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# How to get your song playlisted on Spotify

## **MASTER THESIS**

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters in Music Management at the University of Agder in Kristiansand, Norway

Advisors:

Daniel Nordgård, Peter Jenner

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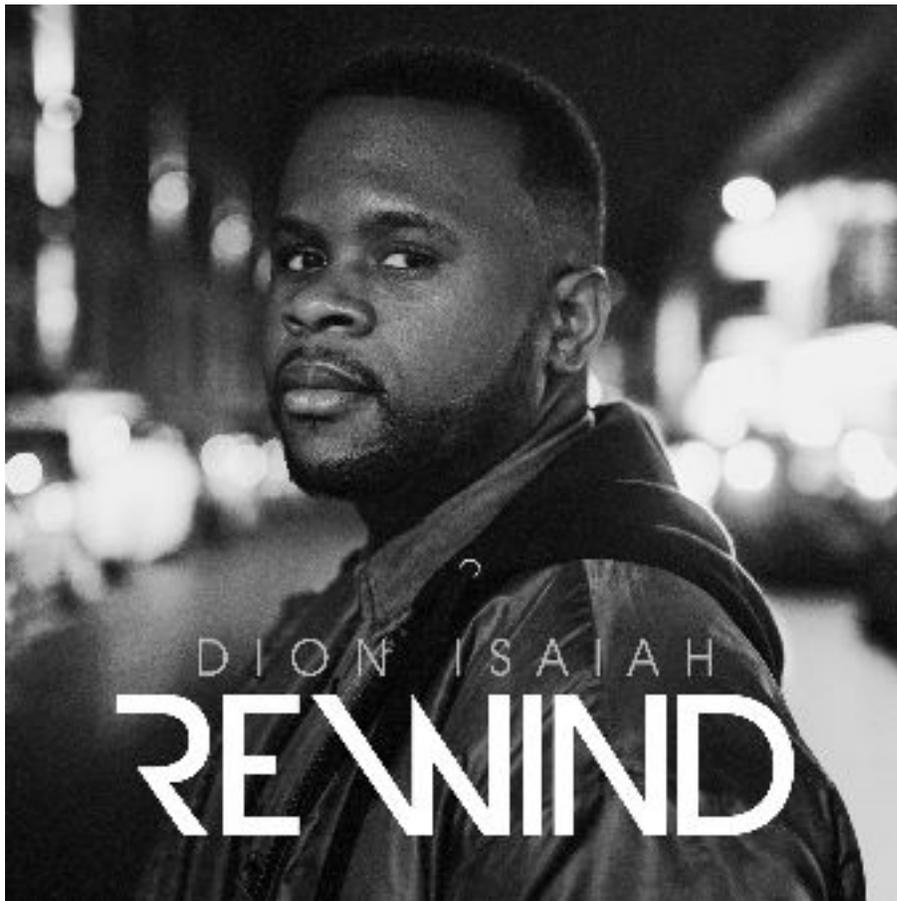
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## 1. INTRODUCTION

When I was young, I really didn't have any aspirations of being an artist or musician. The thought of going to school for music didn't cross my mind. In my senior year of high school, I had no goals set to do anything after, but fortunately my talent was discovered by my high school colleagues and my high school teachers. Being in college then I still had no goals or aspirations on what I would be doing after when I was finished with college. Then I came to Kristiansand as an exchange student and eventually married the love of my life with three amazing kids. I think this is when my mind shifted into placing goals for myself, structure, and what I really wanted to do. I knew I wanted to do something with music. I wanted to be successful in music. I wanted my kids to see that this is what my daddy did back in the day. All of this started when I was studying my masters in music performance (*classical music*) at the University of Agder in Kristiansand, Norway August of 2010. I really enjoyed the Norwegian university settings, but I felt this wasn't for me. I discovered that the university had an popular music program (pop, r&b, rock), which really surprised me. Back home in most university you only have classical and jazz based programs. I was very intrigued by this and began to hangout with people from this department. I began to partake in certain musical activities such as performing in jam session and many other areas that pertained to popular music. I knew right then that this is something I wanted to pursue. My genre of music consist of pop, r&b, and house, but it took some time to really discover my unique sound. In timely fashion, I met a local producer here, Isak Nygaard from Esther Recordings in the summer of 2016. We talked about really small goals to pursue to becoming an artist/songwriter:

- To produce my first debut single "*Rewind*."
- Release the song to a wider audience.
- To hopefully gain a unique sound that many will be able to spark interest.

Yes, that was it. You're probably thinking that's not a goal, but for me I needed to have a song that could catapult me into the music digital world, to build a fanbase, and to have a product that I was proud to present and would give me a foundation for my brand  
We are now in 2018, The song "Rewind" has gone over 128K streams on Spotify in the this year.  
You're probably wondering how?



*Figure 1.1 'Rewind' Artwork. Dion Isiah debut single release.*

**Info of release "Rewind"**

Song link: <http://smarturl.it/DionIsaiahRewind>,

Release date: November 11th, 2016

Where: Most streaming services

Genre: Dance/Electronic

It's many circumstances that I believed helped "Rewind" to reach over 100k streams on Spotify. Here are just a few reasons:

**1).** Being a new independent, I had no idea how to promote this product to a mass audience digitally. Social media has become a big part now in promoting one's music. I understood the ways of promoting and marketing, but the interaction was the difficult part to comprehend. I went through many trials and error when it comes to getting my music playlisted, but in that 2 year span I have gained immense knowledge of how to digitally promote one's music online. I became a fanatic of Spotify and researched religiously to get "Rewind" on a Spotify playlist.

**2).** I started studying about the business of music (music management) at the University of Agder and it was really interesting how the music industry transitioned from a traditional structure to a digital structure. How copyright changed the landscape through history, and its effect on artists, musicians, composers, labels, etc. The issues and the problems we face today in the music industry when it comes to rights for the artists. How complex the music industry has become since the involvement of streaming services in the music industry.

**3).** My involvement with certain events that led me to meet the right people and who helped me go in the right direction as far as having a music career. I think the key point for me was volunteering for Sørveiv Conference 2016 in Kristiansand, Norway. I met many people who were part of the industry themselves and some of them gave me valuable insights into the industry. They showed me things that I had no idea on how to launch a career.

**4).** Working in collaborations with other producers and artists has really helped me gain knowledge about these streaming platforms. Michael Warner, Spotify curator for "*Work Hard Playlist Hard*" and the trio group "*Date Night*", has been an important figure when it comes to understanding the process of getting your music heard on a major Spotify playlist. Not only did I collaborate with this group for a single "Flava", but he also guided me on how to interact and develop relationships with different people in the music industry globally.

## 1.1 THE PROJECT - “FALLIN”

“Fallin” is a project that is a collaborative project created by Wyvio (Libyan producer) and I. I believe that this project had huge potential to do well commercially and my intentions are to focus on spotify playlist for this project and to also use this as research for my master thesis.



*Figure 1.2 ‘Fallin’ Artwork by Mohamed Allay*

### "FALLIN"

A catchy melodic track sugar coated in delicate sweet vocals. Purveyors of electronic pop, funk and dance fusion music.

#### **Info of release “Fallin”**

Release date: May 11th, 2018

Where: Most streaming services

Genre: Dance/Electronic

There is constant changes happening in the digital world and for an independent artist we must learn to adapt to these changes. As I stated before, the thesis will focus more on the process getting “Fallin” on spotify playlister (**major or small**) as I believed that most playlists and curators comes from Spotify. Through qualitative research, I will be using the song ‘Fallin’ as an for not only my own personal agenda, but to explain in detail the process to help others getting there music heard on spotify. Here are more goals for the single “*Fallin*”

- Developing a strategies to get my music on playlist and entail increasing my catalog spotify streams ‘
- Collecting data and ana
- To get “*Fallin*” onto one of the biggest playlist on spotify.
- Breaking a hit with curators on spotify. Basically getting help from other producers, artist, labels, and djs for promoting the tracks on their playlist.
- To get at least over 1 million streams on Spotify with “*Fallin*” by the end of this year.
- To gain more and new audiences on spotify’s platform. I am currently at 380 followers on my artist page, but goal my is to gain over 1000 followers on spotify by the end of this year.
- Getting the song on major radio stations through spotify.
- Work out how Spotify, Apple Music, and other streaming services work, become
- Make strong connections with playlisters and curators that have large playlists
- Get featured on an official Spotify playlist
- Create a playlist brand
- Make some money from the release..

