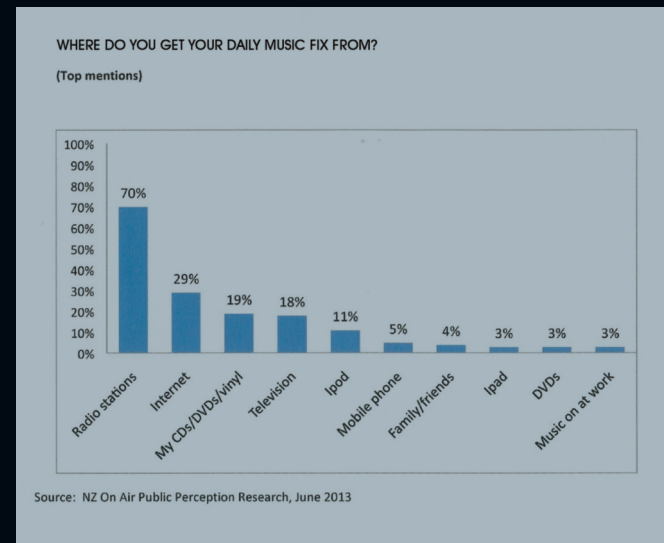




HOW TO... HELP GET YOUR SONG PLAYED ON THE RADIO

Radio airplay remains a vitally important vehicle to get exposure for a music artist. Even in the age of the all-pervasive internet and the proliferation of all kinds of media, most New Zealanders still use radio every week and still get most of their new music from the good old wireless.



So getting your song out there and heard by the masses (or at least a niche sub-set of the masses) is an effective way to gain precious exposure for your music. To get your song on the airwaves, you need to get your music in front of the people who set the playlists – the Programme Directors, the Music Directors, the specialist show hosts and the like. Each radio station has one or more ‘gate-keepers’ who decide what content will be put to air.

There are many different types of radio outlets in New Zealand, more than you might expect. In fact, NZ has the most radio stations per capita in the world. So when seeking an airing for your music, it pays to do a bit of research and concentrate your energies on stations and formats where your music will potentially be appreciated. If you don't focus your energies and resources like this, then you could be sending out literally hundreds of CDs to all kinds of radio stations, when it may only be a dozen that are required for a select few.

To hit the biggest mass of audience you'll be looking at commercial radio stations. Some of the big music networks have hundreds of thousands of listeners in NZ, so getting your song on one of those stations will obviously get your music a lot of exposure. But competition for playlist spots is very intense, and you are competing with hit music from around the world, not just from other NZ artists.

Most of the big commercial networks do also have NZ music features that are funded by NZ On Air. These are used as a way to introduce new NZ artists and songs to radio. Examples of these features include The Word on ZM, The Slab on The Edge, As Kiwi As on Classic Hits, Backyard Beats on Mai FM, Off The Record on The Rock, Wired on More FM, Fresh Produce on Flava, Locals Only on Hauraki and The Jump on George.

If you don't have a record company or promotions company to work your song at radio for you and you are going it alone, here are some basic tips about how to improve your chances of getting radio play....

SOME BASICS

→ SEND ONE SONG ONLY

Keep the focus of your project simple. Radio programmers are not your A&R person so they don't want to go through a list of songs to tell you which one they like. They generally only want to hear from you with your one focus track. That is the one track that you're concentrating on. This should be your RADIO SINGLE, and if you're making a music video, it should also be the track in the video. The music video is the marketing tool of a single release, so you have a greater chance of impacting at radio if you have the exposure of a video.

The reality is radio programmers are looking for the strongest, catchiest and most memorable songs available – you want your song to stick in their minds. Getting airplay is competitive as each programme director receives between 10 - 30 songs a week from multi-national record companies, local artists, NZ On Air and other sources, and they simply do not have the time to listen to them all ... so make your one song count!

→ PRODUCTION QUALITY

Do not send a radio station your demo CD. The song you send should be a mixed and mastered CD of the best sound quality you can achieve on your budget.

If your song is dismissed because of poor recording quality, you may have missed your chance with a good song. If they think the recording quality lets the song down it may not get played again.

→ RESEARCH YOUR RADIO STATIONS

Do a little research into the stations you are sending your single to. If you can, listen to the stations that you are sending the song to so you know what kind of material they are playing. Find out who chooses the music (and how to spell their name correctly!) and send them a CD or online link of your song.

Make sure you are aware of the format of the radio station. There's no point in sending a full-on Rock song to The Breeze or George FM. If you need to, ring the receptionist at out of town radio stations and ask them about the format of the station.

Targeting your song at particular formats is a good way to start, it might mean just sending out a few CDs (eg. to The Rock, Bayrock etc) rather than dozens. Then later on, if the song gets airplay there, you can start sending out a few more.

