The Artist's Guide to Chart Reporting

single

Everything you need to know about reporting your music to the top global charts.

Introduction

Chart reporting refers to the process of tracking and analyzing the popularity of songs and albums across various platforms and channels, such as radio, streaming services, and sales.

Chart reporting is a crucial aspect of the music industry that helps artists and industry professionals stay on top of the latest trends and successes in the industry.

As an artist, chart reporting provides valuable insights into the success of your music, as well as the strategies and tactics needed to further promote and market your work. By monitoring charts and analyzing trends, you can identify areas of growth, understand your target audience, and make informed decisions on your marketing and promotional efforts.

In this guide, we'll take a comprehensive look at chart reporting in music and explore its importance. We'll cover everything from the basics of chart reporting and the different types of charts available, to the strategies and tools needed to interpret and analyze chart data.

Whether you're a new artist looking to understand the industry or an established artist looking to improve your marketing efforts, this guide will provide you with the knowledge and insights needed to succeed in today's competitive music industry.

> **Understanding Music Charts**

> **How to Report to Music Charts**

> **Tips for Maximizing Chart Performance**

> **Best Practices for Music Chart Reporting**

> **Immediate steps to get started**

Understanding Music Charts

Music charts are a key tool in the music industry for tracking the popularity of songs and albums. They provide valuable information to record labels, radio stations, concert promoters, and other music industry professionals.

Types of Music Charts

There are many different types of music charts, each tracking different aspects of music popularity. Some of the most common types of music charts include:

- **Top 40/Hot 100**: This is perhaps the most well-known type of chart, tracking the most popular songs in a given week based on factors such as radio airplay, digital downloads, and streaming.

- **Album Charts**: Track the popularity of albums based on sales or streams.

- **Genre Charts**: Track the popularity of specific genres of music, such as rock, country, or hip-hop.

- **International Charts**: Some charts track the popularity of music in specific countries or regions, such as the UK or Europe.

While streaming services like Spotify have their own charts based on user data, these bigger charts are typically compiled by music industry organizations, such as Billboard, Aria, and the Official Charts Company.
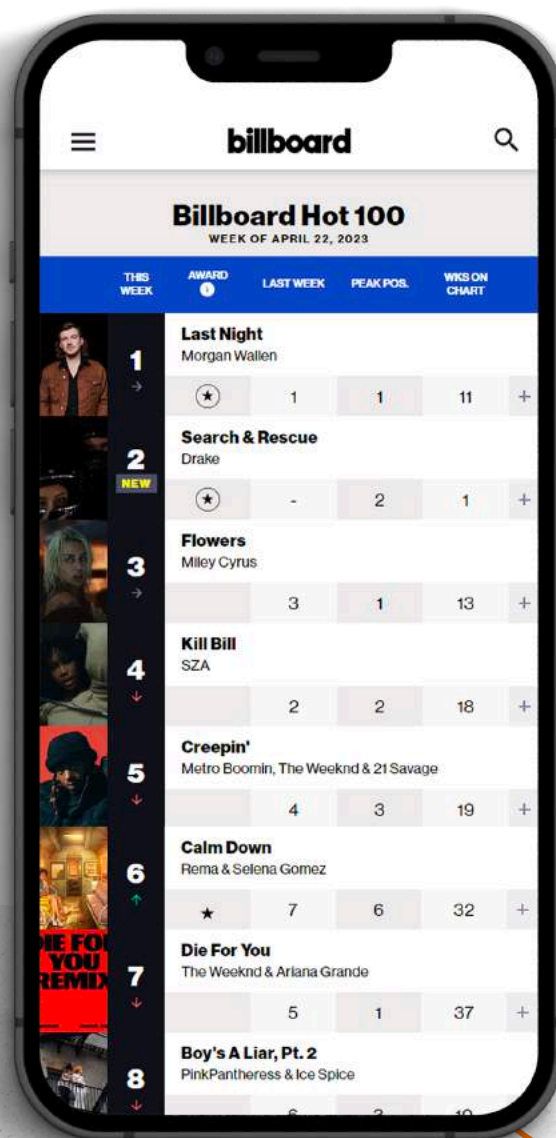
How Charts are Compiled

Charts are compiled by data providers who gather data from a variety of sources, such as radio airplay, digital sales/downloads (through stores like Shopify or marketplaces like iTunes), and streaming services. Different data sources are weighted differently as decided by the chart owner. While chart companies will give basic overviews, their specific methodology generally isn't widely available. The data is then compiled and ranked to determine the most popular songs or albums in a given time period.