## 1.2 How to reach the goal?

In promoting a single, it takes a lot a patiences, hard work, ambition, and also to accept that there will be challenges along the way. So, how will I go about reaching the goals that I want to reach with “Fallin?” I believe by analysing the previous data from “Rewind” and being mentored by others when it comes to interacting with new spotify playlists will help me find the conclusion and results with “Fallin”. Here are some key factors that I believe will help me meet my threshold:

- Have a basic promotional and marketing plan. It’s important that you start at least 3 - 6 months for single, ep, or album release, but for spotify playlisting it’s all about getting on the playlist within a week times to gain notice by spotify algorithm (ex. Getting it on “Discover Weekly”). So my goal will be to research many playlists and curators for the single.
- Using the pre-save link for “*Fallin*” to all my social media.
- Creating my own playlist of artist, producers, dj’s, and labels who are curators themselves (who has similar content to mine). Adding there songs to this playlist.
- Developing relationships and knowing different ways of engaging with others who are playlists and curators of spotify. A key thing to know is that these type of playlists and curators are not at all part of spotify. Some are artist, some are dj’s, some are businesses (ex.fashion stores) and some are private who use spotify as personal use. There is a methods of approaching each when reaching out to them, which has worked wonders for me, which I will explain later in the thesis.
- I will be using thorough transparent data websites to help me find specific playlist to that fits in my niche.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 The digital progressions in the music industry

*“The recording music industry has experienced a significant economic decline starting at the turn of the millennium and continuing until quite recently. (IFPI, 2016; Tschmuck, 2016).*

To fully understand the digital progression in the music industry, one must understand that the idea of music distribution has not changed, but the reconstruction of the value chain has changed ever since the arrival of the digital era in the early 90’s.

*“Digital advancements are credited with having had profound impacts on the music industry’s economic performance and this connection has received a great deal of attention. More recently, however, more emphasis has been given to trying to understand how the digital shift affects the value chains and payment flows (Elberse, 2013; Europe Economics, 2015) and how it alters the structures and dynamics of the music industries (Wikström, 2013; Tessler 2016).*

*“Digital progressions in the cultural - and creative industries have long been the focus for debate, drawing on theories of disruptive technology and innovations and issues of market transformations and alterations.” (Nordgård, 2018).*

Let’s take example Spotify. I will be discussing spotify mostly as this only platform that gives independent artist a slim chance to have your music heard. I think Spotify is a great streaming services. The issue I have is still the labels in my opinion has there hands on Spotify and there is not much equal positions when it comes to independent artist and major artist..

Spotify have tried to integrate an economic imbalance and sustaining power for composers, musicians, artists, etc, but many believes that there should be a “one stop shop” for all who creates music and that the income can come from one place instead of coming from different areas. Also as a listener if I’m listening to an specific artist that I like, then the income should go mostly to them instead of it going to a mainstream artist that I don’t listen to. This thesis is not focused on the royalty share percentage from Spotify to artist, but for the reader’s purpose it should be thought about for potential thesis.

## 2.2 The music industry

I think it's important that we as artists and musicians first must understand and have knowledge about the music industry itself. The industry itself is more than ever complex since the arrival of digitalization.

*“Historically, the music industries have been defined in different ways, but most notably they have been deemed the music industry - a singular term primarily meaning recorded music industry and the major label in particular. Such a singular use of the term has generally referred to a limited (but historically powerful) construction of the multi-national record companies (today totalling only three entities). It is a term limited to a distinct part of the music economy and it very much raises associations of corporate business and its specific logics. It also maintains an image of a monolithic and homogeneous sector aligned around agendas and goals. However, the music industries are actually comprised of a complex set of stakeholders and business that don't necessarily align around shared objectives. And if anything, the recent turmoil resulting from the digital impacts on the sectors has clearly demonstrated that any singular use of the term seems inadequate and even misleading (Barnett and Harvey 2015; Nordgård 2018).*

*“Thus music opens up new potentials of added value that go beyond classical ways of selling music.” (Tschmuck, 2016 p.13).* This will be my goal through to research and develop possible a secure method to get my the single “Fallin” on spotify playlists.

It's important to realize that even though it's a different way of selling music, the process of forging (monetize) music must be copyrighted for the authors and composers benefits. I think it's amazing that I can sign up my works with TONO (*Norwegian collection society/performing rights organization*) by myself, but before digitalization composers, authors, and performers had to submit licenses to record labels and publishers involved to protect the work. Today many artist don't need a record label or a publisher to have their music licensed. But, I believe that having a record label and a publisher under your wing is still more of an advantage then to do it all on your own.

### **2.3 The business of digital music**

In Steve Gordon's "*A Brief History of the Digital Music Business*," he explained, "*in the last ten years (more so two decades as this book is in its 3rd edition in 2011) income earned from recorded music has plummeted in the United States and around the world.*" (Gordon, 2011 p. 119) It was recorded by Tom Silverman that since the arrival of the digital music business the drop was about 80 percent including inflations. I myself and others believe that this percentage is less. Maybe around 50 percent the recorded music took nosedive since the arrival of digitalization. Many people made music as the scapegoat for the decline of the recorded music industry. I think it was the total opposite. In my personal opinion, the 90's and early 2000's to mids 2000's was the golden era for the new generation. I just think in this era with the involvement of copying CD's and illegal file sharing, it came out as surprise for the music industry and they had no idea at first on how to contain it.

Eric Garland, the Ceo of BigChampagne, the leading firm that measures activity across peer-to-peer networks, reported: "*Consider this: song for song, more music [is] acquired on peer-to-peer networks...than through retail sales of compact discs worldwide. Or, to put it another way, file sharing is bigger than the record business*" (Gordon, 2011 p. 119)

I agree on most points as I believe record labels before that where the main go to for distribution, but since the arrival with digitization services that were of low level became an important factor to the music industry. For example, you have different social media chains such as facebook, twitter, instagram, and snapchat that provide its customer access to music. Apple music still continue it's reign in the music download retail, but one believes that streaming services such as Spotify, iTunes, tidal and others has become the most dominant when it comes to accessing "free" music. Downloading music say from iTunes is become less and less, because of streaming. Two decades before you had film industries, advertising industries, and gaming industry that sold their brands and supplies.

## 2.4 Labels vs everyone including technology

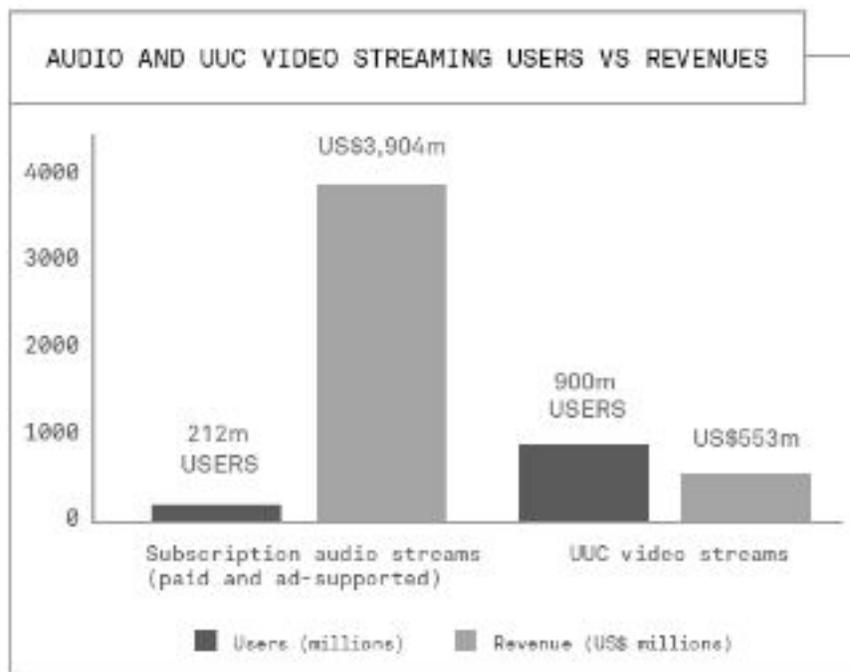
Because of the problems of different services from uploading, music piracy, and file sharing, lawsuits had come in effect due to the revenue issues that the recorded music was facing at the time. One main question was, “Could the recorded music industry survived this onslaught of the music revenues tanking?” The answer is “yes” We may think the recorded music industry is far behind when it comes understanding digitalization, but their sources are strong and they have figured out ways to always remain on top. Taking one example the lawsuit vs P2P (*Napster*). It was a big win lose situation for the recorded music industry. It was the year 1999, a very intelligent college student, Shawn Fanning created a business (which is still running today) for file sharing with peer to peer in his college dormitory called “*Napster*”.

**Napster** is a platform and centralized server that gives users to access to locate and share compressed digital music files (MP3's) from other users' machines with ease.

