The power of smaller playlists
In a world where the playlist is king, it is hardly surprising that getting on New Music Friday (NMF) has become the be-all and end-all of music streaming marketing, an opportunity to get your track in front of 8m people worldwide, including the vast majority of the Western music industry. And yet perhaps it shouldn’t be. Getting your song to 8m people isn’t so great if they immediately want to skip it – something that apparently happened to one global star’s new song earlier this year on New Music Friday – and some marketers have even started to warn managers and artists off their NMF addiction.

Tracks on there [NMF] have a very high skip rate,” says Amelie Bonvalot, a freelance digital business executive. “It’s nice to get on there, it’s a nice ego thing: the editors at Spotify are showing their support. But I think New Music Friday really isn’t what is moving the needle. Featuring on other, smaller playlists is a good way to work your way up and find your audience, especially if you are a new artist. Some people don’t understand that it can work against you and it can be difficult to convince them.”

With this in mind, Music Ally asked three playlist experts to point us in the direction of the best under-the-radar playlists that you should be pitching to in 2020.

**Chartmetric**

Chartmetric’s contribution comes in two parts: firstly, the Chartmetric team revealed what they see as the most interesting playlisting/curation “brands” at the moment; secondly, they used the new Chartmetric Playlist Journey tool to identify “small playlists which seem to have an uncanny ability to add tracks prior to the tracks appearing on some of the largest Spotify playlists”.

“The Playlist Journey tool is looking for tracks that land on small playlists before they are added to a large editorial playlist – and we specifically look at the number of days before a track is added to the larger playlist,” says Chaz Jenkins, Chartmetric’s chief commercial officer. “So, 90% of tracks currently on Baila Reggaeton were previously added to New Reggaeton Friday [2020] before they first appeared on Baila Reggaeton, in some instances by as much as 87 days in advance. And...
New Dance Music 2020 - New EDM 2020
- Electronica Now - Reddit EDM adds tracks as much as six months before they first appear on Mint.”

Chartmetric’s most interesting playlisting/curation brands

**Indiemono ➜ LINK**

**Biggest playlist:** Regeton [sic] 2020 Exitos del Verano 2020

**What it is:** An independent playlisting monster which works “to bring you the most special stuff we find, those hidden little gems that still can get you all hyped up and kept unnoticed all the time”. Indie/alternative music is its core, but its top playlist is a reggaeton hits round up, where artists perform in front of a background of one distinct colour. Its Spotify presence mirrors this: its main playlist features all the recordings from its YouTube channel in their exclusive glory, while Jade (smooth), Ruby (the Function), Amber (groove) and Cream (rhymes & beats) playlists showcase different types of music. Colors has its own submission platform.

**Colors ➜ LINK**

**Biggest playlist:** Colors - All Shows

171,489 followers

**What it is:** A “unique aesthetic music platform showcasing exceptional talent from all around the globe” best known for its hugely popular – 4.3m subscribers and 1bn total views – YouTube channel, where artists perform in front of a background of one distinct colour. Its Spotify presence mirrors this: its main playlist features all the recordings from its YouTube channel in their exclusive glory, while Jade (smooth), Ruby (the Function), Amber (groove) and Cream (rhymes & beats) playlists showcase different types of music. Colors has its own submission platform.

**MrSuicideSheep ➜ LINK**

**Biggest playlist:** MrSuicideSheepFavourites

315,749 followers

**What it is:** MrSuicideSheep is a popular Canadian YouTube channel that covers new, mostly electronic, music with a penchant for elaborate artwork and wavy electronica. It has 12.2m subscribers on YouTube and over 5.4bn global views. On Spotify, MrSuicideSheep operates nine playlists at the time of writing, with the MrSuicideSheepFavourites being far and away the most popular. Users can submit their music and artwork via a dedicated submission portal. MrSuicideSheep also runs the label Seeking Blue Records, home to the likes of Jaron, Echos and Dead Battery, while the online MrSuicideSheep store offers a tasteful range of merchandise.