In recent years, streaming has become an increasingly important factor in chart compilation, as it is now the primary way that many people consume music. This has led to changes in how charts are compiled and the inclusion of new metrics such as "streaming equivalents" that take into account the number of streams a song receives.

How Charts are Used in the Music Industry

Charts are used in many different ways in the music industry—and can provide up and coming artists with great career advancement opportunities.

- **Record labels** use them to track the success of their artists and to make decisions about which songs to promote or which artists to sign.
- **Radio stations** use them to determine which songs to play and how often.
- **Concert promoters** often use them to decide which artists to book for concerts and festivals.

Charts can also be a valuable tool for music fans, providing a snapshot of the most popular songs and albums at any given time. They can be a way to discover new music and keep up with the latest trends in the industry.

Understanding music charts is an important part of understanding the music industry. By knowing how charts are compiled and used, you can gain a better understanding of how music becomes popular, how to promote and market to audiences, and how it can help you grow professionally as an artist.
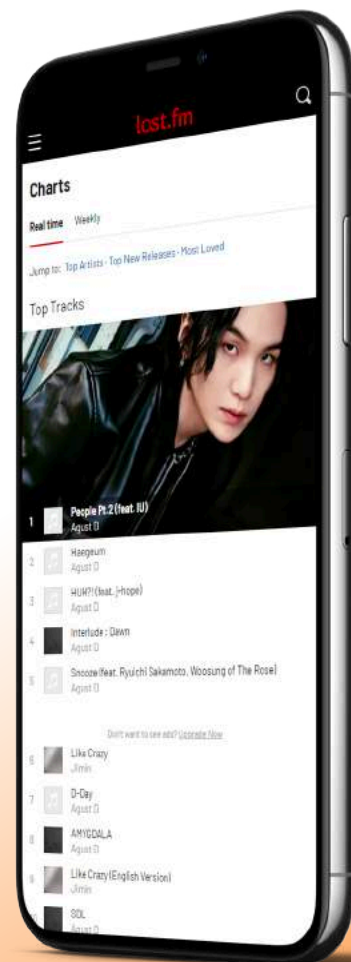
Why You Should Care About the Charts

The music industry has long relied on charts to understanding what's popular and what's not. As an artist, that can have a big impact on your career and growth plan.

Here's just a few of the potential benefits of getting a chart placement:

- **Exposure**: Being listed on a music chart can help increase your exposure to new audiences. Since consumers look to charts to see what's growing in popularity, a placement can lead to more fans, more streams, and ultimately, more success.

- **Credibility**: Chart success can lend credibility to your career and music. It demonstrates to industry professionals and fans that your music is being well-received. That in turn could mean landing a bigger manager, signing an agent, securing a label deal, scoring brand partnerships, or getting booked for bigger shows / tours.

- **Industry Recognition**: Chart success can also lead to industry recognition, such as award nominations and invitations to perform at high-profile events.

- **Financial Benefits**: Chart success can lead to increased revenue, both through music sales and through increased touring opportunities.

Sure, that's all great, but aren't I competing with huge artists on these charts?

Yes, it's going to be hard to compete with folks like Bad Bunny, Taylor Swift, and Drake on the Billboard top 100, but that doesn't mean you can't chart. Each music charting company has a variety of different charts that cover more niche groups of music and artists.

For example, The Billboard Heatseekers chart is a weekly music chart published by Billboard Magazine that showcases the top-selling albums by new or developing artists. The Heatseekers chart is designed to give exposure to emerging artists who are gaining momentum in the music industry.