Afterwards the popularity of Napster skyrocketed in a very short amount of time. No more was this program part of a small community, but it begin to spread like the black plague amongst global users. The major labels finding this out was outraged, but I also believe fearful that something that is so unknown would be the downfall of the labels. Even when the CD's came out, major labels wanted no part of it and believed that this form of sharing was not purposeful in the recorded music industry. In the year 2000 the labels took action and sued Napster for deliberately infringing on music that the labels owned and contributing illegally amongst other peers. Napster was also able to manage and square away copyright infringement from users, but was not taking actions upon this situation. The Ninth Circuit (The United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit is a U.S. Federal court with appellate jurisdiction over the district courts in the following districts) believing that Napster had duties to upheld these infringements and should have ended the users. For this cause, Napster was charged and disbandit by the buying out of BMG (Bertelsmann Music Group) after the courts decided that Napster must stop downloads, uploading, and file-sharing. Still though, Napster still remains today in streaming services.

## 2.5 IFPI Global Music Report 2017: April 25th of 2017

Below is the IFPI Global Music Report 2017. I wanted to show this diagram to show how streaming services has become a huge part in the music industry today amongst users. *Figure 2.5.1*



*IFPI Global Music Report 2017. The figure describes the value gap mismatch when it comes to upload services such as YouTube and music that is put on these uploaded services, but the problem is not much income is coming back to the ones who are creating and investing in one's music. This has become the biggest challenge in the digitalization of music)*

Today the Global Recorded Music Revenues increases by 5.9 %, it's highest rate in the year of 2016 from the year of 1997 since the tracking of reports by IFPI in the music market. (IFPI, 2017.)

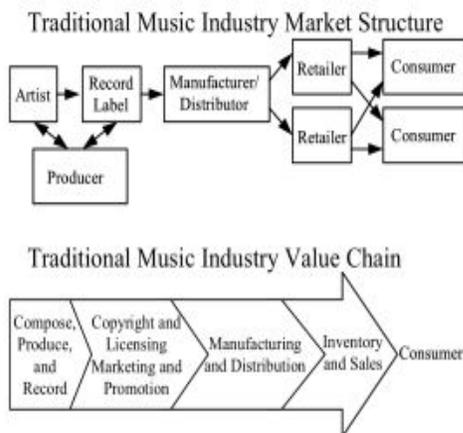
- **Total revenues for 2016 were USD\$15.7 billion.**
- **112 million users of paid streaming subscriptions driving revenue growth of 60.4%.**
- **Digital income now accounts for 50% for global revenues.**
- **'Value Gap' remains biggest challenge for sustainable growth. (IFPI 2017)**

## 2.6 The digital value chain

Remember the first European authors, lyricists, and composers collection society in 1851 (SACEM based in France)? The goal was to uphold basic rights for all composers and lyricist without/with the help of a publisher when they works were performed. Well, it's not like that no more since the value chain has changed since the new digital production.

*“The rise of the global media corporation combined with the new digital production and distribution technologies has seriously undermined these early principles (Wallis et al. 1999 p.104). Before the early 90’s record’s was the major income in the traditional value chain network in the music industry as a whole. The incoming of musical production and file sharing was a surprise to the coherence of selling music. “Public relations (PR) and marketing aimed at maximizing CD sales, and even concerts were regarded as promotional tools for record sales. (Tschmuck, 2016 p. 15)*

Here is a figure of how the selling of records in the 1950s and publishing of the recordings was mostly centered in the music industry. *Figure 2.6.1*



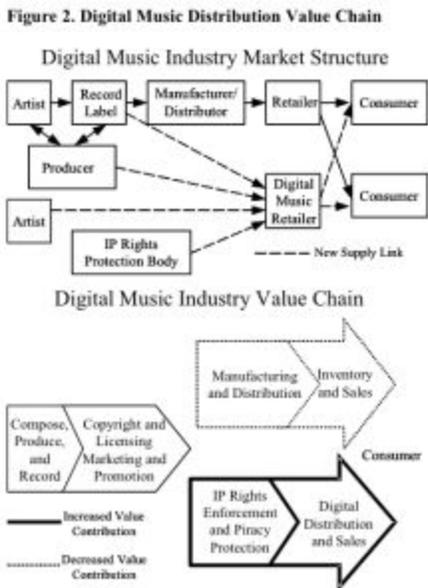
**Traditional value chain** This music traditional structure links artist, record labels, music producers, distributors, retailers and consumers together. You can see also that link up in a coordinated sets of mediators for who gathers and put out earning on IPR (intellectual property rights).

Back then the publishers and record labels were the doorkeepers in the aged record archetype. Composers or creators had to come up with a contractual agreement with a publisher to disperse one's work while protecting the creator's work. It was more worth having a huge label being an artist or songwriter before the rise of digitization. “ *The artist's revenue share from the record sales, as contractually stipulated, served as a relevant income source: it enabled the artist to make a living provided a considerable number of records were sold.*” (Tschmuck, 2016 p.15 )

It was more easier for composers and authors to earn money more from collective companies and to use license music for other uses. Musicians had to do exclusive deals with music publishing and the recording labels received a share of the royalties when it comes to the selling of music. Now music is being put out everywhere globally and its value chain for digitalization had become more complexed. This was a bit a problem though, because the artist could not produce alone. The cost of going to a professional studio was very expensive, which were owned by many output networks and managed by a blend of huge music. This made it difficult, because the royalties was going through different stages leaving the artist with nothing. I do feel the record labels still operate in this manner and I believe changes has to be made to provide composers, musicians, and artists with more revenue from one's work.

Since the rise of digitalization many changes have occurred. The internet for struggling artist, composer, musicians, or even all of these who are labels has become the main go to for creating music (pro tools, ableton, etc). Most music now is either created, mix, and mastered in the box. Home studios are the main source to creating music and putting it out through online distributors. Personally, I believe one should record or create music in a professional studio. I can hear the quality of professional studio work from a home studio work. You have aggregators now (*CD baby, Distrokid, Tunecore, and Ditto*) who can distribute your music on my streaming, downloadable, and media platforms worldwide on Spotify, Apple music, and Tidal. Finally, you have innovative common agreements that allow artist to control the usage of one's music themselves. In the following there will be a figure that shows the changes for artists when comes to making contacts with assisting services who are there for the taking.

I believe this gives the artist and creators the pathway of doing it yourself method. I believe this will be turned into something that also will involve others in the process of selling music (*audiences and fans*). *Figure 2.6.2*



**Digital Value Chain** This is the new digital value chain for the market structure and rights/shares/royalties for streaming in the music industry.

Looking at the digital structure and value chain it seems now that artists and musicians are the ones who are taking control of one’s career. We are seeing more on a amateur level of music being put out on streaming services, getting sizable streams just by sitting and doing all of their work from home. Even mediocre music is being put on major spotify playlist. Through all the wide complex process of what’s going on digitally, this has allowed for artists and musicians to have more power over their own careers.

“Peter Tschmuck in many ways advocates the latter point, underlining the advancements of new hybrid roles and functions, such as “artpreneurs” or the “prosumers” (Tschmuck, 2016:25, Daniel Noddegård, 2018).

This assessments since digitalization has remodeled the the value chain and there had to be changes to the major labels position of power and the roles that they would undertake. *“Tschmuck describes the music industry as a value-added network and argues that while the traditional one was centered around the label, the new one are centered around the artist and management.”* (Tschmuck, 2016: 15-16, Daniel Nordgård)

In Hendrik Storstein Spilker article, *“The Network Studio Revisited”: Become an Artist in the Age of “Piracy Culture”*, he takes the article takes Theberge’s (2004) notion of “the Network Studio” and Latour’s (2005) notion of “re-assembling/disassembling” as a point of departure to investigate the development of home recording and home distribution practices among semi-professional musicians. The central research questions concerns whether these new practices are used to sidestep the traditional career patterns of the music industry. In other words, do they add up to “piracy cultures” (Cardoso & Castells, 2010) that challenge and threaten established social orders? (Spilker, 2012 p.1)

My answer is “yes.” I believe semi-professional uses home studio to sidestep the traditional value chain, because we have the tools to create music in his/her own realm and without interference from others. I actually disagree with them being a “piracy cultures”. Think about way it was in the Classical period, Baroque period, or even the Medieval Period. There was no record label or a publishing company. This composers were making music on by themselves and travelling to different countries promoting their music. Were they a piracy culture? No, I believe home studios and distributing to different networks is a recycle of the past.

*“The study reveals how the rise of the networked home studio has altered the initial phases of the processes of music making in important ways. However, the musicians did not perceive the new practices of the home studio as a substitute for professional studios and traditional ways of making a career, but rather as a preparation. The study suggests that the developing practices of the home studio should be understood as the formation of “pre-distribution networks”—not actually sidestepping, but eventually leading into the professional network of the music industry. Thus, the suspected piracy is still looming at best.”* (Spilker 2012 p.1)

I do agree that home studios are more than a practice to prepare one who is serious about a music career. I see on films where mainstream artist are recording vocals at home, hotel rooms, and tour buses, but they always send the material to a professional studio to be mixed and mastered.

