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# New Release Best Practices Guide



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## Success doesn't happen overnight.

You opened this guide because you want to find some steps to success that you may not have thought of or known about. No matter what your goals are, *you have to work at them*. Some version of planning is **always involved**. Even those who seem to find success overnight, have actually had to **put in real work to get there**.

Here is what we know: nearly everyone would like to have success. But, that success won't happen instantly. It takes *consistency and effort* to build a long-lasting career. You have to **develop a real work ethic**. You have to have something that separates you from the rest. But, what we don't know, is who's going to be willing to put in the work it takes to reach that success and sustain it. The action of showing up consistently each and every day is what will define you in this business.

**Wouldn't it be amazing if all you needed was your pure talent?** Wouldn't it be great if there was magically an audience of adoring fans, waiting for you and you did not have to work at building up a fan base? How much fun would it be if you could just drop off a demo and get discovered by a major player in the music business? I mean, it HAS happened before, right?

Unfortunately, there are no magic tricks. There are **no shortcuts that will yield long term results**. There are **no longer A&R reps out here just looking for raw talent with no social media presence and no digital success**. There is rarely an opportunity to be signed to a label before you build up your *social media following, a solid core fanbase and a strong following* on streaming services.

This guide is our **humble contribution to the rest of your career**. We, at Heads Music, want to give as much as we can, to the community of incredible artists out there. We want you to reach the goals for whatever success means to YOU.

What you will find inside is a **list of questions you should be able to answer before you release a music project**. You will also find *tips and best practices* that have been shared with us by executives at streaming services and social media platforms. There is also a guide to all of the **administrative steps** you should take in order to register your music before release.

This is our gift to you. It is a growing, breathing document. As we learn more, we will offer revised versions. We wish you tremendous luck, and hope that this guide will let you know that Luck is only part of what you need.

## Questions to ask yourself and/ or your team:

1. **What is the Point of View of your project?** Collectively, what point of view, concept, etc. are you trying to get across with your project? E.g. love and loss, general consciousness, etc.?
2. **What Story are you trying to tell?** Storytelling is key. Let's take Jay-Z's "99 Problems" as an example. The lyrics recount an encounter Jay-Z had with a racist police officer before he became a famous rapper. In the song, after Jay is initially pulled over for slightly going over the speed limit, but it soon becomes clear he was pulled over for the color of his skin (and not the drugs the officer doesn't know he has in his trunk).
3. **Who is your Consumer?** Start with those who are your current fans. What type of individual is already drawn to your music? Based on the "Point of View" and the "Story you are trying to tell," which consumers would likely be drawn to what you have to say?
4. **What are the marketing drivers for your project?** (Marketing Drivers = the underlying forces that compel a consumer to purchase products and pay for services. The most popular marketing driver is consumer demand.)
5. **What is your marketing build out?** Which marketing functions (social media, PR, advertising, guerilla marketing, merch) should you use in order to get your message out there to your audience?
6. **What are the drivers around the lead single?** What marketing functions will you use around your lead single specifically, and how will you implement them?
7. **What is your Road Map?** (Road Map = Timeline, digital media plan, content plan)
8. **Do you have a cohesive plan to share with Digital Streaming Platforms (DSPs)?**
9. **Have you given yourself a minimum of 2 months lead time when preparing to pitch to DSP's and Bandcamp?**
10. **How will your plan be presented to DSPs?**

## Questions to ask yourself and/ or your team, Continued:

**11. Have you set Realistic and Scalable goals?**

**12. What is your plan to drive consumers to the DSP's to stream your music and to support you on Bandcamp?**

**13. What is the value proposition to your consumer?** (Value Proposition = an innovation, service or feature intended to make a product attractive to customers. Make sure to keep this in mind throughout your planning process.)

**14. What are the obvious playlist opportunities for your single on each platform?**

**15. Have you studied the feeder playlists, smaller playlists, that can assist you with gaining streams and followers on the DSP's?**

**16. Have you done the work to build your followers on each platform?**  
(Some examples include: Tweet to unlock, Pre-save for prizing, Calls to action on other platforms like Bands in Town, Youtube, and pre-orders on Bandcamp)

# Soundcloud

**Core Goal: The focus on this platform to build your soundcloud audience into your very own “online street team” by keeping their ears full of new music to listen to and share.**

With the largest, most diverse music catalog ever assembled, SoundCloud “is where tomorrow’s creators get their start, genres emerge and music culture is born.” Alongside personalized weekly playlists such as “SoundCloud Weekly,” “The Upload,” and “Fresh Pressed,” they have rolled out the next chapter of curation on SoundCloud--more handcrafted playlists and new community profile pages.