**Simon Field ➜ LINK**

**Biggest playlist:** IBIZA 2020

336,656 followers

**What it is:** Simon Field is a DJ/producer from Norway. More interesting for our purposes, however, is the fact that Field launched what he claims was the first Ibiza playlist on Spotify, a playlist currently operating under the SEO-friendly name of “IBIZA 2020 Deep House Mix, Ocean Beach, Nassau Beach, Amnesia, Space Ibiza, Ushuaia, Chill House”, which has an impressive 337k followers. He also operates the more modest Ibiza Classics playlist, with 2,669 followers. You can only submit tracks to Field via his website – simonfield.no – which proudly proclaims: “Submission to Ibiza 2020 is not on Submithub, PlaylistPush or any other services.” To do so, you have to follow him on Spotify – which seems entirely logical – and he claims to listen to every submission he receives, even if he doesn’t give feedback.

**Songpickr ➜ LINK**

**Biggest playlist:** 2020Songpickr - Indie, Folk, Soul, Americana, Blues, Rock

128,772 followers

**What it is:** “Playlists curated with love. I try to find a warm, organic, timeless sound in today’s music,” according to founder Holger Christoph. His most popular playlist (2020Songpickr - Indie, Folk, Soul, Americana, Blues, Rock) gives you a good idea of what to expect. He also operates Jazz Café; Americana & Alternative Country - Songpickr Guide; and SXSW 2020 What We Missed This Year on Spotify; and Best Songs 2020 - Songpickr Guide (Americana, Folk, Singer-Songwriter, Indie, Soul, Blues) on Apple Music.
"All Songpickr activities are 100% independent," Christoph writes. "Music picks and featured artists reflect my personal taste (which is not for sale)." He recommends getting in touch via social media (Facebook/Instagram/Twitter) and submitting music via Submithub. His Submithub pages ask for English-language music exclusively, adding, "No commercial pop music, designed for the charts. No remixes, no live versions, no instrumentals. I prefer uplifting, positive songs vs sad songs."

La Belle Musique ➔ LINK
Biggest playlist: La Belle Musique/YouTube (Uploads Compilation) 51,465 followers
What it is: A French YouTube channel, record label and occasional promoter that likes "discovering... young talented artists and new fresh music that we like", principally in the realm of downtempo electronica. Their YouTube channel is massive, with 1.76m subscribers, 515m lifetime views and a penchant for vertical lyrics videos and their biggest Spotify playlist reflects the selection on YouTube, albeit with far fewer uploads. You can submit music by Submithub or music promotion service Soundicate Promotion Group. Other Spotify playlists include Best Of The Week (15,942 follows) and Summer Memories (7,182) and they also operate an official SoundCloud account with 166k followers.

See also...
Got Dembow ➔ LINK
Biggest playlist: Top Reggaeton [2020] 18,059 followers

What it is: Got Dembow wasn’t one of the curation brands identified by the Chartmetric team. But the brand’s New Reggaeton Friday [2020] playlist showed up twice in the reports of their Playlist Journey tool, which identifies the playlists that have a significant crossover with Spotify’s largest playlists. Got Dembow’s New Reggaeton Friday [2020] has a 90% crossover with Spotify’s Baila Reggaeton playlist (9.9m followers) and 68% crossover with ¡Viva Latino! (10.6m followers), which makes it of significant interest for anyone operating in those fields.

Got Dembow is a US operation that claims to be “the home of Reggaeton’s rising stars, unsigned hype and underground artists”. It operates a YouTube channel with 145k subscribers, SoundCloud and website (gotdembow.net) alongside its 22 Spotify playlists. Got Dembow says you can submit music via its website contact page although that doesn’t appear to work. Its email (gotdembowyt@gmail.com) might be a better bet.

Playlists from the Chartmetric Playlist Journey tool
In this exclusive research for Music Ally, Chartmetric used its Playlist Journey tool to identify playlists that have a significant crossover with some of Spotify’s largest playlists. "Whether these playlists influence Spotify playlists directly is almost impossible to say – and the only person who can answer that question is the editor of the Spotify playlist in question!" says Chartmetric’s Chaz Jenkins.

"What is more interesting is whether these playlists: 1) indirectly influence the Spotify playlist as part of wider promotion; or 2) accurately predict what will land on a playlist, and thereby be useful as an A&R trigger, or a source of investment insight."