I also agree both with Tschmuck and Spilker, as I believe the labels roles have become less through digitalization. I can sit on my computer for hours and do just as much as what the labels are doing today.

I can creating music from home and distributing my music through different networks The labels have the money to get ahead when it comes to promoting artist from their label. I'm not saying the labels are dying, as they are needed more than ever. I just think doing it yourself gives you endless possibility for researching and putting out good music to the right niche that fit with your audience. For example, while I was promoting my music alone, I gather a new audience and some them where musicians themselves. In that course we collaborate with each other to produce other product.

The question is will this change give artist the push and drive to complete the task themselves? In my opinion, the answer is "No". Artist and musicians are still looking for that deal from a label or artist management group to help build their career. I believe that an artist should develop the necessary skills and fan base before evening thinking about get a "deal." Taking me as an example, I have no interest in the music label at this time,because my goal is develop my brand and increase my fan base. I feel that at the moment, I am creating my own waves and not being lend a hand from a label. I think that an independent artist should have the label come to them instead of one searching for a helping hand.

## **2.7 Do it yourself: The artist has risen**

Since the late mid 2000's we have seen many artist take this route when it comes to selling or licensing their music on their own. One good example that comes to mind is "Radiohead."

They released an album "*In Rainbows*" in 2007 exclusively on their website, but let's explain how they went to selling 1.2 million in only a few weeks, 100,000 copies of the CD box were sold, resulting in additional to that a revenue of 8 million USD.

*"Fans were instructed to obtain registration code in order to download the new album in MP3 format. Music consumers were left to determine the price they were willing to pay for the download on their own - with the band setting the price range from U.S\$ 0.00 to U.S\$ 99.99."*

(Tschmuck 2016, pp. 14).

This was a brilliant idea by "Radiohead" on how to do it yourself way of marketing., but to be honest I don't think this would have been a success due to the huge fan base "Radiohead" already had. I think they knew that digitalization was taking over, so they develop an idea to merge the two digital and physical sells together. Physical can also be means through concert ticket sales and to sell merchandise.

Now that everything is done on the internet, the do it yourself method for many independent artist is the best option to get your music heard to the right audience. Crowdfunding campaigns are a great tool to get money before to perhaps do full productions, promote your music, or to do special events (touring and concerts). There are social media areas like YouTube (youtubers within YouTube), facebook, or snapchat to grow a fan base. Submitting your music to TV/films is also another avenue that many request to be used on their content.

I will discuss later my own method that I will implement when I promote the new single "Fallin" on Spotify. I will try this process as far as promoting this collaborative track. It won't be on a huge scale as "Radiohead", because I don't have the income like Radiohead, but I hope it will increase my chance to get my fans involved in responding to my offer and product.

## 2.8 Spotify: The game changers in the digital music realm

As I stated above in my introduction, my goal will be to use Spotify as my main research for getting the single “Fallin” playlisted. Many artists know how to get their music onto these streaming platforms through distributors or aggregators, but many don’t know the process to get their music heard on this platform. In my opinion, Spotify is the new music industry. Maybe in ten years, Spotify will become that “one stop shop” for all artists, but let’s take a moment to see where it all started.

**Spotify**, a Swedish enterprise (located in Stockholm), was founded by *Daniel EK* and *Martin Lorentzon*. They started around October 2008 with podcasting and video streaming services. They administer **DRM** (digital rights management) guarded content from the record industry and media outlets.

*Business model is an "abstract representation of an organization, be it conceptual, textual, and/or graphical, of all core interrelated architectural, cooperational, and financial arrangements designed and developed by an organization presently and in the future, as well as all core products and/or services the organization offers, or will offer, based on these arrangements that are needed to achieve its strategic goals and objectives."* (Al-Debei, El-Haddadeh and Avison 2008).

*“Spotify is a freemium service; basic features are free with advertisements or limitations, while additional features, such as improved streaming quality and music downloads, are offered via paid subscriptions.”* (Wikipedia, 2018). This just in, Spotify will make changes to their free subscription division. I am a premium subscriber, which allows me to bypass advertisement ads and to listen to better quality sounds on Spotify. There are also other features for premium users included as well, but basically for free users, Spotify will closely copy what premium users have access to and imply these features as well for free users.

In the article “The Verge,” it say this, *“On April 3, 2018, according to Bloomberg’s sources, spotify announces it will make the service easier to use, especially for those accessing it on mobile devices. Mobile users with free plans will be able to access playlists more quickly and have greater control over how they listen to music on playlists. Currently, the free plan prevents you from selecting tracks within a playlist, you just have to listen to what is served up on shuffle. An announcement regarding these changes is expected within a couple weeks. (The Verge....)”*

I think this is great for free users, because what is the point of using Spotify on your mobile when you are force to listen to music that you don’t want to listen to.

Spotify is available in most countries from America, Europe, some parts of Asia, New Zealand, and Australia. It’s also available on most current devices. You can search by album, artist, labels, genres, and “playlist” on this streaming service. Spotify has over 35 million songs that users can dig into. As of May 2018, Spotify boasted over 170 million users on Spotify and 75 million are paying subscribers on spotify.

Spotify is an online digital streaming services an. Unlike iTunes which has download sales or CD’s for physical sales, spotify doesn’t have a fixed price when it comes to royalties. They pay by proportions by streams for artists, which they have received some harsh criticisms by mainstream artist. Most notable Taylor Swift. She was extremely frustrated with the payouts from Spotify that she took all of her music catalogues off Spotify. In the middle of 2017 a new license deal that allowed artist albums to be temporarily exclusive on the premium subscriptions if they are affiliated with UMG (Universal Music Group) and Merlin network. This allowed for better compensation for mainstream artist, but what about the independent artist or artist that listener’s listen to instead of main artist? Many wonder why Drake for example is getting most of the share of pot when some listeners don’t listen to Drake. Some listener’s listen to other artist, but those artist are not getting most of the proportions from the listeners who listen to them. This unfair and I believe there should be a centralized system to detect what listeners are listening to when it comes to their favorite artist and give that proportion to the artist who are listened to by listeners. Instead of giving most of the proportion to Drake.

### 3. PURPOSE

I was asked by a colleague of mine on how I got my debut single “Rewind” over 100k streams on spotify? My response was this:

*Mr. Ping: The secret ingredient is ... nothing!*

*Po: Huh?*

*Mr Ping: You heard me. Nothing! There is no secret ingredient.*

*Po: Wait, wait... it's just plain old noodle soup? You don't add some kind of special sauce of something?*

*Mr. Ping: Don't have to. To make something special you have to believe it's special.*

*Po: There is no secret ingredient... (Kung fu panda 2008)*

This master thesis will focus primarily on getting one's music on many Spotify playlist. To answer the question, how can I get my music heard on spotify.

- I will be using “Fallin” the new collaborative single as catalyst for collecting the necessary data to show where “Fallin” started and what has taken place after when it comes to being playlisted. This research will be more of a qualitative approaches as is thesis is more so a subjective bias observation of the process of getting “Fallin” playlisted.
- The other part of thesis is to elaborate on how the means of promotion is still the same, but different in many ways.
- This master thesis is to help independent artist understand that there is no secret ingredient to get your music heard to a mass of audience. It's the interaction that leads up to one developing a relationship with people within the industry. I will be using the new collaborative single “Fallin” as an example to show the process of getting your music on many spotify playlisters and curator's platform. Most of the methods can be effective if done in a proper manner. I will explain in detail the methods that could work in this process of getting your music on major playlists. As the reader, this will give you valuable information that I gained from others, but also doing the research myself.

#### 4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

I have become very interested in Spotify. I felt that this was an online streaming service that can maintain music that is not only free (not really free, but close enough), but could progress in helping independent artists grow their fanbase. I think it's also important to specify any concerns or issues I have when analyzing and interpreting the data, coming to a conclusion, presenting what I have found, and reporting my research to a niche audience. Which comes to my first question:

##### **1. With the means of promotions when it comes to Spotify, could it be that digital marketing has the same process as traditional marketing, but is differently in some way?**

*“To clarify the terms, the use of print ads on newspapers and magazines is a simple example of traditional marketing. Other examples include flyers that are put in mailboxes, commercials both on TV and radio and billboards. On the other hand, when a business invests on building a website, advertising the brand name through different social media such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, this kind of strategy is called digital marketing.” (Cave 2016)*

I feel that playlisters/curators and Spotify within itself is the new radio. In traditional marketing you had to physically mail your CDs, vinyl, or cassettes to different radio stations, newspapers, or magazines. With online digital marketing you can use ads (like the newspaper), emailing curators to get your music on Spotify playlists, and your Spotify profile to me is like a magazine. Your profile shows your pictures, who you are, and shows your music. Digital marketing in my observation has the same process, but it's different because it's of its interaction with a broader audience.