## New community profile pages

[Hustle](#)   [The Peak](#)   [RAW](#)   [Shine](#)   [Scenes](#)   [Vs](#)   [Throwback](#)  
[AURAS](#)   [Circuits](#)   [Coded](#)   [Vibrations](#)   [Subs](#)   [La Onda](#)   [Amped](#)

## Playlists

[Ear Candy: Fresh Pop Picks](#)

[Drippin': Best Rap Right Now](#)

[On The Up: EDM. New & Hot](#)

[Tearz: Rap's New Edge](#)

[Vibes: Best New R&B](#)

[Club Heat: Dance. New & Hot](#)

[Stitches: Indie New Arrivals](#)

[Borderless: Giant Global Beats](#)

[La Multitud: Latinx Pop. New & Hot](#)

[The Dive: New Rock Now](#)

**The Bassbin:** UK Beats, New & Hot

[Tunnel: Underground Electronic. New & Hot](#)

**One World:** Global Pop Hits

**Gotham Bars:** NYC Rap, New & Hot

[I 85: Atlanta Rap. New & Hot](#)

[Pacific Rims: New West Coast Rap](#)

**Power Play:** Quality Hip-Hop Cuts

**The Look Out:** Bubbling Rap Tracks

[Closer: Emerging R&B](#)

[Sunrise: Fresh Florida Rap](#)

# Soundcloud Best Practices

**With Premier, you can promote your music to new fans on SoundCloud and get paid for your plays – directly from your SoundCloud account.**

It's free to join Premier. **As a Soundcloud Premier Artist**, you can enjoy a few of the following benefits:

1. Earn a share of revenue each month on tracks you own, through advertisements and paid subscriptions
2. Get involved in marketing and promotional opportunities, including live Soundcloud events and brand partnerships
3. Receive free in-depth reporting and connect directly with Soundcloud artist relations team, who'll help answer your questions and grow your career on Soundcloud.

• **Make sure your profile is up to date:**

1) Add your current profile picture

2) Top banner image should feature whatever you're currently promoting (new album, tour dates etc.) NOTE! THE TOP BANNER IMAGE IS CLICKABLE.

3) List socials and contact information in description

4) Link your tour dates using Songkick, Bandpage, etc



# Soundcloud Best Practices, Continued

- **Engage:**

- 1) Follow artists and producers that you work with or would like to collaborate with
- 2) Follow artists with similar music styles to yours
- 3) Follow artists that you just simply like their music
- 4) Repost / like tracks of the artists you follow
- 5) Create playlists
- 6) DM your top 50 followers and thank them for listening. You can also do giveaways to this group. These are your "Super Fans."

- **Feature your top tracks using the Spotlight feature:**

- 1) Focus tracks / albums / playlists
- 2) Ensure some, if not all, content in spotlight is available in ad-supported

- **Utilize stats for Radio, Brand, Touring and Advertising opportunities:**

SoundCloud stats feature granular stats like Top Countries, Cities, Website, Listeners, & more.

-Top country data can be used to align a new artist with a bigger name act on tour based on country plays for a world tour experience

-Top city data can be used as leverage for radio stations to play a new developing artist in a DMA

-Top listeners are essentially your "[digital street team](#)" - [this community](#) can be used for contesting and networking. You can access a list of your top listeners by visiting your insights

-Top Websites can be used to evaluate online reach as well as ad plans

# Soundcloud Marketing

## Marketing on SoundCloud:

Because of the nature of SoundCloud, there are multiple marketing ideas that are easily executable. Here are just a few!

1. **Announcements:** An artist could use SoundCloud to record an audio announcement (Tour, new music, etc) and encourage fans to follow the profile for updates
2. **Giveaways:** Because of SoundCloud's robust stats, an artist could run a contest where the person who streams their new track on SoundCloud the most in the first week wins some sort of prize pack.
3. **Teaser Previews:** Manually upload a sample of a track, and then replace the audio with the full version. Interactions on the original upload will stick since only the audio is being replaced
4. **Twitter Q&A / AMA:** Field questions from fans via social media and answer them on SoundCloud as audio recordings
5. **Direct message fans or record private audio tracks to send to fans:** Use SoundCloud DM feature to directly communicate with fans



# Your Soundcloud Checklist: Actions to Take Before Your Release

- Are your profile picture, bio, and banner image updated for your upcoming release?
- Are you taking advantage of the easy uploads? Uploading Demos and unreleased tracks?
- Did you use as many tags as possible when uploading your tracks?
- Are you reading and responding to the comments on your releases?
- Are you discovering, engaging with and following other artists?
- Did you know you can message your top 50 followers?
- Are you aware of how you can monetize on Soundcloud?
- Do you have a [Soundcloud Premier](#) account?



