

PR 101

PR Tips



**NEW ZEALAND
MUSIC COMMISSION**
TE REO REKA O AOTEAROA

Publicity and promotions are an important part of any release campaign or tour. Getting media to help promote your music allows you to reach a wider audience, which can be invaluable to both emerging and established artists. But if your budget is tight and it's not possible to pay professionals to do your PR, there are things that you can do yourself.



Create an EPK

An EPK is an electronic press kit or a media kit. This is all of your assets laid out in one document or one file in a neat and tidy fashion, making the information and files easily accessible too media.

These can take a number of forms, but the most common are:

- A one to two-page document, most commonly a PDF file (with hyperlinks embedded). This should contain information that is relevant to your release, a short bio, artwork, etc. The idea is that you want everything to be clear and concise on one or two pages so that the recipient can easily and quickly find what they want. If you are sending this to radio or anyone who will need files, such as MP3 files or large hi-res promo pics, remember to include download links. Depending on the size of the document, you can either attach it to your email, with a short note explaining this to the recipient. Or if it is a large file you may need to send it as a download link, this can be done via We Transfer, Dropbox or Google Drive. For submissions to iHeartCountry NZ, you can submit tracks via iheartcountry.co.nz/musicsubmissions.
- A folder (for example Google Drive or Dropbox) with all of your assets clearly labelled. Send the link via email with a short note explaining what the recipient will find when clicking on the link.

Here is a check list of the assets media often require:

- MP3 and/or WAV file of the master (if sending to radio).
- Private listening link (if sending to print/online blog).
- Bio (sometimes it can be helpful to send a short bio and a longer one with more detail).
- Hi-res promo pics, which you are happy for the outlet to use. Please indicate clearly if there are any credits the outlet needs to mention.
- Single/album artwork and/or tour artwork.
- One-page press release. If not a formally written release, then notes about your song/album/tour and who you are (see below).

It is important that you have everything labelled correctly and clearly. Keep it simple and concise. Don't bombard journalists or editors with too much information. Remember that the recipient probably receives dozens of emails and files every day, so you want to make this as simple for them as possible. Make sure you keep your EPK and/or media kit up to date.

Write a press release or notes on your song/ep/album/tour:

A press release is your way of letting the media know what you're up to. Many media will often share well written press releases just as they are, or they will take key information from them and use them in articles or to help formulate questions for interviews. If you are unable to pay for a PR campaign, you can write your own press releases and send them directly to media. Keep in mind the following:

- Avoid flowery or complicated language - keep it simple.
- Write a catchy and short heading as this is often what makes a person decide whether or not to open an email.
- The intro should clearly state what the press release is about.
- You should include the artist/band's name, where the artist is from, the genre or style of their music and the name of the song/album.
- If you are promoting a tour, then the dates of the tour should be within the first couple of sentences and clearly stated.
- Always include a link to the song/record you are promoting. This could be a hyperlink to a smart URL, which has the song on different formats, or to the private Soundcloud link. You should also include links to ticketing sites (if promoting a show/tour).
- Always test and double check your links before you send the press release.
- It's helpful to include some info about the song - describe its sound, the feeling it evokes. This helps those who don't have a lot of time to listen.
- Quotes from the artist are also helpful as it means those who don't have time to do an interview can use a personal statement in their coverage.
- Are there any interesting snippets of information or anecdotes you feel you need to share with the journalist? This is sometimes enough to pique interest.
- You can send your bio as a separate attachment, or you can cut and paste key info from the bio into the body of the press release.
- It can help to bold key words throughout the press release. This includes the artist's name, the song/record title, dates etc.
- Include a promo pic at the top of the press release. Choose one that will grab the recipient's attention.
- Include hyperlinks to your socials at the bottom of the press release. Make it as easy as possible for people to find you.

Deciding who to send your press release to:

The aim of a press release is to promote your music and let media know the key information, such as name of song/EP/album/tour, date of release, date of show, tour dates and so on. Press releases are also what many journalists/producers then use to formulate their question lines, should they request an interview with you. Many smaller media outlets will cut and paste, then share your press release as it was written – so grammar, spelling and so on is important.