##### **With traditional marketing:**

- the interaction is limited to between the mediums and the customers.
- Advertising can be costly with printing material and then you have to hire people to put it out for you.
- Finally, was the campaign successful, because sometimes it can't be noticeably measured?

### With **digital marketing**:

- As I previously stated before, you can go for your local audience, but now you can also target people internationally. With Spotify you can target curators all over the world. Not only that on Spotify, you can target to a specific audience that fit within your niche. You can see the gender of my group, their age, their demographic, and which artist I'm related to.
- Fans can now choose how they want the content presented to them. One can choose to watch a stream audio on YouTube or someone else stream audio through Spotify. With traditional marketing you had to accept what it was.
- With digital marketing, you are now able to interact with fans and audience members through social media. You have people called "tastemakers," which is very important for musician to have in your pocket. These are playlisters who have become very popular that Spotify uses them to fish out new music and to add it on their playlist.
- The cost for digital marketing is more stable and efficient. Most of this has to do with ads. Spotify uses ads to help promote new music on their platform.
- Data is easily documented through digital marketing: While this is true with Google Analytics and insight tools to see how your product is doing, the transparency could improve more. I believe in the near future this will happen. Spotify has a couple of insight tools, which will be explained later.
- The playing field is more leveled in this time because of digital marketing. In the traditional marketing it was mostly the labels, publishing, and radio running the show. Now independent labels, small publisher, independent artist, streaming services, and more can compete at the same rate. I still believe that the labels are running now, but things are changing as anyone can profit of their own product and brand.
- On my mobile devices I have *Spotify Artist*. It allows me to real time of my streams and monthly listeners.

## 5. COLLECTING DATA

### 5.1 Michael Warner: *Workhardplaylisthard* - Independent spotify curator

For collecting data for this thesis, I felt that I needed to find someone who understood the process of getting one's music playlisted on spotify. Someone who knows the interaction online process when it comes to playlisters and curators. Not only did I gain a mentor, but I also gained a good friend in this process.

I had the great pleasure to interview *Michael Warner*, one-third of the trio group *Date Night* (from Australia), spotify curator for the playlist *Work Hard Playlist Hard*, and also recently released an amazing E-book with the same title. Michael and I met through his group *Date Night*, as I was asked to do a collaboration with them for their new single 'Flava' in late 2017. 'Flava' was one of my huge accomplishment as a songwriter and vocalist. Currently the song is near 100k on Spotify and I also found out that the single was 29th on the iTunes charts in India. I was very impressed with Michael's work ethic when it comes to promoting his band's music in many areas including blog, social media influencers, and magazine. Most importantly I was curious on how he got each of *Date Night's* music on these huge independent spotify playlist. It was actually before the release of 'Flava' Michael and I develop a friendship. This is the first time I considered a musician a friend. My approach before was that musicians develop only business relationships and to keep it that manner, but it was different this time around. Michael became a mentor of mine and really taught me to develop relationship with key people in the music industry. He showed me ways to get my music heard on different streaming platforms. He gave me the tools to not only better myself as a musician, but to better my brand and the promoting of my brand. I recently did an interview with Michael, because I wanted to talk to him about being a spotify curator and how did he end up in this position.

*“I am from Australia, but live now in San Diego, California. I started as DJ 15 years ago hosted multiple podcasts and radio shows, helped numerous artists become labeled as independent, produced music under various aliases and worked with a few background music services. After many years of trying to break into the music industry, applying to multiple jobs, I concluded that my resume wasn’t strong enough...so I decided to build my own opportunities through self education.”* (Warner interview 2018)

His E-book *Work Hard Playlist Hard*, is a book that helps independent artist understand the ways to go to getting your music heard on different streaming services. Many of this friends requested for him to write this book on his knowledge as an independent curator

*“ The book will cover getting an artist profile, bio and artwork on different streaming platforms. Not just on Spotify, but on major different streaming services. When you have all this, you will gather more engagement on your platform”.* (Warner interview 2018)

We began to get into more into Spotify curation as I explained to him that my master thesis covers this specific area. I asked him “How does an independent artist approach on of these spotify curators?” He replied:

*“ When it comes to approaching curators on spotify, you should approach all aspect of who is working in the industry from labels, dj’s, and artist,. Also the way you approach them should be different. Think about it. How many times per day do curators receive emails that start with “I’m sure you get a lot of these emails...” just stop! You aren’t going to stand out if your approach is the same as everyone else. You are reaching out to an artist that is also a curator. Open by telling them the following, in this order:*

- 1 . You added their song to your playlist, link*
- 2. You would like to hear more music from them, invite them to add you to their mailing list or send you new songs directly.*
- 3. That’s it*

(Warner e -book 2018)

Collecting this data, I have come to learn how approach can be effective for certain people. It's useful when they actually get in touch with you and respond (which is rarely), but this process is a very long tedious process and you have to patience when it comes for this approach. In my following of this procedure, I have seen that many of these artist, dj's, and labels don't respond to my email. I continued to do a weekly follow up to get a response, but for most of them this approach is not as effective as I thought it would be. I even contacted them on different social media when it comes to Facebook DM or Twitter and no response back. I have even shared there music on my social media platform and tag their names in my description. Still no response as a thank you reply or something that would gain their interaction. I believe Michael's approach is effective for him, because his connection and sources with people in the music industry is much bigger than say other independent artists.

A successful approach of mine that is very effective for smaller independent artist actually has been working for me since my debut single. This approach is to actually share your music with artist, dj's, and labels, but it in a way that attract their interest. Here is my approach for a very effective way to gain interaction with artist, dj's, and labels from Spotify:

- **Presentation** - think about how would you present an engaging email to gain interaction.
- **Make it short** - It's true artist, dj's, and labels receives thousands of emails, so make it interesting and short.
- **Email only** - I'm still a firm believer that you should email (gmail, hotmail,etc) rather than using social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) to message others. In some cases you have to message through social media, but this should be that last option. Google search is a great way to discover email address of artist, dj's, and labels. Even if google doesn't display one's email, you can find it for example on one's Facebook about fan page or personal page.
- **Follow up** - I believe you should do three days to a weekly follow up for a possible a response. Do this twice and if still no response, move on and try for the next single.

Now I would like to show an example of a successful approach that has worked for me consistently and later on I will show the results of this approach. It's important to know that the subject of your email should be short and what you want of this email. (Ex.) "*Dion Isaiah - Rewind (spotify song submission).*" Make you in the description you upload the artwork within the description. Never send anything as attachment when sending emails to curators and playlister on spotify.

*Hi.....,*

*My name is Dion Isaiah. Some really cool musical content you have here. I really love ".....". Some good inspiration for me to work with when I back in the studio.*

*Hope you don't mind I am here to present a latest collaboration single, a poppy memorable electronic treat called "Fallin". This is a collaboration with the Libyan electronic producer "Wyvio."*

*Spotify URL: .....*

*It goes without saying but if it fits on your playlists any support will be appreciated and we will gladly do shout out on social media*

*Not your cup of tea? That's cool too, let me know if I can send you future releases.*

*Cheers,*

*Dion Isaiah*

*Singer of sweet, soulful, baby making music*

Sending these types of emails has been very effective for me and I've been receiving response from other playlister and curators on spotify at a much faster rate than Michael's approach. It's important to know that each email should be different and not all the same, because you are listening to different musical content and you want to be a personal with the email when it comes to listening to their music. Now to do the follow up email. This is what I suggest:

*Hi .....,*

*Just doing another follow up on the status of Wyvio X Dion Isaiah - Fallin (spotify song submission).*

*Spotify link: .....*

*Best,*

*Dion Isaiah*

*Singer of sweet,soul, baby making music*

As we finished the interview, we continues to talk about him coming over to Norway and become a speaker maybe at the Sørveiv Conference here in Kristiansand in the near future. I think many independent artist, musicians, and dj's would be interested in hearing from another independent artist who runs a successful spotify playlist. This will give independent artist and leadway to getting their music heard.