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# Audiomack

## <https://audiomack.com>

**Core Goal: The focus on this platform build and maintain a true core audience for your music**

Audiomack is a free music streaming and discovery platform that allows artists to share their music and fans to discover new artists, songs, albums, mixtapes. This is a platform where artists and labels can share their music without limits—there are no premium accounts for artists, and free accounts include unlimited storage, whether you have one song or one thousand.

Audiomack is also free for listeners, although they do offer a subscription option in the mobile app, which removes ads and enables HQ streaming.

Many artists use both Audiomack and SoundCloud to host their music, and we think that's great. Artists should host their music in as many places as possible for the widest reach. Audiomack is free, so there's little downside to adding your music to Audiomack in addition to other platforms. In the same way you probably use Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to promote your music, you can use us alongside Spotify, SoundCloud, and other platforms.

Audiomack's playlisting is robust and highly sought after. They cover many genres. Some examples of playlists are:

<https://audiomack.com/joevango/playlist/verified-hh>,

<https://audiomack.com/tgut/playlist/best-hip-hoprap-songs-of-november-2020>,

<https://audiomack.com/ade-a/playlist/hometown-heroes-nigeria>,

When you open the Audiomack app or go to their homepage, they show you what's trending right now—you don't need to follow anyone or curate your own feed to find out what's hot (although you can do this too). You can also see top songs and top albums. Examples of these features, below:

<https://audiomack.com/trending-now>

<https://audiomack.com/songs/week>

<https://audiomack.com/albums/week>

# Audiomack Best Practices

## **Make sure your profile is complete and up to date:**

- 1) Add a current profile pic
- 2) Link all social media accounts
- 3) Complete your Bio - Try not to make make it too cookie cutter. Really share interesting details about yourself.
- 4) Apply for verification/authentication if applicable - Link below:  
<https://audiomack.com/world/post/audiomack-for-creators-authentication>

## **Uploading Your Music:**

- 1) Try to have fascinating cover art that is eye catching. Remember you are on a platform with millions of young artists vying for the attention of the same audience. how will you stand out?
- 2) Make sure that every time you upload new music, it is submitted for trending - Link below:  
<https://audiomack.com/world/post/how-to-pitch-your-music-for-trending---playlists>
- 3) use as many tags as possible in hopes of easier discovery of your music in searches



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## Audiomack Best Practices Continued

4) Utilize the built in tools for social promotion - Link below:

<https://www.musicbusinesshowto.com/howtos/audiomack-playlists-and-trending>

5) Consistently post the links of your records across your socials

6) Take advantage of all of the apps features. For example, there is a new trophy room that gives you shareable accolades as you hit different milestones.

7) Make playlists that will lead artists back to your page, and comment/reach out to other users to start to build your audiomack community

# **Your Audiomack Checklist: Actions to Take Before Your Release**

- Are your profile picture, bio, and banner image updated for the upcoming release?
- Are you taking advantage of the easy uploads? Uploading Demos and unreleased tracks?
- Did you use as many tags as possible when uploading your tracks?
- Are you reading and responding to the comments on your releases?
- Are you discovering, engaging with and following other artists?

# Youtube

**Core Goal: INSERT**

# Your YouTube Checklist: Actions to Take Before Your Release

- Is your pinned Youtube video your new release?
- Do you have content up on your channel other than your music video for your fans to watch?
- Are you posting content you've created for other platforms on your Youtube page? (Covers, Tik Tok compilations, etc.)
- Are you properly tagging and adding descriptions to all of your uploads?



# Best practices on Bandcamp for your release:

**Core Goal: The focus on this platform engage your fanbase to join your community, where they can stream your music, buy your merch, see you perform, all in one platform.**

## What is Bandcamp?

- Bandcamp is a music community providing services to artists and labels to share and earn money from their music, and for fans to discover and enjoy it.
- While they believe that streaming is an important technology, and it plays a role in how fans can access the music they buy on Bandcamp, Bandcamp uses a completely different business model to streaming platforms whereby fans buy more directly from artists and labels. They're also different from DSPs because fan purchases have the ability to go viral and create a snowball effect for your sales. Fans drive about 30% of sales on the site so taking advantage of Bandcamp's community features is key. Also, their editorial arm, the Bandcamp Daily, actively highlights music from all corners of the world and is a great driver of awareness and sales.
- Check out Bandcamp's [Artist Guide](#)

## Recommendations from the team at Bandcamp:

- Tag your profile and music accurately so that you show up in the correct fan searches, newsletters, and genre pages
- Make sure your fans know that they can support you on Bandcamp, and encourage them to follow you or subscribe to you
- Use the recommended album section on your profile page to recommend your peers and have them return the favor
- Design your page to look as unique as your music sounds, and don't forget the small details like a bio, photo, liner notes, and lyrics which all increase fan engagement
- Add physical merch - LPs, CDs, Cassettes, T-shirts, posters, tickets, etc. Over 50% of sales on Bandcamp are physical, and all sales on the site beget more sales
- Consider enabling a vinyl crowdfunding campaign to your upcoming digital release.
- For editorial coverage, pitch the Bandcamp Daily team (with Bandcamp links) at least 4-6 weeks in advance of your album release date.
- Make sure your smart links, press releases, your own site, and your social campaigns include links to your Bandcamp account
- Use the messaging feature on your community tab (or the app for artists) to directly message your fans. Send them photos, get them hyped up about your upcoming releases or shows, or just say hi.