→ SONG LENGTH

Beware of sending long drawn-out songs to a radio station - most radio stations do not usually play long songs. Most radio singles are anywhere from 3 – 4 minutes in duration.

If you do have a really long song that you want to release as a single, make a radio edit and keep your full length version for the EP or album! Also watch out for long intros - they can be a major put-off to commercial radio. Radio Programmers listen like their audiences, they know very quickly if they'll connect, be grabbed by or “like” your song. If the song gets to 60 seconds before the vocals start or something compelling grabs them, there's a chance it won't last any longer on the programmer's CD player let alone make it to the airwaves.

→ SONG INFO AND BIOS

If you can afford to, make an appealing CD cover or promotional image. This is the first thing that is going to 'sell' your image to a radio programmer, and hopefully entice them to open the CD cover or online link and listen to it. Make sure everything is clearly labelled with your artist name and song title.

Imaging and band logos for new artists can be really important, and your presentation efforts are helpful. Some very brief facts about the band or a web address within the CD sleeve could also be handy. Large bios and folders will invariably get separated from the CD.

If you are sending a bio, make it concise and to the point. One page maximum, including photo if possible. You can have a longer bio on file if any media want more information on the band. But in most cases you are dealing with extremely busy people who don't have a lot of time to sit around reading long bios.

→ ONLINE PRESENCE

If you are referencing your website or social media on your promo material for your single, make sure all details are up to date and that the site is looking at its best. It's entirely pointless putting a website address on your promo material for a new single that is carrying old tour dates or release information. Social media interaction is important because interested radio programmers will have a look to get an idea of the size and type of fanbase you have.

→ RELATIONSHIPS WITH RADIO

When approaching Programme Directors and Music Directors after sending your song, don't be overly pushy! These are very busy people who have to deal with lots of people about music each week. Most of them cannot cope with hearing from 20 artists/managers a week who they do not know.

For most programmers, selecting the music is only a small proportion of their job responsibilities. Invariably, they can only give attention to listening to music for a couple of hours a week to listen to new songs. Be careful of contacting a radio programmer too often and becoming a nuisance.

If you have friends or contacts in radio they could encourage the programmer to at least hear the song and tell them what they think of it. Servicing a copy of the single directly to the night DJ who can possibly spot-play the song may help you. But remember, most DJs on the big commercial networks are not generally allowed to play songs that are not on the playlist.

→ BE PATIENT

Songs can take a long time to work at radio. This can be true for established artists presented by major record companies or promo companies, as well as new artists presented independently or by NZ On Air. If a song hasn't been added to playlist after a month it doesn't mean you need to hit the radio station with another song. Some songs take two months or more on the listening pile before they get a chance on the air.

Remember - commercial radio wants to play radio hits. That is exactly what they are looking for. Be patient, be focused, be polite and use any opportunity you can to make a positive impact about your band and song.

APPROACHING SPECIALIST, ALTERNATIVE AND NON-COMMERCIAL RADIO

Alongside the big commercial radio stations and networks there are many other possible radio airplay outlets for your music. Again, it is worth doing your research, and often jumping online for half an hour will prove time well-spent in finding out who is best to approach with your music.

RADIO NZ NATIONAL

Radio NZ National has a number of specialist music programmes such as Homegrown, Music 101, The Sampler and The Music Mix, as well as general music programming.

For more information about sending your song to Radio NZ National, see www.radionz.co.nz/national/music/music-contact

ALT RADIO STATIONS

There are a number of alternative music radio stations in New Zealand. The main ones are the five stations that were part of the original Student Radio Network or the bnet - 95bFM in Auckland, Radio Control in Palmerston North, Radio Active 89FM in Wellington, RDU 98.5FM in Christchurch, and Radio One in Dunedin.

Contact details for each station can be found on their individual websites :

www.95bfm.co.nz
www.radiocontrol.org.nz
www.radioactive.co.nz
www.rdu.org.nz
www.r1.co.nz

Don't forget The Most FM in New Plymouth and if you are making hip hop, reggae, funk and soul, there is Base FM which is based in Auckland but broadcasts on the Freeview platform as well:

www.basefm.co.nz
www.mostfm.co.nz

KIWI FM

Kiwi FM is a NZ music focused radio network that broadcasts in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch and streams from www.kiwifm.co.nz. Kiwi plays 60% New Zealand music but as well as the general music playlist, Kiwi FM has a number of specialist shows including Songs From The Backyard, The Lounge, High Noon Tea, Voices From The Wilderness and the NZ Electronica Show and Kiwi Metal Bar.

For more information on Kiwi FM, see their website www.kiwifm.co.nz
 Music submission guidelines are at www.kiwifm.co.nz/Music.aspx

IWI RADIO

There are a number of iwi radio stations around NZ who play music predominantly by Maori artists. To get in touch with any of the iwi stations around the country you can find their contact details via the Te Mangai Paho website www.tmp.govt.nz/radioinfo.html