Tips:

- Do your research! Make sure you are targeting an outlet that fits the vibe of your music. If you make country music, then don't target rock radio stations. Make a list of all the radio stations, TV channels, blogs, magazines etc, which you feel your music is suited to, then work through the list.
- You'll find most email addresses online, but another way to find contacts is to search for other articles and find the details for specific journalists or writers. This is often a good tactic if you know that the journalist likes music similar to the music you make.
- You can send your press release to generic email addresses but where you can it's helpful to find out the name of the person and their role, so that you can email them directly, as you stand a better chance of your email being read.
- You could try reaching out to specific people via social media with a friendly note to let them know you are sending them information on your upcoming release. If they answer, make sure you get their personal email address and follow up ASAP.
- Note that most big media networks have generic news emails and you can send press releases here. Chances are it will be among 100s of emails sent that hour, but if you have a catchy heading, your email may end up in the right hands.
- You can either send a press release as an attached Word file, with a short and friendly personal note in the main body of the email, or you can embed the press release into an email, which is what most PR firms do (followed up later by a specific pitch).

What next?

All campaigns vary in length, depending on what you are promoting. There are no hard and fast rules as to when you should carry out each task. But once you have compiled your assets and you have written the press release, you should also write up a simple media plan, which outlines the steps you are taking on the campaign. Share this with your label/distributor, as this will help with their pitch to Digital Service Providers, such as iHeartCountry NZ and other digital audio platforms. DSPs like to know that you have a solid strategy in place supporting the releases. This also goes for promoters and festival bookers.

Suggested timeline for a PR campaign:

- **ASSETS:** Finalise all assets and write PR, compile one-pager, EPK etc (this should ideally be done 4-6 weeks in advance of release. Often distributors want this information 4-6 weeks before release for pitching purposes).
- **SINGLES:** For single releases it can be a fine balancing act as to when to approach radio – too much in advance means you could be forgotten come release day; too late and you may miss out opportunities such as an on-air premiere. But as a rule of thumb, it's advisable to let the appropriate radio programmers know around 2-4 weeks in advance of the song being released, as this will help them to plan (should they be interested in premiering or playing the song). Send an embargoed PR (clearly state at the top of the PR that this information is not to be shared until the date you stipulate). You can also send them a private Soundcloud link to hear the song. If they are interested, they will request the WAV file. Ensure this file is clearly labelled and that the radio programmer has the correct release date. It is fine to wait until release day, or a few days straight after, to send your press release to other media such as blogs/magazines/newspapers, unless you want to tease the release (see below for suggestions).
- **EP/ALBUMS:** If your single is part of a bigger EP or album campaign, then it is up to you as to how much information you want to reveal about the EP/album. This can often be teased in the press release to help build hype and as you progress through the campaign, and with each single, you can start to trickle out more information. You're your release schedule clear in your media plan, as this will be helpful for your distributor and keep you on track too. If you have to move dates at any point, just keep all in your team across changes.
- If you are releasing an EP or an album as is (without singles leading up to it) then it is definitely a good idea to let media know it's coming. You'll need to set up interviews in advance – see advice in Long Leads below.
- **LONG LEADS:** If you are wanting to promote a bigger body of work, it's advisable to build up to more substantial pieces, such as feature articles in newspapers and magazines, to coincide

with the release. Often bigger outlets will want a story that ties in with an EP or an album. These are often what are referred to as 'long-leads', so you would want to make your pitch to them at 2-6 weeks out from release, as this will allow time for them to set up an interview/photos shoot/live sessions etc

- **TOURS/SHOWS:** If you are promoting a tour, a week or a bit longer is normally enough time to let media know (unless the tour dates are soon in which cases more notice is good). If you are hoping to get a media partner, like iHeartCountry NZ on-board, start conversations at least 4 weeks out from announcement.
- **TEASING A RELEASE:** If you are already an established artist/band with a decent profile, you may want to send out a PR which announces the fact that you are about to release new music. Blogs are likely to share this, helping to generate interest in the upcoming releases. This can be followed up with a media alert (shorter PR with all key info and links to track/record) on release day or within several days after.
- If you are a newer act and still growing your profile, it's fine to wait until the release to send out the PR to blogs/print. But if you know of specific blogs or sites who are interested in you, there's no harm in sending them an embargoed PR a week or two before. With contacting radio, see suggestion above.

To summarise:

4-6 weeks – compile all assets and share with distributor/label

4 weeks (at least) – if looking for a media partner to support a tour or show

2-6 weeks – start pitching 'long leads' with print/online publications, TV (allows time to set up interviews/photo shoots) and live sessions (send media kit with embargoed press release)

2-4 weeks – start conversations with radio if you are releasing a single (send private Soundcloud link and embargoed PR)

Release day – PR sent to media you have identified as suitable for your release with all live links to music.