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# Your Bandcamp Checklist: Actions to Take Before Your Release

# Spotify

**Core Goal: The focus on this platform build up as many followers as possible BEFORE your first release, then work to grow your audience by utilizing the tools offered on the platform**

**Remember the key to success, here is to:**

- Grow your followers
- Use **Spotify's** tools
- Understand metadata
- Stay tuned in to the landscape
- Look to other artists for inspiration
- Connect with other artists
- Think outside the box
- Continually educate yourself

**Engaging with your fans is key—[here is a link](#) with information you need in order to simplify the process.**

**Playlistsing:** Playlisting is a powerful way of showcasing who you are as an artist. Create custom playlists that showcase who you are as an artist, while also promoting yourself. Include your favorite tracks, your inspiration/ sound, and--most importantly--pin your music at the top so fans can see it first.



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# Your Spotify Checklist: Actions to Take Before Your Release

- Are you set up with Apple Music For Artists so you can manage your profile as well as see analytics on your releases?
- Are you set up with Spotify For Artists so you can manage your profile as well as pitch to editorial playlists?
- Link to sign up for Spotify for artists:  
<https://artists.spotify.com/claim>
- Is your profile set up with new pictures and an updated artist bio?
- Do you have custom playlists pinned on your artist page for fans to listen to?
- Did you reach out to everybody in your contacts to pre-save your new release?
- Did you ask everybody in your contacts to add the new release to one of their playlists once released?

# Apple Music

**Core Goal: INSERT**

Apple Music combines subscription-based music streaming with global radio-like programming. It's an all-you-can-consume service for subscribers: Pay a flat fee, and you unlock all of Apple Music's extensive 60 million-song library.

## *Benefits:*

1. *Artists can easily access the dashboard to see song plays, radio spins and purchases. (30 seconds of listening to your song on Apple Music counts as a play. Also, every time someone buys one of your songs/ albums, it is shown here.)*
- 2.

- Did you know that Shazam is now a part of Apple Music?

*Shazam is a platform that can listen to a track and find its name, album, and artist. It's very useful for finding out what song the DJ is playing or what song is playing on the radio or in a restaurant or store. Keeping count of Shazams for your tracks can give you feedback about how often your music gets played in public places and whether your tracks spark curiosity in listeners.*



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# Your Apple Music Checklist: Actions to Take Before Your Release

- Are you set up with Apple Music For Artists so you can manage your profile as well as see analytics on your releases?

\*Link below to sign up for Apple Music for Artists:

<https://artists.apple.com/>

\*And a guide to go with it:

<https://artists.apple.com/support/42-claim-your-account>

\*And another great guide:

<https://www.musicgateway.com/blog/how-to/apple-music-for-artists-the-how-to-guide-k>

- Is your profile set up with new pictures and an updated artist bio?
- Do you have custom playlists pinned on your artist page for fans to listen to?
- Did you reach out to everybody in your contacts to pre-save your new release?
- Did you ask everybody in your contacts to add the new release to one of their playlists once released?



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# Amazon

## **Core Goal: Collect rich research (e.g. collecting voice data).**

When you think of music streaming, Amazon Music isn't the first company that comes to mind. However, don't even think about sleep on this platform.

Amazon is one of the most data-driven companies of our time, so it would make sense Insights and research you can collection from Amazon are unique to any other platform. For example, Amazon offers data as topline and as granular as you can get (e.g. they let you know how your song has performed over 24 hours). It also offers insights that many other streaming platforms offer, e.g. listener location information.

Perhaps the most unique, standout feature of Amazon is the Alexa Daily Voice Index. This shows you how you are trending on Alexa, displaying the number of voice requests your music has received (this is grouped into track, album, song title, artist), and what exactly has been searched. This is offered by no other streaming service, and is valuable.

Some more information on Amazon:

1. Artist Follow Feature:
2. Amazon Programming
3. Amazon Originals
4. Today in Music
5. Song of the Day:

And what are some best practices:

1. **Install the Amazon Music Extension with Twitch.** This gives Prime Members and Amazon Music subscribers the ability to share their music with their viewers who are also Prime Members and Amazon Music subscribers.
- 2.



