for channels and how do you work with artists and labels?

6cni] e\ [glb YZh^c'e\ Vc Vyj a Xdatj g'e\ Wld` [dgB gJ XYZH] ZZe`[Vch dgYd'e\ akZ ZkZcih`c KZ\ Vh`c eVgcZgh] e1 1] Db cV[dgEglmb 1n!dj g \dVa'h'id XgZiZ!Xj g/iZ VcY XdccZXi`b j hX'id eZdeZ`c ZciZgV'e'e\ 1 Vrh#

L Z1 dg 1 1] i] dj hVcYh'd[Vg hi h! aVZah! b Vc\ VZgh VcY`ej Vdh] Zgh ZVX] I ZZ` #B dhi`d[i] Z Xj g/i dgh i] Vi`g c i] ZhZ`b V_dg`c[aj Zci VaX] VccZah`egYZ i] Zb hZkZhd`c VZ`e\ VXXZhhVZ`VcY`deZc`id`Y`Vad\j Z`Wdj i` \gZVi`b j hX# I] ZVZhi VYkXZ`h'id`egdYj XZ`Vb Vo'e\ b j hX`VcY`Ydc i VZ V[d/Y`id`gVX] dj i`id`h] VgZ`1 1] hdb ZdcZ1] d] Vh i] Z`hVb Z`atkZ`[dgb j hX`Vh`ndj` Yd#e Yd`e\ 1] Vi 1 Z`Yd`ZkZgnVni] ZgZ`h`Vc`eXgZYVZ`Vb dj ci`d[[ZmVatn`e1] Vi I Z`XVc`hdX`Van`b Vg Zi`!h] VgZ`dgYZkZade#7Z Vda`!i]` e` dg\`eVan`VcY`i]` e` i] gZj \] ndj g`YZVh VZ[dgZ`egZ`hZci`e\ i] Zb` id`VcndcZ`d[i] ZhZ`b V_dg`c[aj ZcXZgh`#

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The District Channels: Audience Data

Channel	YouTube Subscribers (millions)	Spotify Playlist Followers
Trap Nation (USA)	25.7	2,000,000
Trap City (NL)	12.5	82,293
Suicide Sheep (CA)	11.3	63,400
Proximity (USA)	8.2	258,718
Chill Nation (USA)	7.9	382,549
Swagy Tracks (CA)	2.8	23,152
Mr Revillz (GB)	2.8	12,985
xKito Music (DE)	2.3	25,978
Tasty (LV)	0.9	13,687
Koala Kontrol (US)	1.3	47,937
The Vibe Guide (BA)	1.8	52,149
Rap Nation (US)	2.6	139,363
Trap and Bass (US)	0.8	35,459
Selected	2.1	144,481
House Nation (US)	3.0	9,973
CloudKid (US)	2.9	98,353
Bass Nation (US)	2.3	69,138
Nik Cooper (US)	0.8	12,090
Future House Music (NL)	1.0	160,117

Source: The District, socialblade.com, Spotify

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3rd PARTY PLAYLIST CURATORS (3PLs)

While a lot of airtime and marketing energy is put into landing a track on a streaming platform “owned & operated” playlist, less attention is given to thriving sub-industry of third-party playlisting, and how artists can use it to their advantage. The abundance of 3PLs means there is an alternative route to an audience for almost every artist, but the landscape is crowded and confusing. We highlight some of the most interesting players below.

Austin Sherman, Account Manager at Awal has spent hundreds of hours researching and working with 3PLs:

Hd'b Vcni] gY"eVgn'eal/nahih] vkZ'hj X] V'XaZVgb j h'XVaeZgheZXi'kZ!] Z'Znae/c'h# s h cdi Zcdj \] id'j hi hVn'Gfi7#Ndj Xvc'[eYV'c'X] Z'X] VccZa[dgVcni] e\#6hVc Vg hi!'h gVan'ob edgVci id' cdl ndj ghbj cYVcY'hZZ' X] VccZah'i] Vi XViZgid'i] Vi!VZXVj hZ i] Vi h'l] Zc'ndj ae\Zi] ^] XdckZgh'bc/EZdeaz VgZ'ad'e\ id'i] ZhZ'ea/nahih'e'hZVgX] d[hdb Zi] e\ kZgn'eVg Xj dgVcY'f'ndj [f'c'i] ZgZ'i] Zn'l aeVeegZXVIZI] Vi i] Zn] ZVg [gdb ndj #

Support from big 3PLs will result in immediate audience growth and engagement. Support from smaller 3PLs might result in enough extra streams to trigger another playlist add i.e. the snowball effect.