Rap Caviar
25% crossover: Fire Emoji: Daily Hot New Rap and Hip Hop ➔ LINK
23% crossover: Iceberg Radio ➔ LINK
22% crossover: RapNieuwsTV ENG ➔ LINK

¡Viva Latino!
68% crossover: New Reggaeton Friday [2020] ➔ LINK
Baila Reggaeton
90% crossover: New Reggaeton Friday [2020] ➜ LINK
73% crossover: Trap Reggaeton ➜ LINK
63% crossover: Novedades Reggaetone 2020 ➜ LINK

Get Turnt
22% crossover: NEW MUSIC 2020: Trap Music/Club Hip Hop ➜ LINK

Hot Country
48% crossover: New Country 2020 Top Hits Weekly ➜ LINK
46% crossover: New Dance Music 2020 - New EDM 2020 - Electronica Now - Reddit EDM ➜ LINK

EDM Hits 2020 ➜ LINK
209,310 followers
What it is: A collection of the biggest EDM hits, curated by one Christoffer Brants, that is updated weekly. At the time of writing, the list is home to Kygo, MEDUZA and Martin Garrix, alongside lesser-known acts. Music should be submitted via Brants’ Instagram or Facebook. Brants also curates three more playlists on Spotify: Ibiza Lounge 2020 (8,340 followers), Avicii - TIM (30 followers) and Summer 2020 (42 followers).

Majestic Casual ➜ LINK
466,063 followers
What it is: Majestic Casual is one of the biggest channels for electronic music on YouTube, with 4.3m subscribers and 1.9bn lifetime views. It also has its own record label and sells a fairly charming range of merchandise. Its main Spotify playlist reflects – but doesn’t mimic – its YouTube playlist and is updated weekly. It goes big on Kaytranada and Mura Masa. You can submit music via a dedicated form. “Not everything that Majestic Casual adds to their YouTube playlist goes onto Spotify,” says Barker. “So when pitching to them, you should be having a cross-platform conversation.” In total, Majestic Casual runs 18 playlists on Spotify but none even come close to the popularity of its main playlist.

Label playlists
Barker also recommends label playlists. “It might be slightly counterintuitive, but actually many labels, especially dance labels like Anjunabeats, Armada and Ministry Of Sound operate in-house playlists that do have space for tracks that aren’t on their own labels,” he says. “Some have space on their main playlists and some operate separate ‘recommended’-style lists that are more specifically geared to other labels’ tracks – though not exclusively, obviously.”

Justin Barker, Slice Music
Barker is the founder of Slice Music, which offers streaming strategy consultancy for the music industry, as well as a former group director of streaming strategy at PIAS. He has worked with playlists for the best part of a decade. He focused on third-party playlists in his recommendations. “The way to look at third-party playlists is basically the same as looking at editorial playlists, in the sense that there won’t be any one playlist that will take everything to one huge streaming level,” he says. “It is a question of getting on as many of them as possible. When I was actively pitching to third-party playlists, we would be drawing up targets of third-party playlists that were 80+.”

He outlined two of the most interesting third-party playlists for Music Ally.

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As for Brants himself, not a great deal of public information exists: he lives in Gothenburg and works, if LinkedIn is to be believed, as an engineer on Gothenburg’s trams, after graduating from university in 2014.

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Amelie Bonvalot’s guide to the biggest under-the-radar playlists from Spotify and Apple Music
Amelie Bonvalot, now a freelance digital business executive, has a decade of experience in the digital music, including three years as senior director of digital accounts for Kobalt Music and, most recently, head of digital at Domino.

She listed the most important under-the-radar editorial playlists on Spotify and Apple Music by genre, focusing on UK lists but adding a number of interesting playlists from around the world.

“As a new artist you should be thinking about other territories,” she says.
Pop

Easy ➜ LINK
367,300 followers

New Pop Revolution ➜ LINK
166,761 followers
“They are very good and accept a lot of new artists. They have a lot fewer followers [than New Music Friday], but they do drive a decent amount of streams and usually they are also where editors watch.”

See also...
Off Pop (DE); Pop Edge (AU) Indie

Hot New Bands ➜ LINK
45,999 followers

The Other List ➜ LINK
114,393 followers

Transistor ➜ LINK
79,833 followers

See also...
Gegen den Strom (DE); Indie du Kender (DE); Melancolia Indie (MX); Indielandia (MX); Indie Shuffle (Singapore)

Dance/electronic

Altar ➜ LINK
209,350 followers

The Dance Tent ➜ LINK
27,851 followers
“The Dance Tent has pop, electronic, dance tracks that are usually working well around the festival season. So I don’t know what will happen to it this year...”