# Your Amazon Checklist: Actions to Take Before Your Release

- Did you share the story behind your song with your team so they can pitch it to editorial playlists?
- Did you share to your social media using Amazon music app?
- Is your profile set up for the new release?
- Are you set up on platforms like Twitch and interacting with your fanbase/followers regularly to keep them involved?
- Did you know that Amazon Music works together with Twitch?

# Instagram

**Core Goal: The focus on this platform is to create as much engagement as possible by engaging followers to comment, repost, share and save your posts.**

In order to sustain yourself and build your fanbase, above all you must stay authentic and true by constantly and consistently engaging with your followers. This means no buying followers or joining Instagram pods!

The benefit to this is twofold: you will deepen connections with your followers/ fans, and you will also help overcome Instagram's infamous, tricky algorithm, increasing your chances of being seen on the timeline.

Instagram is wildly successful because of the amount of users who are on their platform (that's how they get paid). The more you can get your followers engaged and on Instagram, the more the Instagram algorithm will reward you.

## **A few best practices:**

1. First and foremost, stay connected and close to your core followers/ fans you already have on IG. Like, share, and comment on their content. Follow them back. Set alerts for when they post so you can like/ comment.
2. Likewise, when these core followers comment/ like/ share your content, thank them, like their comments, comment back, etc. When they DM you, like or respond. The more you do this, the more Instagram recognizes your profile, and the more you deepen connections with your fans.
3. Reward your top followers with engagement. Turn on post notifications for your top followers, and like, comment, and share their content.
4. Be consistent with your content and post a picture or video at least once a day so your audience is always engaging. This will keep you top of mind for them, and for Instagram.
5. Use hashtags, but make sure they aren't too popular. Utilizing niche hashtags that relate to you allows you to appear on the Discovers section to like minded potential fans/ followers. Also, make sure to engage with content that can be found under that hashtag at least 7x a week with comments and likes. Here is a good website for hashtag generation: [displaypurposes.com](https://displaypurposes.com).



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# Instagram

## Best Practices, Continued:

6. The higher your photo/ video quality is, and the more interesting and punchy your caption is, the more likely people are to engage with it, so think thoughtfully about your content, and make sure your posts are as high quality as possible.
7. When creating captions, always try to incorporate a “CTA,” call to action, words that pose a question, call users to action, or cause your followers to react.
8. Use the business account version of Instagram for Instagram Insights. The information you’ll get will bring you closer to your followers than ever before (e.g. see when most of your followers are on IG).

## Instagram Hacks:

1. Use as many Instagram features as possible (e.g. polls, IGTV, Reels, etc.). Whenever Instagram rolls out a new feature, use that too. Instagram rewards those who uses their latest and greatest features! (Fun fact: Reels is usually most touted on IG’s Discover page.)
2. When someone comments on your content, pay it forward and go like or comment on one of their pictures. Their followers will see you engaging with them and visit your account.
3. Experiment with video. This will help your followers get more of a sense of who you are, while the Instagram algorithm rewards you
  - a. Go live once a week, even if it’s for 90 seconds.
  - b. Use Reels (see hack #1)
  - c. Make stories a core part of your strategy: stories are the most viewed/ popular feature on IG. So make them count!

## Instagram Don’ts

1. Buying followers. This is a huge NO. A bought follower is bit likely to amount to an engaged one. Plus, they’re not a true fan of your music, and the point is authenticity, right? The fact is that shortcuts will hurt you in the long run. It’s better to grow organically through quality engagement every time.
2. Posting too much/ not posting enough. Ideally, one photo and/ or a few story posts a day is a good frequency.
3. Not evaluating, and editing your strategy. Creating a fanbase on IG takes one part authenticity, and one part work. If your current strategy isn’t creating engagement for you,, tweak it and see what does. Test your [IG engagement here](#). If it’s low, make it a point to grow each week.



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# Your Instagram Checklist: Actions to Take Before Your Release

- Are your profile picture, bio, and website updated for the upcoming release?
- Have you made a hashtag specific to your release that you use on every post?
- Does every post encourage your followers to comment in some way?
- Did you create a post announcing the release date?
- Did you create a post 5 days, 3 days, and 1 day before the release encouraging your followers to presave?
- Are you utilizing the promotion tool to boost your Instagram posts?

# Facebook

Core Goal: INSERT

## Actions to take on each platform before your release:

The focus on this section is to create as much engagement as possible on each post.



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# **Your Facebook Checklist: Actions to Take Before Your Release**

- Are your profile picture, bio, and website updated for the upcoming release?
- Is your pinned post related to your upcoming release?
- Did you set up all of your Instagram posts to cross post to Facebook?
- Are you posting regularly on Facebook Stories?
- Are you utilizing the promotion tool to boost your Facebook posts?