Many analytics tools available – Kudos, Orchard, AWAL, Spotify, Apple, etc. allow monitoring of 3PL track adds. Each one provides material to reach out to your audience for CTA (calls to action) and to nurture a new relationship with the curator.

There are two main types of 3PL:

- Playlist brands - can take several forms: branded content, sponsorship or pure curation
- Personal accounts - some of whom are highly influential (and have made playlist curation their main activity and income)

Just a few of the many playlist brands are mentioned below. For individual playlisters, many can be found by the web simply through Google and then exploring via Spotify, YouTube, SoundCloud etc..

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Playlist brands:

1. **IndieMono:** Indiemono is one of the largest independent playlist communities and claims it plays a role in breaking new artists <http://indiemono.com/music-submit/>
2. **Soundplate:** Soundplate has a selection of playlists curated by their team. In addition, they have a new submission system whereby they push tracks to other playlists <http://play.soundplate.com/>
3. **Spingrey:** Playlists spanning multiple genres, you can submit by following their collaborative playlist <http://www.spingrey.com/backstage/>
4. **Songpickr:** Songpickr aims to surface “warm, organic, vintage sound in today’s music”. Songpickr has more than 30,000 followers on Spotify and their biggest playlist is currently sitting at 137k followers <https://www.songpickr.net/>
5. **Daily Playlists:** A huge amount of playlists you can submit to, they also have their own curated playlists for Rock, Hip Hop, Indie and Electronic dailyplaylists.com/submit-a-track
6. **Work Hard Playlist Hard:** Founder Mike Warner is a well-known voice in music marketing and playlisting. You can submit music for them to consider via the form on their website <https://workhardplaylisthard.com/>
7. **Independent Music Monday** is a playlist which celebrates the finest indie releases every Monday. It is curated by Sean Adams from DrownedinSound in collaboration with PIAS.

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A clear path to Spotify success is getting onto 3PLs, which can generate enough streams to trigger Spotify's algorithms and potentially get your song added to official Spotify playlists like Fresh Finds, Release Radar and Discover Weekly (with a potential reach of millions, but bear in mind the inevitable comedown once the track drops off the playlist).

Here is a step-by-step strategy on how to optimise chances to get on DSPs curated playlists :

1- Build initial following on DSPs

- Use all of the features that Spotify for Artists (or equivalent) provides, such as: artist's pick, ability to share playlists directly with fans, analytics dashboards.
- Make sure to add links, buttons, widgets of the DSP of your choice (or via smartURL or an aggregator like Soundgood) to grow your followership on the platform.
- Ask fans to follow you on streaming platforms via your newsletter, social media or even at shows.

2 - Build a playlist CV (start the snowball effect)

- Create your own playlists: best of the month/year, influences, "what I'm into..." (make sure to only have one track per artist and add a track of yours to the mix).
- Promote these playlists as much as you can through your own channels and try to get online media coverage via links by tagging the artists/labels in it.
- Engage fans by creating collaborative playlists "road trip soundtrack, running tunes..."
- Work with your artist friends by trading tracks (they put yours on their playlist and you return the favour).

3 - Increase your chance of getting onto algorithmic playlists like *Release Radar* and *Discover Weekly*

- Focus on growing your followers.
- Don't just share links to a single, but to a playlist of your music with the single as the first track.
- Use same ISRC number for a track (single and then EP, Album etc.) so the streams merge.
- Run a pre-save campaign (there are now several providers to work with).
- Release music more frequently (singles, remixes, collaborations).