The chart is compiled based on sales data, as well as streaming activity, from a variety of sources, including Nielsen Music, SoundScan, and other industry partners (like Single!).

The Heatseekers chart covers a range of genres, including rock, pop, hip-hop, country, and more. It has helped launch the careers of many successful artists, including **Lizzo, Billie Eilish, Khalid, and many others**.

While success will vary depending on what other artists release music at the same time as you, there have been many instances of artists landing on these charts with as little as 200-500 sales.

How to Report to Music Charts

Reporting to music charts involves submitting sales and streaming data to chart compilers, such as Billboard or the Official Charts Company.

Here's an overview of the reporting process, along with tips on how to maximize chart performance.

Overview of the Reporting Process:

The reporting process varies depending on the chart, but it typically involves two primary sources of data: sales and streaming. The chart compiler collects data from retailers, streaming services, and other sources to compile the chart rankings.

To report sales data, you'll need to submit a report of your sales figures to the chart compiler. This may require working with your distributor, record label, or music retailer to obtain accurate figures. Typically, the chart compilers will require weekly or daily sales reports, depending on the chart.

If you're running your store on Shopify (or want to start doing so), Single makes chart reporting of direct-to-fan sales super simple. In our easy-to-use Shopify app you can tag physical products (like vinyl or cassettes) to report to the charts and/or sell digital downloads direct to fans, which we also report.

Did you know?

You can automate daily sales reporting to OCC, Billboard, and ARIA – right from your Shopify store with Single?

Streaming data is usually reported automatically by streaming services, such as Spotify or Apple Music, but it's important to ensure that your streaming data is being properly attributed to your release, so that it's accurately counted towards your chart performance.
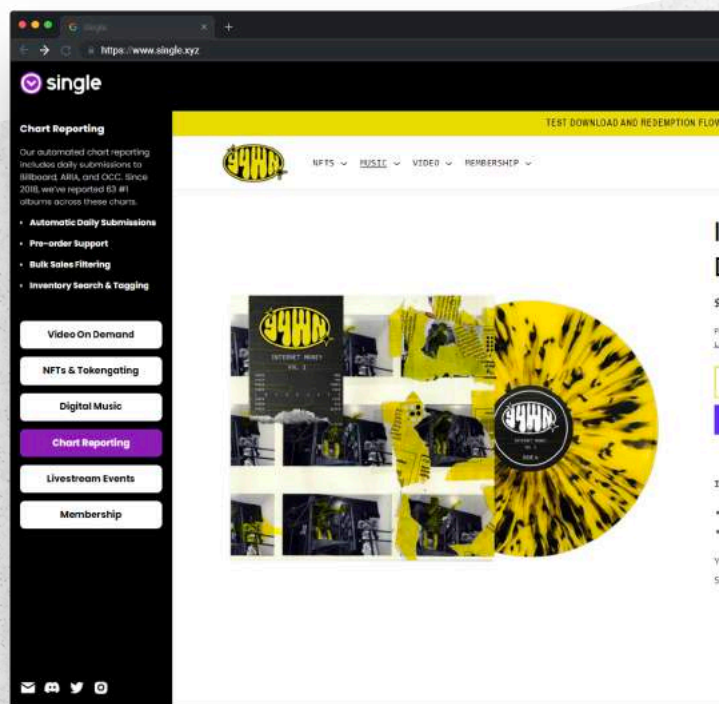
Tips for Maximizing Chart Performance:

1 Timing

The timing of your release can impact your chart performance significantly. Try to release your music at a time when there are fewer major releases or events happening, as this can increase your chances of chart success. While it's impossible to know every upcoming release, sites like Metacritic provide upcoming release calendars to help you make an educated guess.

2 Pre-Sale/Sale & Promotion

This one may sound obvious, but promotion makes a huge difference. Build up hype for your release in advance, using social media, email marketing, press releases, and other promotional channels. This can help to generate interest and drive sales or streams during the crucial first week of release.