See also...
Top Shelf Electronic (AU) Urban / R&B / Soul

Altar

In the UK it can be quite hard to get access to these playlists but you have some in the Nordics that work well.

Certi (Nordics) ➜ LINK
136,232 followers

See also...
It’s Lit (NL); Vibes (NL); Soul N The City (NL) Mood playlists

A Perfect Day ➜ LINK
691,923 followers

The Most Beautiful Songs In The World ➜ LINK
2,124,474 followers

Running UK ➜ LINK
280,710 followers

Your Office Stereo ➜ LINK
168,813 followers

“You tend to stick in these playlists for a lot longer than you would in a genre or new release playlist. You can stay for up to six months. And you can see a spike in streams. If your work fits in the mood you can fit on the playlist. The only downside is that it is a more passive listen. It drives streams, but it’s not the best way to find an audience.”

See also...
Apero (FR); Weekend + Friends (AU)

Apple Music playlists

Loops (Electronic)
Untitled (Alternative)
Midnight City (Indie / Alternative)
Breaking Dance
Groove (Dance / Electronic)
Breaking Pop

In My Room (Pop / R&B)
Mellow Days (Pop)
The Plug (Urban)
The New Rock
Kebab On The Night Bus (Alternative/Rock)
We covered HypeAuditor in sandbox early last year, but some significant updates since then made us decide that’s it’s worth revisiting.

HypeAuditor has become a key tool in identifying fraudulent influencer accounts; now it has added a new influencer discovery tool, enabling those frequently working with influencers to promote artists/releases and to more easily find the right fit.

The platform says it has a database of 11m+ influencers across Instagram and YouTube, scraping information from publicly available accounts using AI. The intuitive interface will then allow you to start your influencer search and narrow down results using assorted filters.

The first filter allows users to include up to three categories for one search (e.g. makeup, travel, sports). In this first step, marketers can define which audience segments the influencer campaign will target and in what content types the artist and their music will be presented.

Keyword filters help to be more specific in that you can search for influencers based on what they actually write about instead of focusing on just their broad category. The keyword search scrapes the influencer’s bio, posts and hashtags to find results, with HypeAuditor’s business development manager Nadya Markovskaya recommending, “The more potential keywords, the better.”

With the next filters, you can define the location, gender, age and language of the influencer and you can also opt to say if your search should only surface accounts of people or brands. On top of that, there’s an audience feature that allows you to define demographics as well as the market coverage of the influencer in terms of the percentage of their audience that is based in a certain market. For example, you could say that a minimum of 10% of the influencer’s audience should be based in Germany.

Depending on which platform you want to focus on for the influencer search, you can then further define certain values that are specific to the influencer’s account on either Instagram or YouTube.

For Instagram, you can define so-called “quality filters”, such as the number of followers and the minimum engagement rate (ER). It should be noted that this follower filter doesn’t only serve to find the biggest and greatest of influencers; it also helps you to ensure you’ll find the right individual more easily, whether you’re looking for nano-, micro- or macro-influencers.

As the sector has evolved, many now understand that one post with huge reach and not much engagement or authenticity is actually worth less than working with a selection of smaller influencers to get volume, variety, better engagement and hitting different audiences.

When it comes to ER, HypeAuditor recommends that you only engage with influencers who have an ER of at least 2%. There are some successful influencers who boast ERs of 5%, but anything at 2% and above is good.
HypeAuditor’s Audience Quality Score (AQS) dissects how healthy an influencer’s account is, basing that assessment on the number of fake followers and engagement they have. This is where HypeAuditor is leveraging its existing features which helps to filter out all low-quality accounts.

Markovskaya provides some context here and explains that an account should at least achieve a score of 50/100 to even be considered. She, however, recommends working with influencers who have an AQS of at least 70/100 to avoid marketing to an audience of bots.

What’s more, you can define that you only want to see influencers whose last post was no more than, say, three days ago to ensure you’re only surfaced influencers who post actively, based on how active you’d like that to be.

Even more interesting is the feature to filter by an account’s audience growth rate within the last seven days. Let’s say you’ve decided to work together with a bunch of nano- or micro-influencers, this can help in finding those accounts that are growing the quickest and are therefore poised to become one of the top tastemakers – but before they are so big that they get offers from all sides and the shine of their authenticity is dulled.

Similarly, when looking for YouTube influencers, you can filter by number of subscribers, average views, average reactions, average comments, comments and reactions rate.