The final question I had for Michael is where does see himself from 5 - 10 years. He replied:

*“It's important to always feel like you are accomplishing something, even if something like “have a top 100 song on Beatport” seems unachievable, write it down. When you cross a goal off your list, take a moment to celebrate, then get right back to grinding and working on the next one.”*

*The next set of goals I created led me to where I am today:*

- *Work out how Spotify, Apple Music, and other streaming services work, become as close to a guru as possible*
- *Make strong contacts that have large playlists*
- *Get featured on an official Spotify playlist*
- *Create a playlist brand*
- *Make a living from music, whether it's producing, releasing, pitching, or a combination of things.*
- *Attend and speak at numerous music industry conferences (Warner interview, 2018)*

## 5.2 Where to find spotify curators and playlisters?

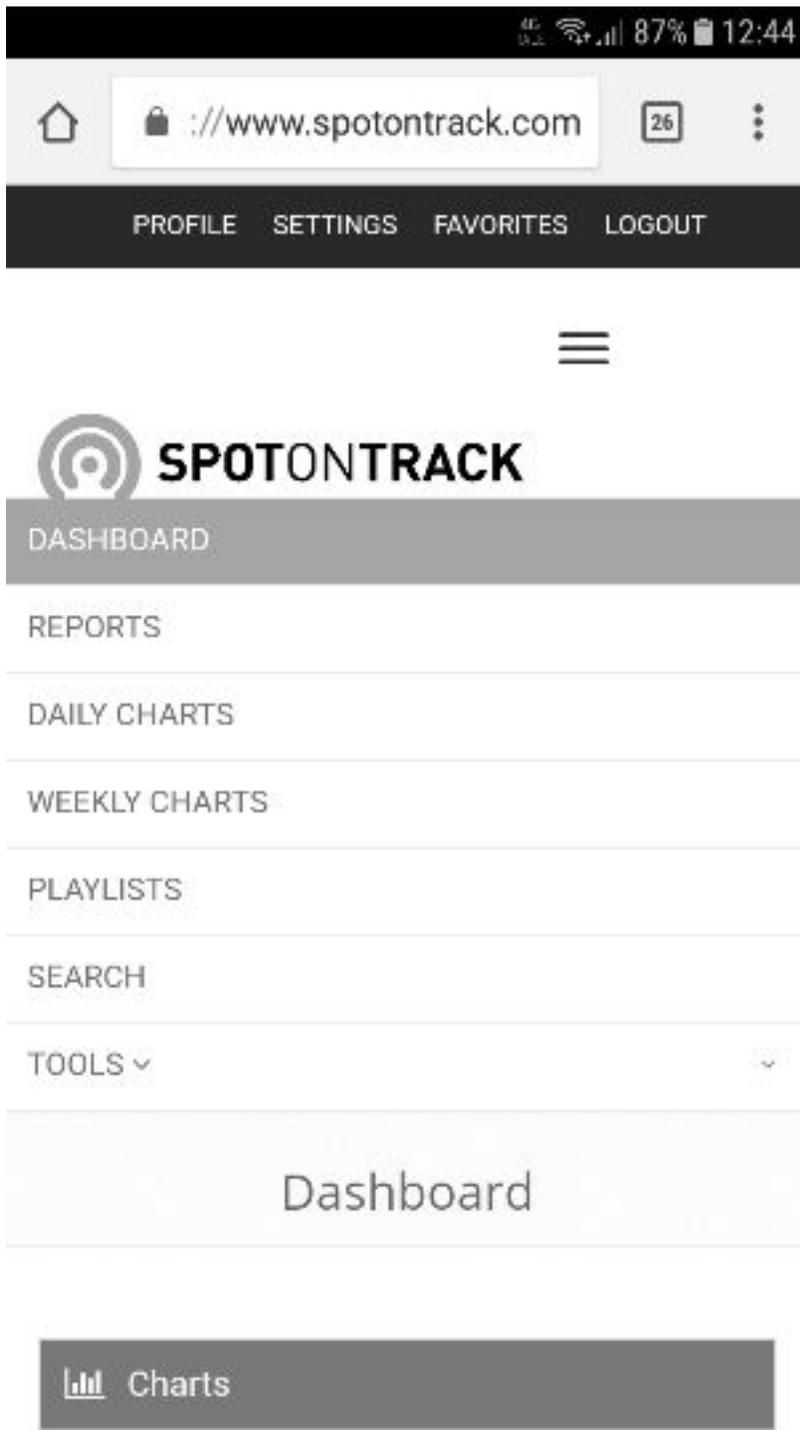
I get ask this question so many times on where to find these people? I will show how I go about find playlisters and curators on spotify.

**Google Search** - I usually start of with finding playlist, curators, and playlisters here. You have some who would rather for you to submit to a form rather than emailing them. Most of them you can find here on google.

**Spotify** - Yes, you can find curators and playlisters here. For example, for “Fallin” I typed in the search bar “*Summer vibes*” and scroll down to playlist all and you will find many curators, tastemakers, and playlisters in that pile.

**Spotontrack** - <https://www.spotontrack.com>, a free based user for searching for spotify playlists only. *“Spot On Track is here to help. Spot On Track is a tool that helps listeners follow their favorite artists, songs, playlists, etc. and see how they are doing on a billboard chart standpoint. Spot On Track is a useful tool for listeners because they are able to listen to their favorite artists and see exactly how they are doing on a billboard standpoint. Having easy to view charts, graphics and being a free beta app makes Spot On Track very user-friendly and definitely something to look into trying out. Fans are also able to see what countries their favorite artists are the most popular in.*

*Spot On Track makes a great tool for artists to use for promotion as well. Artists are able to track their albums, songs and playlists they’re on to better understand what music of theirs is hot and what is not. Through Spot On Track, artists are also able to have a better understanding of exactly what cities, states and even countries stream their music the most. This helps the DIY musician world because artists are able to book a better run of shows or blown out tours based on knowing where their music is listened to most. From musicians to fans, Spot On Track is a great tool to better understand streamed music on a larger scale.”* (Spotontrack, 2018)



*Figure 5.2.1 Spotontrack is a spotify chart tracker that allow one to check on what the world is listening to.*

**Chartmetric** - “let’s you sift through almost every playlist/curator on Spotify, Apple Music and Deezer. You can filter out official Spotify owned playlists, only seeing independent and non-Spotify owned playlists. The best feature is that you can filter by curators (or someone else) who have added their social media URLs - making it easier to narrow down your search. You can also filter out Spotify and major label brands, showing only independent curators”. (Michael e-book, 2018).

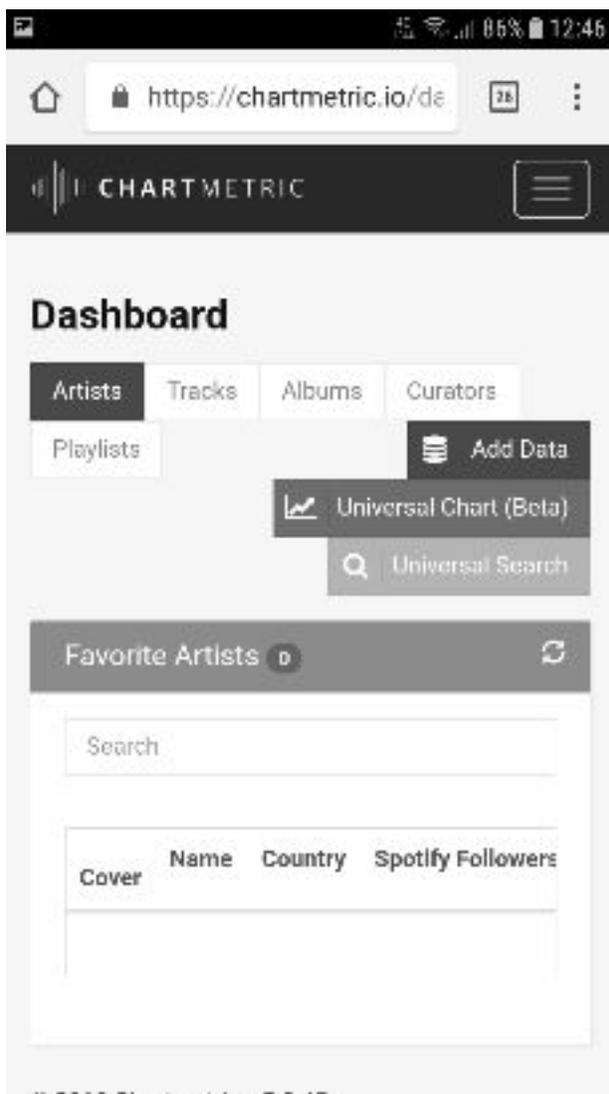
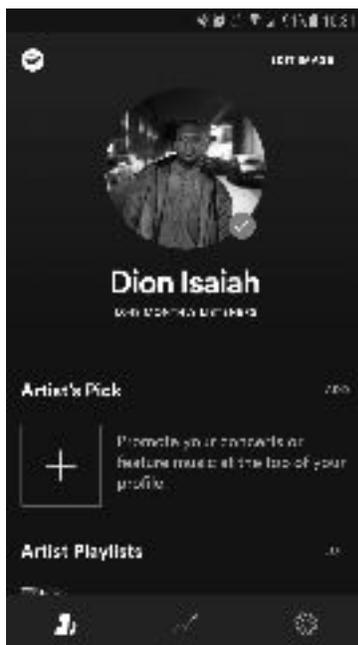


Figure 5.2.2 **Chartmetric** is data tracking service for musicians to get insights to different playlist from Apple music to Spotify.