Launching a pre-save and pre-sale campaign gives fans an opportunity to pay for or save your release before it actually launches. Then on launch day, all of those numbers count towards chart placement. Additionally, it gives you something to promote before your release actually drops—adding an additional phase for marketing.

3 Leverage your fan base

Encourage your fans to buy or stream your release during a pre-sale of the first week of release. This can help to boost your chart position and create buzz around your music.

4 Target key playlists

Getting your music onto influential playlists on streaming services can help to increase your streams and drive chart performance. Research playlists that are relevant to your genre and reach out to curators to see if they'll consider adding your release.

5 Work with your team

Make sure you're working closely with anyone that might support you—your record label distributor, or other members of your team—to ensure that your release is being promoted effectively and that sales and streaming data is being accurately reported to the chart compilers.

By following these tips, you can improve your chances of chart success and increase the visibility of your music. Remember, chart performance is just one aspect of promoting and marketing your music, but it can be a powerful tool for reaching new audiences and generating buzz around your releases.

Best Practices for Music Chart Reporting

Making it to the music charts is a combination of many factors, including talent, hard work, and some luck. Each charting company has their own set of rules that determine how their charts are generated—and unfortunately, those rules change frequently and aren't always super transparent.

That said, the biggest factor impacting your ability to chart is from sales of your music. If you've already signed on to a label, they will be a great resource for helping you move album units through their distribution channels and marketing services. But if you're just getting going on your own – there's still steps you can take.

Here are 6 ways to help your chances of landing a spot on the charts:

1 Sell physical editions of music direct to fans

Purchases of physical copies of music—especially vinyl— have exploded over the past several years. And guess what, all of those sales count towards the charts! If you have the upfront capital to produce a vinyl or cassette release, it's a great way to move more units that count towards your chart placement.

2 Sell digital music direct to fans

While there's obviously been a huge rise in streaming audio, there are still tons of fans out there that purchase digital albums from their favorite artists. Taking the simple steps to make your album available for direct sale to fans will ensure you capture all possible demand and report every possible sale to the charts.

3 Launch a pre-sale for your digital / physical music

When you launch a pre-sale, fans can buy your record before it's released. Then on release day, all of those sales get reported to the charts at one time. It's a great way to get a headstart on sales by promoting the pre-sale at least 3-6 weeks in advance of the actual release date.

4 Launch a pre-save campaign for streaming services

Streaming of your music has a direct impact on your ability to chart. Use your marketing channels and a service like DistroKid to encourage fans to pre-save your album in their preferred streaming service. That way, the day it drops, they will get a notification and can jump into listening.

5 Offer deluxe versions

Give your fans a little something extra with a deluxe version of your album. Take cue from pro artists like SZA and Drake, and include bonus tracks and exclusive content that will not only incentivize them to purchase your album, but make them feel like they're part of a special club.

6 Utilize instant grats

Give your fans a little something extra when they pre-order your album or single. This could be early access to a new song, an exclusive behind-the-scenes video, or anything that will make them feel special. For example, Ariana Grande released a video for the song "thank u, next" to those who pre-ordered the album of the same name.

Conclusion

Remember, there are plenty of resources at your disposal if you want to improve your chart performance, and Single is one of them! We have a proven track record of reporting more than 5 million sales to chart partners worldwide, and we work with artists of all sizes.

Our integration with your Shopify store simplifies things by automatically reporting all of your music sales, whether digital or physical, to the charts. So, if you're looking to step up your chart game, we're here to support you!

Ready to Get Started?

Here at Single, we're committed to helping artists of all sizes build successful Shopify stores and simplify the chart reporting process. Whether you're just getting started or looking to take your store to the next level, we're here to help.

Get started on your own:
Install Single in your Shopify store.

New to Shopify?
Read our guide for launching a killer store in no time.

Thinking big?
Want to discuss a bigger project? Our professional services team frequently partners with clients to help brainstorm ideas, build websites or membership programs, launch/promote campaigns and more.

Get in touch and let's talk!

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