## Twitter

**Core Goal:** Use trending news and conversation to establish a two-way connection between you and your fans and gain even more fans--before, during, and after release time.

### Actions to take on each platform before your release:

- Are your profile picture, bio, and website updated for the upcoming release?
- Is your pinned tweet related to your upcoming release?
- Did you use images or gifs whenever possible in your tweets?
- Did you interact with other accounts as much as possible?
- Did you react or respond to famous or popular tweets to increase your accounts exposure?
- Have you made a hashtag specific to your release that you use on every post regarding your release?
- Did you limit your posts to a maximum of two hashtags?



# Your Twitter Checklist: Actions to Take Before Your Release

# Triller

## Best Practices, % Triller:

1. Get a Triller profile and get verified on Triller, and let the world know you're on Triller
2. Create Triller videos and upload existing videos. Record brand new video, or upload clips from your camera roll.
3. Fill your profile up with content consistently, establishing a regular posting cadence. Don't forget to link your Instagram for identification!
4. Select song clips that are available on the Triller platform. Triller's Apple integration allows plays to count as streams. Make sure to integrate into your videos to support your stream count on your song.
5. Pre-release your music with Triller. Create a social media viral sensation by pre-releasing your music on Triller, [submit your music here](#), and don't forget to let your point of contact at Triller know so they can show love and support.
6. Repost fan videos for higher engagement. Repost your favorite fan videos to your own Twitter profile, Instagram, or other social media platforms
7. Share your Triller videos across all social platforms like Snapchat, YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, etc.

# **Your Triller Checklist: Actions to Take Before Your Release**

- Are your profile picture, bio, and website updated for the upcoming release?
- Are you posting 3 to 5 times a week mostly using your sound as the audio?
- Are your videos filmed in vertical and are they all well-lit?
- Did you use a maximum of 3 hashtags related to the video on each post?
- Did you like and comment on every video using your song as a sound?
- Did you incentivize your followers to use your sound in any way (dance, offer to repost, etc.)

# Your TikTok Checklist: Actions to Take Before Your Release

- Are your profile picture, bio, and website updated for the upcoming release?
- Are you posting 3 to 5 times a week mostly using your sound as the audio?
- Are your videos filmed in vertical and are they all well-lit?
- Did you use a maximum of 3 hashtags related to the video on each post?
- Did you like and comment on every video using your song as a sound
- Did you incentivize your followers to use your sound in any way (dance, offer to repost, etc.)

## Press

**Core Goal: Help shape your image, tell your story, and deepen both public awareness, understanding, and trust with your fans.**

Aside from social media and streaming platform promotion, another useful function to establish yourself as an artist and create deeper buzz/ awareness around your projects is **pitching and securing press in third party media**.

**Third party media can come in many forms.** This can be online/ traditional press as well as their respective social media accounts (this can be as big as [Complex](#) or [Rolling Stone](#) or as niche as [Clash Magazine](#) or [Line of Best Fit](#)), blogs (think [2DOPEBOYZ](#), [Hype Off Life](#), or [Brooklyn Vegan](#)), podcasts (think [Run That Back](#), [Rap Radar](#) or [No Jumper](#)), television, etc. Essentially, any form of media that is not your own social media.

Before you even begin pitching outlets about your release, it is important to have **creative assets ready** ideally two months in advance of release. Shoot and be ready to provide at least the following assets: hi-res artwork/ photos of yourself, a bio, and a press release (read more about [writing a press release HERE](#)) about the project you want the outlet to cover.

Once you have your assets, **it's time to make a media list**. We recommend doing a Google News Search of your sound (e.g. maybe you're a Latin Trap or Alternative R&B Artist) or similar artists in your genre, and seeing which journalists/ outlets are covering them. You can also use these search terms when searching out select outlets yourself (e.g. using the Complex websites' search function). Take note of the outlets, which journalist, and the tone of the articles/ journalistic style. Record 15-30 journalists and the outlets they work for based on this criteria, and get their emails (sometimes these emails can be found on the outlet itself, but sometimes an internet or LinkedIn search can work for this, too). It is important to be as specific and targeted as possible here. You don't want to be pitching a hip-hop journalist as a pop artist (unless there's an angle there).

**Which brings us to angles.** You'll need to develop **different, creative ways to explain or draw outlets in**. Some artist teams just send press releases out the day of release to their media list. While this is good too for awareness purposes and should be done (per the instructions in the writing a press release link), nothing beats a customized email pitch, especially when you are an up-and-coming artist.