4 - Pitch directly to 3rd party playlisters (see above section)

5 - Pitch to curated playlists

Since September 2018, Spotify has launched a new way for artists and labels to submit music directly to the platform's editorial teams for playlist consideration. Here are some pitching principles:

- Do your research: Spend time on your DSP of choice browsing playlists by genre/era or whatever theme you see fit for your music and take note of the ones that resonate with you
- Follow the playlists you want to pitch to so you are familiar with the artists and songs featured
- Build a relationship with the playlist creator: follow them on social media, engage with them by leaving comments etc.
- Pitch your music: be subtle and smart in your approach using data and keywords and highlighting the playlists you would like to be considered for

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Soundsgood is a provider of playlisting and promotional tools for music influencers and curators. The team spent some time in 2018 reaching out to its community of 25,000 curators (and subsequently 120 million followers) to ask them about what could improve their projects and help build their audiences.




In February 2019 the team launched one of their first value-add services to influencers called Soundsgood Premieres. Simple but effective, this allows artists and labels to notify the Soundsgood community of curators about forthcoming releases. The curators can listen to the tracks via a secure private link.

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21 music premieres to stream this week!

Here are the next music releases that artists and record labels have entrusted you with in early access.

	<p>Nodey - G.H.O.S.T. #electro #asia 28 March 2019</p>	<p>Pre-stream</p> <p>Single / Jeune à Jamais</p>
	<p>La Fine Equipe - Aurora Feat. Madjo #electro #electroPop 28 March 2019</p>	<p>Pre-stream</p> <p>Single / Nowadays</p>

Useful links:

[Sidekick music top Spotify curators](#)

[Reddit list of independent Spotify curators](#)

SOCIAL MUSIC-BASED INFLUENCERS

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Of the five sectors we've explored for this report, the area of music-based influencers is both the newest and least-utilised by the industry. It may be that labels are pitching Hip Hop artists to Gary Vee's Monday to Monday playlist, but this is surely just the beginning of a much bigger opportunity.

We think there are opportunities for artists to be their own influencers. At the BPI event, Barney Artist spoke about his approach to making his own content feel "like a TV show" for his fans. His social output reflects this, with an engaging commentary on his career and latest projects. He also does this via the podcast series [Are We Live?](#) with fellow artists Jordan Rakei, Tom Misch and Alfa Mist. George Ezra's highly engaging and successful [podcast series](#) is an excellent example of how artists themselves can undertake and present cultural projects that attract audiences and new fans along the way.

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Mixcloud has created a platform for audio-based creators to upload content and build audiences much more strategically than many social platforms. Mixcloud Select allows creators (artists and curators) to become their own influencer, and to earn revenue directly from fan subscriptions. The platform allows audio creators to offer their subscribers exclusive content via a paywall channel. Creators can make shows available to subscribers before they go public, offer bonus content that only subscribers can access, or other types of projects they can create. Mixcloud Select has a roster of new creators to the service including Roger Martinez, Worldwide FM (as mentioned earlier), Defected, J. Rocc, Dummy, DJ Blighty and Mayer Hawthorne and more.