Once you’re happy with how you have set your filters, you’ll get to a results page with those accounts meeting your criteria. Here, HypeAuditor provides the contact info of the influencer – as long as this is publicly available information – so that you can start reaching out immediately. You can also filter these results by metrics and you’ll be directed to their respective Instagram or YouTube profile. You can then choose to add influencers you find interesting to lists that can be created on the platform.

HypeAuditor offers a one-month free trial for its discovery tools, providing users with the top three results rather than the full list of eligible influencers. The starter tier is priced at $299 a month (including the platform’s other tools) and comes with limited features. While you can filter by category, keywords, location, followers/subscribers and engagement rate, more advanced features such as AQS and growth rate are not included.

With the Pro account costing $599 a month for the full suite of HypeAuditor features, it becomes clear that this will be more accessible and useful for those music marketers who work with influencers on a larger scale.

Other solutions in the market include InData Labs, a platform that enables marketers to integrate its API into their existing platforms and search influencers across not only Instagram and YouTube but also Twitter, Twitch and TikTok.

For those who have a smaller budget to work with, Music Ally will feature a new startup (due to launch in a few weeks) in a future issue of sandbox. ;)}
CAMPAIGNS

BOOK SMARTS: DOLLY PARTON LAUNCHES BEDTIME STORIES YOUTUBE SERIES

In 1996, Dolly Parton set up the Imagination Library in Sevier County, Tennessee, where she grew up. Free books – paid for through charitable donations – were sent out to poorer families to encourage reading and to improve literacy.

Parton’s own father grew up illiterate and she wanted to give others the opportunities he was denied. “Because if you can read, you can educate yourself,” she told CNBC in 2016. The initiative spread across the US and arrived in the UK in 2007 and then Australia in 2013. By February 2018, Imagination Library had given out its 100 millionth free book.

Responding to the coronavirus crisis, Parton has taken the love of reading online by setting up Goodnight With Dolly on the Imagination Library’s YouTube channel. The first episode, lasting nine minutes, went out on 2nd April where she read The Little Engine That Could.

“Hello, I’m Dolly Parton – the book lady from the Imagination Library,” she begins, sitting on her bed, reading spectacles on and book in hand. As she reads, the relevant pages with the text and illustrations appear on screen so that children can read along.

This is not selling or marketing anything. Not that it should. It’s just another example of Parton’s altruism, philanthropy and all-round excellence.

Back in October 2017, she appeared on Bedtime Stories on CBeebies (the BBC’s children’s channel) where a vast array of famous faces – including Rosamund Pike, David Hasselhoff and Josh Homme from Queens Of The Stone Age (yes, really) – all took turns to read stories for the young viewers.

“Encouraging children to develop a love of books from an early age is very important to me,” she said at the time. “I hope my songs and stories inspire the CBeebies audience.”

Goodnight With Dolly takes that idea and runs with it as she is an effusive and engaging reader.

There are other prizes of Native Instruments software and hardware but, according to the competition, ”in the spirit of DIY creation, there will be no judging”. Instead, winners will be selected at random.

The latest projects from the digital marketing arena
CAMPAIGNS

ROCK ‘N’ TROLL: SPOTIFY’S HARMONISER FOR TROLLS WORLD TOUR

Trolls World Tour is the sequel to 2016’s Trolls movie and works as a multi-genre jukebox musical. The general plot is that two of the lead characters, Poppy and Branch, discover that there are Trolls in six different countries – each one devoted to a particular genre of music – and they have to unify to counter the evil Queen Barb and her father King Thrash (they are defined by hard rock, FYI) who want to turn all the Trolls into rock zombies.

To launch Trolls World Tour, Universal Pictures partnered with Spotify to create a Trolls-themed Harmoniser that riffs on the “music tribes” theme of the film. There are five genres to play around with – techno, pop, rock, funk and country – and by using the slider beside each one you are delivered a tailored playlist.

Still, you get pretty decent recommendations: alongside the inevitable burst of tracks from the OST, one attempt by Music Ally to create a playlist brought up ‘Disco Inferno’ by The Trammps, ‘Funky Jam’ by Primal Scream and ‘One More Time’ by Daft Punk.

The idea is presumably that users – well, kids mainly – will try this multiple times to see what different results they get, generating a multitude of playlists and also having chunks of the OST served up to them.

