




NEW MUSIC FRIDAYS

Global release day: “think Fridays, think new music”



By Frances Moore, Chief Executive, IFPI

One month from now, music fans around the world will for the first time be able to access new albums and singles on the same day. This is a big achievement. The global release day levels the playing field for music fans internationally. It can raise awareness of newly-released tracks and albums globally. And it's a celebration of new music on an international scale.

Today, we have revealed the “New Music Fridays” branding that will accompany this change. Most consumers today probably don't know what day of the week new releases come out. In future, we hope it will be a case of “Think Fridays . . . think new music”.

Many in the industry have asked why global release day did not happen years ago. But the truth is that switching to a single global release day has been a huge project, involving more than 40 national markets, many different interest groups and thousands of individuals and companies.

The launch of “New Music Fridays” comes after a year of intense consultations and preparation. It is the reward of a collaborative effort bringing together major and independent record companies, retailers, charts providers, artists and musicians.

From the outset at the centre of the global release day discussions has been the music fan. In today's connected world, it simply makes no sense that an album could be released in Australia on a Friday, but not be available in the UK until the following Monday, or in the US until the subsequent Tuesday.

In the past, this did not particularly matter much. Various countries had developed their own agreed release days in isolation, while others did not adhere to a single release day at all. But today's fans around the world are united online through social media. If a consumer in Sydney is streaming and tweeting about a new album on a Friday afternoon, then one in Seattle will know about it.

It is understandable that fans in markets where the album isn't yet released are frustrated that they cannot access it on licensed services. And the risk then is that some of them turn to illegal sites to access the music.

The consumer case for a global release day has not been contentious. Indeed, there has been huge support from across the world, from labels, retailers and the artist community. There was, however, debate over the day with some countries understandably sceptical about moving away from their own national release days.

There are various insights that support a Friday release day. Most important, research by TNS Ncompass across seven leading markets – Brazil, France, Italy, Malaysia, Spain, Sweden and the US – found a strong preference for the start of the weekend. Almost seven in ten of consumers who expressed a preference favoured a Friday or Saturday, and this pattern was consistent across all the markets surveyed.

Other data shows that Friday is the best time for impulse buying and social media activity. And this is supported by many retailers. In the succinct words of Paul McGowan, CEO of HMV's owner, Hilco: "New music should hit the high street when people hit the high street".

Once the decision was made in February to move ahead with implementation, the focus shifted to the enormous logistics involved. A cross-industry international steering committee co-ordinated the project, its activities mirrored locally by similar bodies led by IFPI's affiliated national groups. These groups focused on three areas: supply chain reform, chart modification and marketing and promotion.

"New music should hit the high street when people hit the high street"

Reforming the supply chain has been a very significant task. Some 35 markets worldwide are having to switch release day to a Friday.

There has also been a knock-on effect in the compilation of the charts. For example in the UK, the Official Charts Company used to supply charts on a Sunday to the BBC for broadcast on Radio 1. From 10th July, that process will take place on a Friday to reflect the new release week. Similar changes are happening around the world.

We're also working hard on the promotion of "New Music Fridays". A brand and logo has been created, available in more than a dozen languages, for all retailers and record companies to use as part of their individual release campaigns. These will play a vital part in the campaign to encourage the public to think Fridays, think new music.

"New Music Fridays" has been a tremendous example of cross-industry collaboration. While no switchover will ever be 100 per cent flawless, we think that all the ground has been covered to make the switchover work. I believe this is a big step forward for the whole music sector. The task now is to embrace the marketing opportunity that "New Music Fridays" offer to help promote great new music to fans worldwide.