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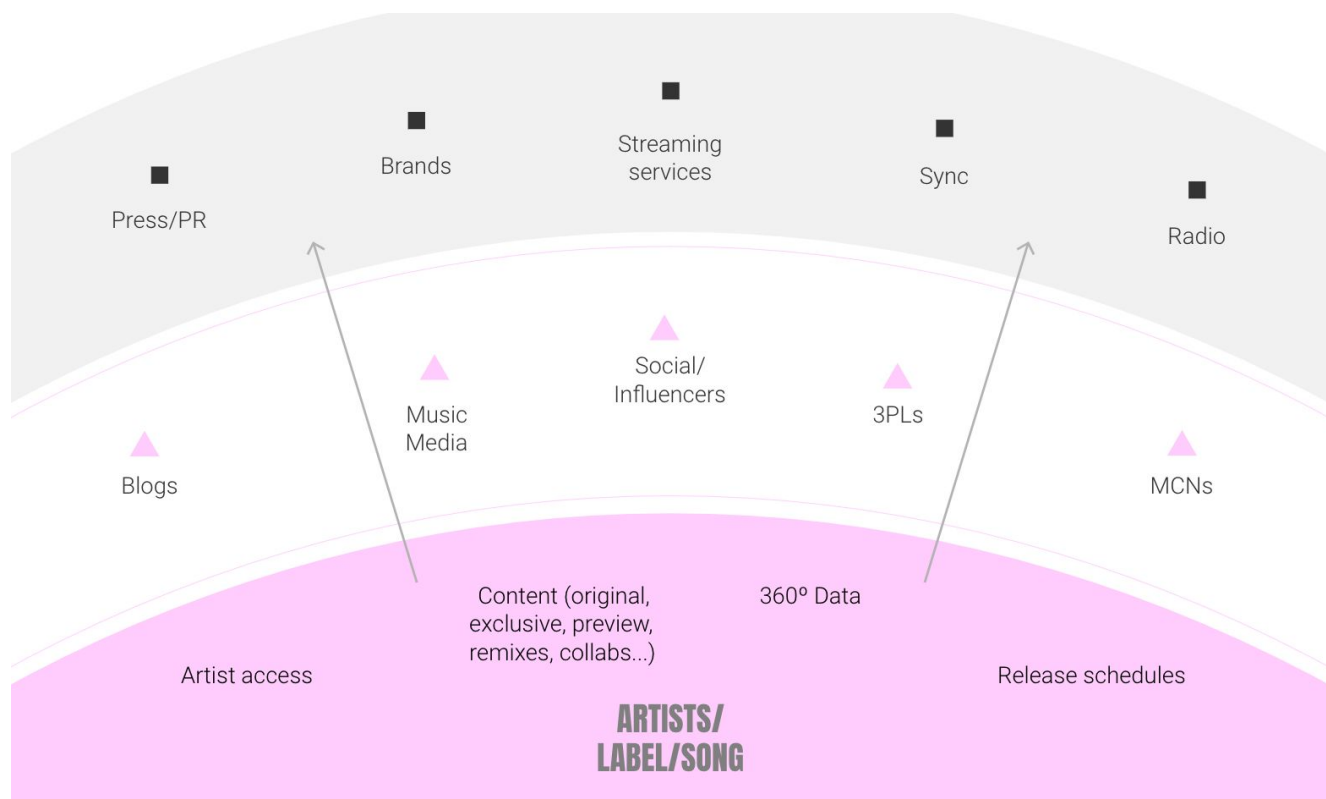
Mixcloud Select allows creators to set their own price starting from 2.99 per month in local currencies (\$/£/€). Creators receive a share of the profits from their subscriptions, while the artists, labels and publishers played in their shows receive royalty revenue as shows are streamed. Mixcloud's proprietary content ID system identifies individual tracks and underlying rights holders and has also announced direct licensing deals with Universal Music Group, Sony Music Entertainment, Warner Music Group, Merlin, Warner/Chappell Music Publishing and others.

4 RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES FOR ARTIST MARKETERS AND LABELS

We've explored five key sectors so far - music media, blogs, MCNs, 3PLs and social music influencers - and looked at how some tech services are enabling these sectors to innovate and build audiences. Our aim with this report is to encourage artist marketers to see these sectors as strategic, not tactical. With the key assets available, artists and labels can work through these sectors to build an organic fan base and build success stories to take to the major gatekeepers with greater chances of success. Or in fact, have those gatekeepers approach you.

Figure 2: Marketing Strategically Through Music Influencers

This chart illustrates how creators and content producers should aim to work through the curator and influencer layer in order to increase their chances of success with some of the bigger promotional levers such as mainstream press and DSP playlist adds. Artists' strategic assets include access to them (interviews, chats, blogs), the range of content they produce, when they choose to release that content and all the data they can now gather and share about their activities.



For individual artists, or for labels that have aggregated assets in terms of multiple artists and releases, we highlighted at the beginning of this report some critical success factors to pay attention to. To conclude this report, we make four simple recommendations.