The film obviously cannot open in cinemas until lockdown in different countries ends, but it was made available for home streaming from 6th April as the emphasis shifted to digital marketing to do the heavy lifting for the film.

It doesn’t matter how much you slide up on some genres and down on others, you’ll always get a track by (or featuring) Justin Timberlake. And that, if you hadn’t already seen this coming, is because he is a major presence throughout the original soundtrack for the film.

Things, the argument goes, happen in threes. So following on from Dolly Parton and the Trolls World Tour examples this issue, Lego is the final piece in the child-centric music marketing triptych.

BLOCK-ROCKING BEATS: LEGO DUPLO CREATES SING-ALONG EDUCATION SERIES

Mixing well-known songs with brand new compositions, Lego Duplo has linked up with production music company West One Music Group and content creation platform Tongal to make a series of education sing-along videos for young children.

The songs will be grouped around three themes – Happy Birthday, Lullaby Songs and Nursery Rhymes – and 21 videos in total will be released in the coming months, starting on 9th April.

“The animations and songs are designed to ignite fun and imagination, as well as inspire creativity and engagement,” said Lego in a statement. “They are educational and the aim is to encourage children, parents and friends to connect and sing along together.”

The videos will be hosted on the Moonbug Kids’ YouTube. Its Cartoons & Kids Songs channel has 2.7m subscribers and its Cartoons & Nursery Rhymes channel has 1.7m subscribers. They will also be hosted on Lego’s official site.

“Our goal for the new, original songs was to ensure that they are as singalong-able and accessible as possible,” said Edwin Cox, the CEO of West One Music Group.

“To support this, multilingual production has been a key focus. This enables children to learn the songs not only in their own language but also in other languages such as German, Korean, Russian, Chinese and Polish.”

The videos uploaded so far include ‘Old MacDonald Had A Farm’, ‘Wheels On The Bus’, ‘Itsy Bitsy Spider’ and ‘Head, Shoulders, Knees & Toes’ (it goes full-on rave around the 1.45 mark which is nothing short of incredible). The audio for the songs will also go to DSPs from 24th April – assuming parents have not been driven to distraction from repeated plays by that stage.
Behind the Campaign

DARKOO

British songwriter and rapper Darkoo was discovered and signed at lightning speed after her track ‘Gangsta’ began to go viral. It started to gather momentum on Triller and that is where the intense early focus was. Michaela Browne, digital campaign manager at Virgin EMI Records UK, explains how ‘Gangsta’ was able to grow at its own speed on Triller before bleeding onto other platforms – most notably TikTok. She also talks about how influencers in markets like France, Nigeria, Ghana and the UK were woven into the campaign, where female and male remixes significantly extended the life of the track and how things were being set up for the next single, ‘Juicy’, to capitalise on what ‘Gangsta’ had achieved.

Signing Darkoo

Darkoo had a couple of releases prior to ‘Gangsta’. She was a fully independent artist and dropped ‘Gangsta’ with One Acen before she was signed. She did a dance move in the video and it really took off.

It came to our attention and she signed with us just a matter of weeks after the record had come out. We had jumped on it quickly, but it was very apparent that she had already engaged a really young audience.

There were videos online of people doing the dance and much of it was coming from Triller. We recognised that quite early on, even though she’d only posted once on her own account there.

Her first post on Triller was on 20th October and by 2nd November she had the second-biggest profile in the UK on the platform.

She hadn’t engaged on TikTok at all at this point. We decided to just keep it where it lived for that moment as there was some magic happening on Triller; she was clearly making massive waves on the platform.

A round 18th November was when the promotion started to kick in. We worked with Triller and got top placement across all the playlists and we got a homepage brick. Our first UGC video from Triller hit 1m views at that point on Twitter alone. We marketed our UGC dance from Triller in our advertising and social promotion to engage the fans – and by 21st November we were #1 in the UK on the platform.

Engaging influencers from multiple countries

It was great that we were able to show people that we had the stats, we had the videos and we had so much organic user-generated content across every platform with hundreds of thousands of views, as well as all of our success at that point on Triller. It was undeniable.

After ‘Gangsta’ hit #1 in the UK on Triller, we made the decision to then start to engage influencers. We sat down with the Triller team and put a list of creators together.