## Press, Continued

Think back to the “Point of View” of your project and the “story you are trying to tell,” mentioned in the beginning of this guide. Draw from your original inspirations and ideas to create angles and unique stories around your project. Perhaps your angle is a unique sample you’ve used, a gut-wrenching love story that inspired your track, or a social issue you want to bring light through to your music. Whatever it is, use it to hook your audience (the journalist you’re pitching) in. [This link](#) has great details on how to pitch music editors and writers from a writer’s perspective. We know that you aren’t the writer in this case, but if you use this pitching approach when doing your own PR, and you are sure to set yourself apart from so many.

As you start to garner press, it’s essential to keep in mind that press outlets also have their own social media accounts. When securing coverage, you should ask if the interview/ profile/ etc. you secure can be posted on the social media accounts of the respective outlet you’re working with.

### **Important to Note:**

- If no one responds to your pitches, do not get discouraged. This is not indicative of your talent. With all the music out there, these folks sometimes get 100s of pitches a day. Whatever you do, do not let getting responses define you.
- If a journalist responds and declines to cover your project, kindly thank them for their time. Even a “no” answer is an opportunity to create a relationship with them/ keep communicating moving forward.
- In 2020, longform articles in traditional/ digital press is a lot less important than it once was when it comes to promotion, especially for Millennial and Gen-z audiences. This does not mean this kind of press is not valuable, though. This is an opportunity to showcase the uniqueness and depth about you and your work. Even an article on the smallest music blog can be found when a fan types your name into the search bar. Nothing is arbitrary!

# Your Press Checklist: Actions to Take Before Your Release



## Marketing/ Platform Management Tools

### **Gleam**

Gleam has a strong, steady free plan option that allows you to run unlimited contests with some limited features and user data.

### **ShortStack:**

Takes step further, allowing you to customize marketing mix. Various types of contests and landing pages, email, publishing, Instagram, Facebook, Data Management, and more. A business plan is \$948 a year, or \$99 per month.

### **Feature.fm**

As you have read, marketing a project (e.g. a single song) requires a lot of tasks that you need to keep track of simultaneously. Feature.fm is a smartlink service that centralizes your workflow through organizational features like: pre-saves and smart links (Dynamic landing pages that engage fans, collect data, and provide valuable behavioral insights), a music advertising suite (Music centric, self-serve ad platform that reaches fans where they listen to and discover music), audience collection (rich audience data about your fans that connects real people to music tastes, behaviors, and interests), and action pages (Dynamic landing pages to encourage fans to follow an artist, playlist, subscribe to YouTube channel and more).

### **Lnk.bio**

User-friendly and aesthetically pleasing linking service that allows your to embed songs, video playing right on your Lnk.bio page. It also provides you with geographic and traffic source analytics.

## Independent Organization to Note

### About A2IM:

A2IM is a 501(c)(6) not-for-profit trade organization headquartered in New York City that exists to support and strengthen the independent recorded music sector. Membership currently includes a broad coalition of more than 700 Independently-owned American music labels. A2IM represents these independently owned small and medium-sized enterprises' (SMEs) interests in the marketplace, in the media, on Capitol Hill, and as part of the global music community. In doing so, it supports a key segment of America's creative class that represents America's diverse musical cultural heritage. Billboard Magazine identified the Independent music label sector as 37.32 percent of the music industry's U.S. recorded music sales market in 2016 based on copyright ownership, making Independent labels collectively the largest music industry sector.

Learn more about [A2IM here](#). View membership benefits and sign up to join the organization here.

# A&R Admin Tips and Actions to take before release

## Mixing Songs

- Make sure you have all files, stems, versions of your recorded songs.
- Once your songs are mixed, make sure to get the main, acapella, and instrumental versions in WAV form to send to mastering.
- All three of those (Main, Acca, and Inst) should have their own ISRC codes created as well.

## ISRC Codes

- Create an ISRC code for EVERY song you plan to release. If the song has a remix, a music video, lyric video, pseudo video, instrumental, or acapella, they ALL MUST BE ASSIGNED AN ISRC CODE.
- What is an ISRC code? An ISRC code is the international identification system for sound recordings and music video recordings. Check out <http://www.usisrc.org>.

## Mastering Songs

- All songs, unless instructed, must be mastered before being put into distribution systems.
- When getting songs mastered you must send the FINAL WAV file of the song along with ISRC code and ask to have the mastered WAV, mp3 with ISRC code embed and the MFIT ("Mastered for iTunes") for the song or songs sent.
- Listen to final version of the song to make sure the sound and eq are correct.

## Storing Songs

- Make sure all songs are placed on a hard drive AND in a file system like Dropbox or BOX.
- Keep the songs on your computer as well for quick reference and in case they need to be found quickly.

## Producer Agreements

- Have all producer agreements fully executed by producers of each song.

## Sample Clearance

- Make sure to clear ALL samples, Interpolations, and Covers.