### 5.3 Spotify for Artist

*“In November 2015, Spotify introduced a "Fan Insights" panel in limited beta form, letting artists and managers access data on monthly listeners, geographical data, demographic information, music preferences and more. In April 2017, the panel was upgraded to leave beta status, renamed as "Spotify for Artists", and opening up to all artists and managers. Additional features include the ability to get "verified" status with a blue checkmark on an artist's profile, receiving artist support from Spotify, and customising the profile page with photos and promoting a certain song as their "pick".” (Wikipedia, 2018)*

Having this fan insight provided me with the tools to also find spotify curators and playslitters who are actually artist. Since 2017, I have gained over 380 followers on Spotify. That may not be much, but most of these are fans I gained just primarily releases of the songs through playlitters and curators. Also the fan insight shows demographics of who listens most to your music male or female, the location of most listeners, streaming of one’s music, and the amount of monthly listeners.

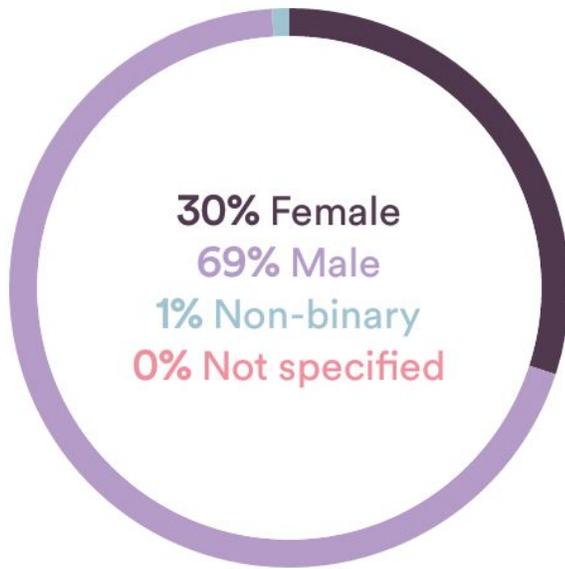


*Figure 5.3.1 Spotify for Artist is an insight and guide for artist to get what is need out of Spotify.*

# ← Audience

## Their gender

LAST 28 DAYS



## Their age

LAST 28 DAYS

< 18 5%



Figure 5.3.2

← **Fallin'**

### Top countries for this song

LAST 28 DAYS		LISTENERS
1	Norway	26
2	United States	18
3	Spain	9
4	Sweden	8
5	Germany	7

See all

### Top cities for this song

LAST 28 DAYS LISTENERS



Figure 5.3.3



# ← Fallin'

## Top cities for this song

LAST 28 DAYS

LISTENERS

1	<b>Kristiansand</b> Norway	11
2	<b>Oslo</b> Norway	6
3	<b>Barcelona</b> Spain	3
4	<b>Chicago</b> United States	3
5	<b>London</b> United Kingdom	3

See all

## Playlists for this song



Figure 5.3.4

← **Fallin'**

### Sources of streams

LAST 28 DAYS

Your Profile & Catalog 50%

Their Own Playlists & Library 4%

Other Listener's Playlists 37%

Our Personalized Playlists 0%

Our Editorial Playlists 0%

Unknown 8%



Figure 5.3.5

← Audience

Who else they listen to

-  Kamalung
-  My Buddy Mike
-  Marian & Sean
-  Sory
-  Krosses

See all

Top countries



Figure 5.3.6

## 5.4 Spotify Contacts

Here are the following playlist, playlister, and curators that I will be making this particular approach. These are just a few contacts that I have on my list. There are more that fits with the release.

1. Mike Biggane
2. Austin Kramer
3. Triple J Hitlist
4. Simon field IZBIA
5. Filtr Australia
6. NRK P3 Spillister
7. H&M in Store Music
8. Filtr Norway 2018
9. Pretty light - Holy Shit
10. George FM Playlist - George FM
11. Nye Hits 2019 - Norway
12. Switerzland Filtr
13. La Bella Musique
14. Seanrpedmunds
15. Showtek
16. Ultra Music - Indie dance
17. Future Classic
18. Indiemono - Pop playlist 2018
19. Your EDM / Week in Music
20. College Music / Chilled Beats
21. Wolfgang Wee -
22. Manifesto - Best of Popular
23. TMRW Music -
24. Summer 2018 - deep playlist
25. Hype Machine -
26. P3 med Germund Stenhag
27. Vallis Alps - Vallis Select
28. The afternoons - joe and the juice
29. Dasding - Dasding play
30. Mixmash Records
31. Digster Norge - Website

## 6. ANALYZING, INTERPRETING DATA, AND RESULTS

Putting my approach to action, I came up with some data that I was really satisfied with so far. My approach with interacting with different artist, dj's, and labels got me faster rate responses than Michael's Warner approaches. This by no means to downplay his approach, but I believe different approaches work for different people. There is not written in my results, but it can only be shown visually and explained within the pictures themselves.

The single "Fallin'" was emailed to over 90 spotify playlists. Out of all them 25 have responded, 12 has entered the song in their respective playlist (22 entries) and 13 rejected the single. My follower went up 380 to 392. There is more playlists and curators that have accepted the song, but the song will be put on their playlist next week.

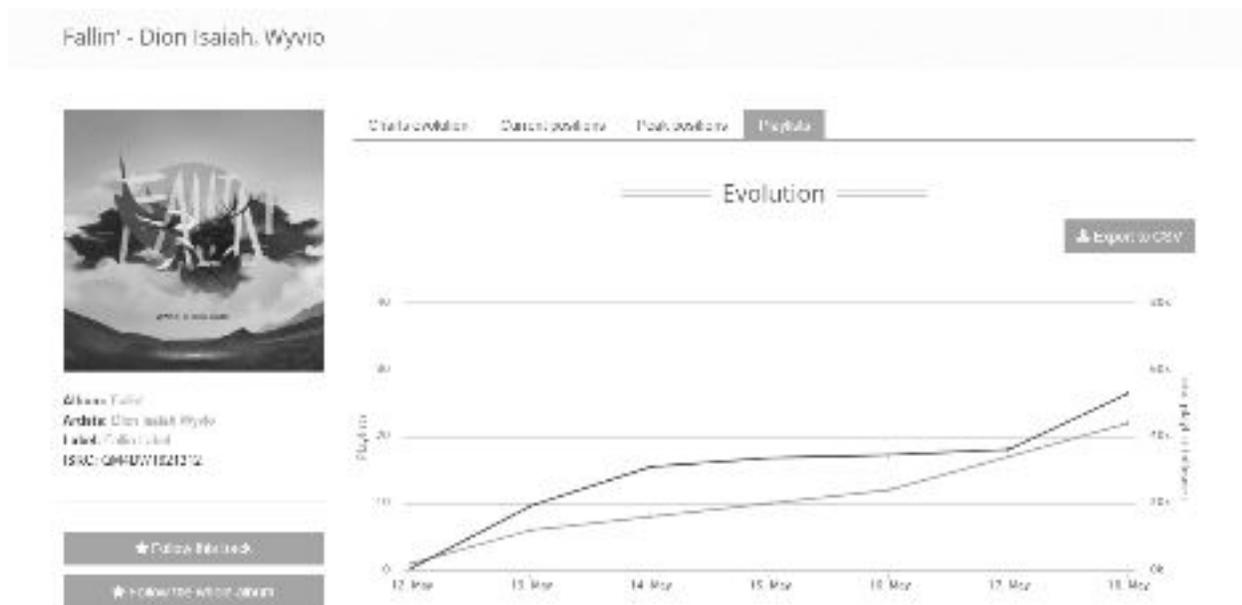


Figure 6.1.1 Here the **Spotontrack chart** shows the evolution of the amount of playlists and followers by the day of the release to the 18th of May. This will continue to change on a daily basis. The black line shows the numbers of total playlist followers and the grey is number how many playlist the song has entered.