We made an active point to ensure a lot of the creators had a European, if not a fully international, profile. We had a lot of French influencers, US influencers, Nigerian influencers and Ghanaian influencers – as well as the ones from the UK. We ensured our take-off was synchronised with the
record being added to the top of playlists in the UK, Nigeria, Ghana, Ireland, South Africa and France for maximum impact. There were already signs of it being popular in those countries and Triller was able to feed those insights back to us. We wanted to maximise where the fires were already being lit.

Alongside the playlist additions in all our focus markets, we also had an app push notification in all those focus markets surpassing 35m people. Then 24 hours later, ‘Gangsta’ had a worldwide homepage challenge feature placement and a homepage brick. The playlists, notification, worldwide homepage placement and influencer activity was planned and set up to go all within two days of each other.

Within 24 hours, ‘Gangsta’ jumped from #39 to #28 on the platform globally. Darkoo was the #1 profile in the UK and we entered the global leader board at #95. Two weeks later, we were the #1 record on the platform globally, as well as seeing ‘Gangsta’ hit #4 in France, #2 in the UK and #4 in the US. Very shortly after, our challenge became the top challenge in the UK. We entered the new year with over 3.5m views on the challenge and gained well over 32k new followers on Instagram in just seven weeks.

Darkoo was engaging with everybody who posted on the dance challenge and was reposting people left, right and centre, making sure everybody felt involved. The UGC ripped from Triller that she has engaged by posting it on her socials alone has had over 6m views – with the biggest single video having over 2.5m views so far. That shows how important that UGC was on socials.

Throughout the campaign, we were utilising the assets that we had. We were using more UGC footage as our advertising assets and we were driving really high rates on our advertising. We noticed quite quickly that the DIY organic content was working perfectly.

It had a very big influence on our traditional marketing. It was our Spotify Canvas, it was in our advertising assets. It’s everywhere where we can drive people from traditional platforms to DSPs. We made it as visually prominent as possible on those platforms and joined all the dots.

Keeping the ‘Gangsta’ momentum going

We did two remixes. One was a female remix and one was a male remix. They both dropped on the same day – 27th December.

The female remix featured Br3nya and Ms Banks. Darkoo definitely wanted a strong female remix. The male remix featured Davido, SL and Tion Wayne.

She did new videos for each of the remixes. Visually the videos tie into each other: where one leaves off, the other one picks up.

Both remixes featured a wealth of incredible artists. Darkoo really wanted to make sure that these artists were authentic to the record. She was really involved in the process.

The remixes are very different from each other. On the female remix, Br3nya is super melodic and Ms Banks has a glamorous style to her. On the male remix, there’s Davido, there’s SL, who’s typically a drill artist, and there’s Tion Wayne.

It was amazing that Darkoo was able to create two unique remixes for the record
that visually told a story. The audience was also able to engage with both of them for different reasons. We played up to it all, asking fans to vote for the one they liked better and there was a “girls versus boys” aspect to some of the marketing around it. The videos dropped within a few hours of each other.

We wanted the audience to engage with both videos separately and understand that they each served different purposes – not just being Remix 1 and Remix 2. That was a massive turning point for us in terms of the chart position. We jumped 60+ positions up the chart after the release of those two remixes.

There was obviously a lot of traditional promo as well. There was some elite plugging being done at radio, she was doing a lot of radio promo and carefully selected press, as well as getting extremely strong streaming support. The whole team felt in sync and worked really collaboratively, with every element being integral.

Another massive viral moment for her was going out on other people’s shows and performing ‘Gangsta’. She went out on AfroNation in Nigeria with Tion Wayne to perform ‘Gangsta’ and the entire crowd were singing it back word for word. That was a really important piece of UGC that we used in our advertising and in our plugging.

Everything was lining up perfectly for her at the time. We had a massive viral record and we were working hard on continuing to push it further and further until we got it to a global scale.

The track also started to cross into TikTok. We had over 35,000 videos made to the non-official record, so we switched that over and then we started promoting it. In January, we engaged the teams and we launched our first in-app promotion with a ‘Gangsta’ banner. Up until that moment, we were keeping an eye on it and waiting for it to happen organically – and it did.

We were at well over 45,000 videos after the first week of promotion. We were still using that content on social media to drive more UGC.

When we look at the kind of UGC that’s being made on TikTok, it’s a different kind of audience. It happened for a long time very organically, but then we pushed the button and engaged the team to see how far we could go with it on TikTok.