## Side Artist Agreements

- Have all side artist agreements fully executed by artists featured on each song.

## Split Sheets

- Gather all writers splits for each song and create split sheets for writers and producers to sign.
- Use the songwriter's and producer's legal names and publishing companies.
- Email out split sheets for all songwriters and producers to sign.
- Once signed, put fully executed copies of the split sheets in album folder on your hard drive and in your Dropbox.



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# A&R Admin Tips and Actions to take before release

## Song Credits

- Gather all credits for each song, this includes legal names of songwriters, producers and their publishing companies, PRO's, the name of the engineer who recorded the song, the name of the studio it was recorded at, and the city and state it was recorded in for all people who recorded on the song.
- Gather the name of the engineer who mixed the song, the name of the studio it was mixed at, and the city and state it was mixed in.
- Gather the name of the engineer who mastered the song, the name of the studio it was mastered at, and the city and state it was mastered in.

## Create Label Copy for Album

- Create a label copy for the album using all song credits by putting them in one document.
- Use sample and flow chart.
- Once the label copy is complete and looked over 100 times with a fine tooth comb, place in the album Dropbox.

## SoundExchange

- Complete the Soundexchange Repertoire submission form with song details and submit online on the Soundexchange website.

## Submitting songs to distributors

- Upload mastered WAV file of song to aggregator of your choice.
- Upload artwork making sure the artwork has the exact dimensions requested.
- Add ISRC code you created. Some distributors may insist on using their own ISRC code.

## Audio and Video into back end of Youtube

- Complete the spreadsheet given on Youtube once in the creator studio for audio and music video and submit to the uploader along with actual music video file or mp3 of song.
- Once the Validator has deemed everything valid, process the package.

## Soundcloud

- Upload the song and make public when instructed to.
- Set song to monetize (via tab when uploading each song) using the songwriter's name and ISRC code

## Song Lyrics

- Listen to all songs on the album and make sure all lyrics are typed out.
- Place all lyrics on your hard drive and in your album folder on dropbox
- Submit lyrics to genius.com and musixmatch.com.
- Submit to smaller lyric sites (lyrics.com, elyrics, lyricsondemand, etc)



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# A&R Admin Tips and Actions to take before release

## ASCAP or BMI Submissions

- Collect all splits for song, legal names, and publishing companies and submit to ASCAP or BMI.
- Submit on [ASCAP.com](http://ASCAP.com) or [BMI.com](http://BMI.com)

## Mediabase encoding

- Complete the form to submit all songs to mediabase for encoding - you must then also submit the actual mp3 via email to the email provided
- Click here to submit to MediaBase

**NEED MORE INFO HERE NO LINK**

## Servicing songs to Digiwaxx, Bottom Feeder and/or iDJPool

- Create a folder on Dropbox for these services, in the box put the Main version of the song, the clean version (if there is one), the a capella, the instrumental **ALL IN WAV format.**
- Send the artwork for the song and the Logo. Some might ask for the ISRC code, songwriters and their publishers and album info along with the artist's bio.
- Link to [Digiwaxx](#); Link to Bottom Feeder; Link to [iDJPool](#)

## Copyright Registration

- Submit all releases for Copyright
- To register a work, submit a completed application form, a non-returnable copy or copies of the work to be registered (if required), and payment. [www.copyright.gov](http://www.copyright.gov)
- There are companies you can pay to handle your copyright registrations if you choose not to do this yourself. One example is [www.cosynd.com](http://www.cosynd.com)
- Submit to [Music Reports](#) - Music Reports serves individuals and organizations seeking expertise and solutions in music rights licensing, administration, royalty accounting, and software development and hosting. Music Reports operates the largest registry of worldwide music rights and related business information.
- Submit to [Harry Fox Agency](#) - The Harry Fox Agency (HFA), established in 1927, has long been America's premiere licensing agent for issuing mechanical licenses

**Note:** Register Catalogue and new releases with both agencies to collect mechanical royalties from digital service providers to songwriters and music publishers. (Each collects from different avenues so you should register with both or you may be missing out on mechanical royalties from platforms.)

## Reading List

### Music Business Mastery

- All You Need To Know About The Music Business by Donald S. Passman
- This Business of Music by Sidney Shemel
- Real Artists Don't Starve by Jeff Goins

### Entrepreneurship

- Start With Why by Simon Sinek
- 5 Dysfunctions of a Team by Patrick Lencioni
- The Hard Thing About Hard Things by Ben Horowitz
- Purple Cow by Seth Godin

### Strategic Thinking

- *The Art of War* by Sun Tzu
- 

### Creative Guidance, Intelligence, and Power

- *Big Magic* by Elizabeth Gilbert
- *The Tipping Point* by Malcolm Gladwell
- *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho



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# New Release Best Practices Guide



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