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1. **Develop Artist Marketing Roadmaps.**
2. **Build Content Hubs.**
3. **Create Networking & Support Programmes (like YouTube's Partner Programme).**
4. **Create New Influencer Brands.**

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Every successful marketing initiative for any product should begin with a strategic vision and a clearly defined set of goals. Music is no different, and this is why a marketing roadmap is a great tool to build for your single/ep/album launch. We break down any type of release into three phases:

1. Pre-launch phase: create excitement about the release.
2. Launch phase: the bulk of marketing effort, activities and budget.
3. Post launch phase: ensure momentum extends the life cycle of the release.

In each of the above phases, actions will cover those curator and influencer sectors we've outlined in this report. [Here](#) is an example of a roadmap built for the launch of Richard Spaven's "The Self" album, the first single organically reaching over 800K streams on spotify, thanks to strategic activities leveraging all five curator/influencer sectors.

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Labels could easily create a content hub where artist & creative assets are made available to influencers, potentially with preview windows, to help build pre-release momentum. If a track is submitted to Spotify for playlist consideration via Spotify For Artists some three weeks ahead of release (as suggested by Spotify) then there is a considerable pre-release window with which to build momentum.

One way to do this is to release *Vg hi fiigX hidgVhhZih* to curators. Rather (or as well as) pushing these out, labels and artists can create their own hub sites, or use a third party service. For example see the Soundgood Premieres case study. The content available could include in-studio behind the scenes/backstage video, podcasts, artist blogs, artist influencer playlists, artwork images, sleevenotes etc. It's this story-based material that curators and influencers are interested in - sometimes much more than the major DSPs are!

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We think it's possible for the music industry to create a network and support programme for music curators and influencers in a similar way to YouTube's Partner Programme. For many video content creators, YouTube's Partner Program has made it possible for them to turn a passion project into a

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viable career. For YouTube channels that have achieved 4,000 watch hours over 12 months and at least 1,000 subscribers, YouTube provides access to production facilities, training programmes and one-to-one support from Partner Managers. YouTubers are able to expand their content, grow their audiences and generate more revenue, to a point where some are able to focus full-time on their channel activities and take their passion project to the next level of full-blown media brand.

The music industry could offer a similar programme, with facilities, education & support, working space and of course, greater access to artists and content for music-focused curators and influencers. This kind of support is even more critical to music influencers as revenue opportunities from advertising have declined.

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In this report we've mapped out the landscape of music influencers and curators and namechecked just a few. There are many more potential partners - all providing possible routes to a loyal artist fanbase. However, it's not beyond the capabilities of artists, managers, labels, brands or the industry to create new cultural music brands.

Spotify has successfully created a number of sub-brands, from Rap Caviar to Peaceful Piano. We think there are plenty of opportunities to add to the current crop of curator brands, be it genre-based (neo-classical, country) or leveraging existing brands (Hyundai Mercury Prize, National Album Day).

INTERVIEWS & RESEARCH PLAN

The following people contributed to this report, with thanks to:

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Kevin Breuner VP of Marketing at CD Baby
Leila Fataar, Founder Platform 13
Josquin Farge, Co-founder Soundsgood
Barney Artist, Artist!
Xanthe Fuller, Head of Community Mixcloud
Jon Cohen, Founder of The FADER
Anthony Volodkin, Founder Hype Machine
Crispin Futrille, Founder Lost Music
Josh Carr-Hilton, Founder & CEO The Districts
Austin Sherman, Account Manager, Digital AWAL

REPORT AUTHORS

Keith Jopling is a music & media strategy professional with 20+ years experience in insight and data-led approaches to solving complex business problems. He is passionate about change, progress and doing things better. Keith is consulting director for MIDiA Research, and also works independently on other music & media projects. He has recently completed a 1-year engagement advising on the global digital, streaming & content strategy for Sony Music. His side passion project is the “art of the playlist” music discovery site www.songsommelier.com - contact keith.jopling@gmail.com

Eric Karsenty is a music & media strategy professional with 20+ years experience in insight and data-led approaches to solving complex business problems. He is passionate about change, progress and doing things better. Eric is consulting director for MIDiA Research, and also works independently on other music & media projects. He has recently completed a 1-year engagement advising on the global digital, streaming & content strategy for Sony Music. His side passion project is the “art of the playlist” music discovery site www.songsommelier.com - contact eric.karsenty@gmail.com