On the tail end of ‘Gangsta’, we saw some sudden traction in France. Although we were internally planning ‘Juicy’, we didn’t ignore it and planned some in-app promotion specifically in France. We reacted and secured a #1 homepage brick placement, a #1 playlist placement and a push notification that went out to all app users in France. In a matter of days, ‘Gangsta’ was #2 on the Spotify viral chart in France.

Following ‘Gangsta’ up with ‘Juicy’

We began by teasing ‘Juicy’ on Triller – not as an official audio piece, but rather as a Triller video featuring the first clip of the song. We had also locked in a massive worldwide promotion with Triller surrounding that record. We were continuing to work with ‘Gangsta’ until we swapped the two records over and ‘Juicy’ officially came out.

We already knew that a viral social media audience was going to be really important for her as an artist. We were confident enough to let it happen organically. ‘Gangsta’ was still having a bit of a moment on TikTok and it was catching up there. But we didn’t push it; we just let it happen.

Triller is where Darkoo is. She has a massive profile there. It felt like Triller was the place for our main campaign for ‘Juicy’. We weren’t pushing Darkoo [on TikTok] at that point because we figured things would happen naturally if they were going to happen at all. She will amplify it and participate as and when it feels natural to her. We all agreed not to do anything contrived as we knew it wouldn’t connect at all with her audience.

We launched ‘Juicy’ with a homepage banner on Triller across the whole of the UK and Ireland and we did a push notification across all of the UK and Ireland on launch day. We had full Triller playlist additions. On launch, the ‘Juicy’ Triller video on Darkoo’s account was the third most popular video in the UK and was on nearly 200k views. On top of this, Darkoo was the #1 profile in the UK whilst also being in the top 5 in Ireland and Nigeria. During our ‘Juicy’ campaign, we peaked at #21 record globally on the platform. It felt like it connected a lot right off the bat. We kept marketing on the platform.
While still in the early days of the campaign, we launched a lot of influencer activity on Triller. Some of it was paid posting, but it was mainly much more organic.

It was specifically on Triller as that’s where we felt like we were getting a lot of engagement and connection. It then naturally bled into Instagram and Twitter. ‘Juicy’ is about Eva [Apio], who is a supermodel and contains the lyrics “brown skin like Eva”. She is really good friends with Darkoo and was pushing it on her platform. We also had lots of Triller and Instagram influencers following suit – all carefully selected talent. All of our efforts had switched to ‘Juicy’ as our next big record – but we did still see that ‘Gangsta’ continues to grow on the platform.

Towards the end of ‘Gangsta’, we were not spending as much on it because we were getting ready for the next record. That meant a lot of the tail end of ‘Gangsta’ was really organic. We never asked people to stop making content or started taking down content. It just naturally switched over.

The minute Darkoo announced that she had a new record and she started teasing it in the same way that she was teasing ‘Gangsta’, her fans just naturally got really excited for it. It came quite quickly after ‘Gangsta’; it was just the perfect timing.

Leading into ‘Juicy’, Darkoo started her own profile on TikTok, so we were messaging outside of Triller and she was making content on both platforms. One of our biggest learnings from ‘Gangsta’ was just how well that super-organic, authentic, artist-led content performs – and how we just needed to continue to encourage that and collectively be ready to react effectively.

Her posting and reposting so many people making content using her music is just encouraging even more people to make content to her music. She’s lit this fire. The more and more we were reacting, posting and the more and more we were pushing the right content, it felt hotter and hotter as a record.

We have got some new music coming – but there’s nothing that’s going to be announced or teased imminently. We are still working with ‘Juicy’ and it’s still a massive, growing record for her.

Hardy Caprio, who’s a featured artist on the record, has also just dropped his own record [‘XYZ’]. No doubt, we’ll find that the new record is going to take people back and remind people of ‘Juicy’ as well.

Darkoo is pretty unstoppable. She’s just got this magic that you can’t invent in the boardroom. You can’t invent it in an A&R meeting. She just comes with it. The stats speak for themselves in how well it can act as a part of her fabric. ‘Juicy’ has completely cemented her position in her own lane. ;)

WANT TO FEATURE IN BEHIND THE CAMPAIGN?
Marketing people: do you have a campaign you are working on that you would like to see featured in Behind The Campaign in a future edition of sandbox? If so, send a brief synopsis of it to Eamonn Forde for consideration and your work (and your words) could appear here.

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