Danceability: 77%  
 Valence: 63%  
 Energy: 77%  
 Acousticness: 26%  
 Instrumentalness: 7%  
 Liveness: 22%  
 Speechiness: 6%



Playlist Name	Followers	Created	Tracks
BASS BOOSTED 🎧 Car Music Mix 2018 🎧 Best EDM, Bounce, Electro House	4,177	2018-09-17	4,376
Best Workout Music Mix 2018 🎧 Gym Motivation Music	4,170	2018-09-17	1,730
ZARA in Store Music Playlist 2018   Fashion Store Music	3,154	2018-09-17	2,506
Ibiza Summer 2018 🎧 Best Summer Hits 🎧 Best Of Remixes Deep House & Tropical 2018	4,107	2018-09-17	2,071
Zepet Collection	3,140	2018-09-17	540
Disco House 2018 🎧	40,164	2018-09-15	601
Fresh Beats	14,718	2018-09-15	1,475
Perfect House Bag	37,215	2018-09-15	288
Weekly Picks   Dindwithfriends	37,128	2018-09-14	1,034

Figure 6.1.2. Spotify curators and playlist chart on where the song has been placed.

Danceability: 70%  
 Valence: 65%  
 Energy: 77%  
 Acousticness: 26%  
 Instrumentalness: 6%  
 Liveness: 23%  
 Speechiness: 6%



Playlist Name	Followers	Created	Tracks
Summer Vibes	15,791	2018-09-14	37
Trending EDM Essentials	35,756	2018-09-13	5,582
Best House Songs // EDM, Electro, Progressive, Dance Music // Tomorrowland, EDC, UMF, Ultra	37,700	2018-09-13	3,417
Just bigmergence cohort All hip tracks no majors	142,100	2018-09-13	3
Nyctol	47,730	2018-09-12	571
Mandagsklubben - Mingleik Vol.1	32,251	2018-09-12	22
Fresh Picks	46,700	2018-09-11	2,210
New Electronic	21,100	2018-09-11	1,287
Música Electrónica 2018 (Actualizada cada viernes)	40,756	2018-09-11	4,583

Figure 6.1.3

When it comes to the numbers on Spotify, I believe the progress is slow at the moment. Here is how “Fallin’” is doing so far.

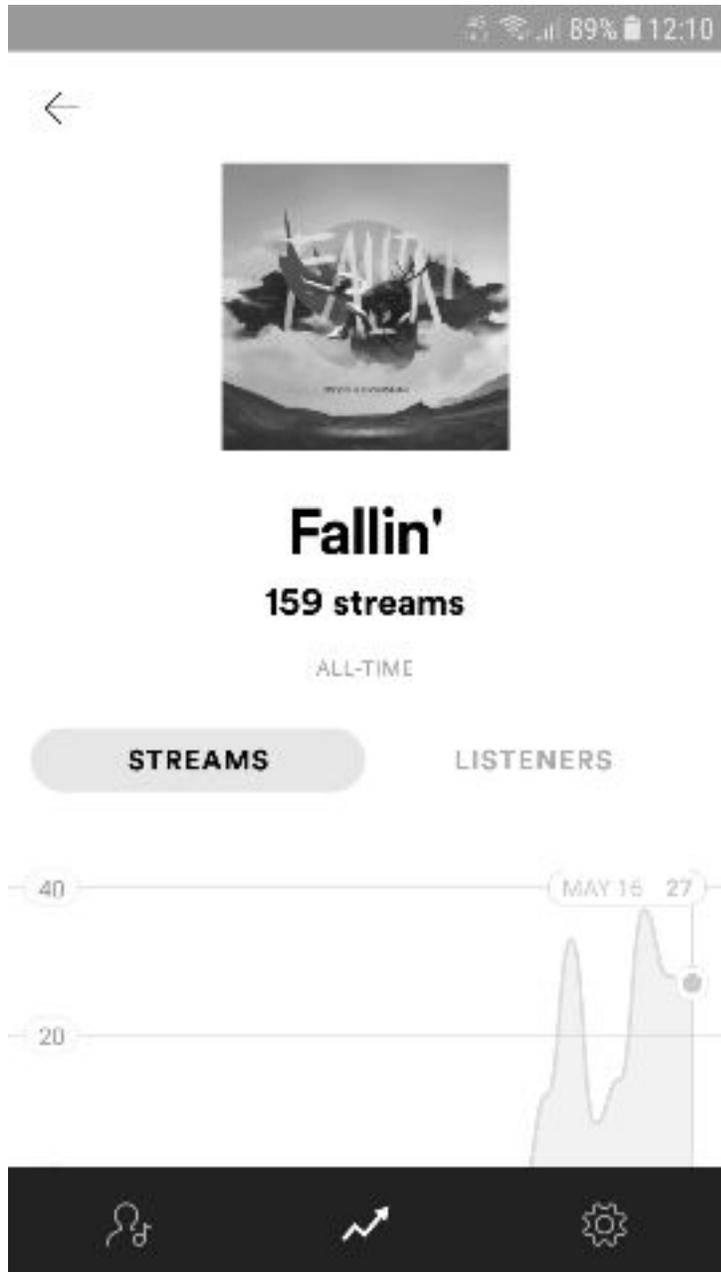


Figure 6.1.4 Here this *spotify for artists chart* shows the amount of streams the song has been played. It's important to note that users must play 30 secs of one's song to count as a stream.

← **Fallin'**

**Sources of streams**

LAST 28 DAYS

Your Profile & Catalog 50%

Their Own Playlists & Library 4%

Other Listener's Playlists 37%

Our Personalized Playlists 0%

Our Editorial Playlists 0%

Unknown 8%



Figure 6.1.5

With more playlist and being in the top position of the each playlist, I hope that spotify algorithm will pick up the song to put it on their “Discover weekly” or potentially Spotify will put it on their playlist.

“**Discover Weekly** is a personalized playlist with 30 old and new songs Spotify thinks you’ve never heard of, updated every Monday. The songs are personalized for each user so no one user has the same Discover Weekly playlist (unless you freakishly have the exact same likes/dislikes/behaviors as someone else).” (Medium...)

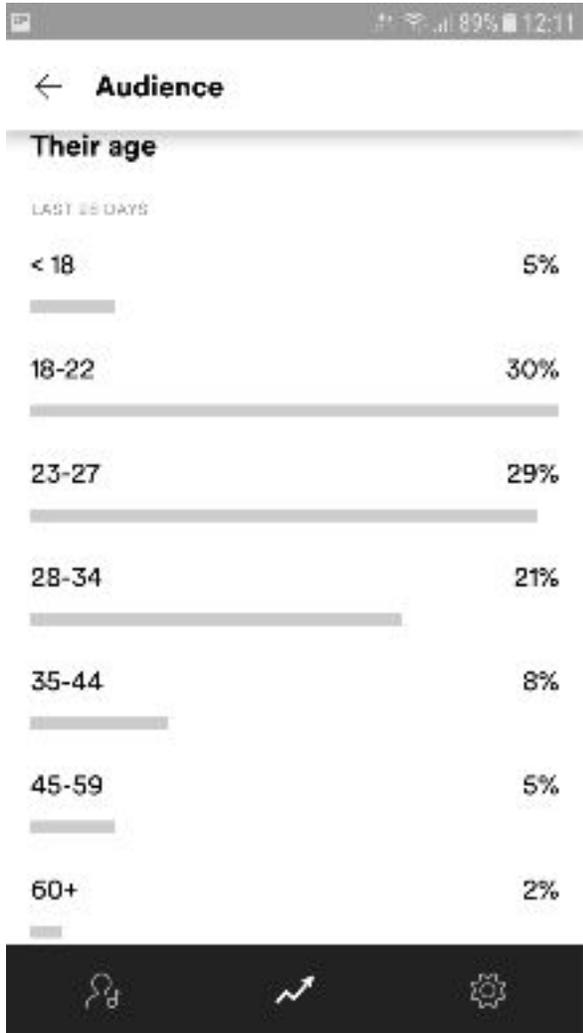


Figure 6.1.6

## 7. CONCLUSION

Coming back to how everything started for me beginning, I can reflect on how an additional interest to understand the process of getting my song on a Spotify playlist has changed my approach to promoting music on streaming platforms. I hope this information helps the reader gain some insight on how they should approach someone on Spotify who has perhaps a huge following on Spotify and to get their song added. Since there is so many approaches to interacting with one another, I hope the reader's can add on to the knowledge that was presented in this research. I think Spotify is the way to go to interact and develop relationships with different curators and playlisters all over the world. I also believe that Spotify can be something like Instagram or even Twitter in the near future. It's already happening with your Artist name, bio, logo, concert performance, etc.

Was my method a success so far? I would say "yes". I do believe my method will change or have some form of tweaking to gain more interaction with Spotify curators and playlisters. One important thing is that this doesn't happen overnight. You have to be consistent with using this method to being added to a playlist. Yes, I know I said before that Michael Warner's approach was very tedious, but my method as well is not some overnight success. You have to be really be into finding a way to get your music heard on these streaming platforms. Find what makes your music unique and just be who are when you interact with curators and playlisters on Spotify.

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