Getting your singles online

A BPI guide for independents

Supported by

CatCo

THE OFFICIAL UK CHARTS COMPANY

Foreword

It's a long, long way away from Percy Dickins's first UK Singles Chart back in 1952.

When the all-new Official UK Singles Chart makes its debut on April 17, it will mark the biggest change in chart compilation since the switch from paper diaries to electronic compilation back in 1983.

For the first time download formats will count in the Singles Chart alongside physical product. It will mark the culmination of more than two years' work by the BPI, OCC, CatCo and others. And it promises to be a significant milestone in the industry's evolution into an increasingly digital business.

The challenges this presents to labels and retailers alike are significant. It means finding new ways of working, it means acquiring new skills, it means finding new and often different kinds of business partner.

These challenges are significant even for the biggest players in our industry. For independents – always smaller, often under-funded – these are enormous challenges indeed.

For people whose number one motivation is often A&R, the sudden requirement to develop an inordinate interest in "metadata" – previously known to the more mature of us as "label copy" – was always going to be a stretch.

Not to mention the fact that some of the new digital services that emerged were not always as indie-friendly as they might have been.

Whatever the reasons, it has been clear for months that the representation of independent music online has lagged behind its success in the physical world.

The point is to do something about it.

This BPI-sponsored guide – supported by the OCC and CatCo – is just one of a series of measures we have taken in an attempt to progress the issue.

It attempts to boil down the problem into a series of clear guidelines, choices, tips and contacts which we hope will help every independent label to compete on a level playing field.

What no one can afford to do is to ignore or stand in the way of the opportunities the new chart presents. We need to nail the myth that the record industry is slow to react to new technology. We need to ensure that every single is available as a download as well as a physical product.

If we can achieve this, I am convinced that the singles market will once again thrive to the benefit of every label large and small alike.

Peter Jamieson,
Chairman, BPI

Sponsored by

The BPI is the trade association for the UK recording industry, dedicated to representing the common interests of all labels, small or large. The BPI is taking a leading role in helping the industry manage the transition to online distribution. On the one hand, it is taking a high profile action against the unauthorised distribution of music online. On the other, is it working to encourage the spread of legal online services. This guide forms part of that campaign.

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CatCo is the record industry's sound recording database. It is owned by Phonographic Performance Ltd (PPL) – the company which collects royalties for the public performance of sound recordings – which allows PPL record company members to submit new release data electronically.

Contact: CatCo, One Upper James Street, London W1F 9DE. Tel: 020 7534 1000. Fax: 020 7534 1111. Website: www.ppluk.com

The Official UK Charts Company (OCC) is a joint venture between retailers' association Bard and record industry association the BPI, which compiles and publishes the UK's official sales charts. It launched the Official Download Chart last September.

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A new chart

The all-new Official UK Singles Chart will be launched on April 17. Consolidating physical and digital sales, it promises a more accurate barometer of consumer tastes as well as highlighting the growing acceptance of digital as another format, rather than something distinctly separate. The Official UK Charts Company, a joint venture between the BPI and Bard, has been monitoring and developing links with key players in the digital market since 2003.

The raft of services launched in early 2004 provided the basis for OCC to compile the UK's first Official Download Chart on September 1 2004 and provide the industry and the consumer with the first listings covering the best-selling songs online.

Since then, OCC has tracked the rapid growth in legal downloading on a weekly basis and provided a focus for the burgeoning digital market. But within a short space of time, the relationship between the physical singles market and the top end of the digital market had increased the case for integrating digital formats into the existing Official UK Singles Chart.

Of course, going digital is not without its challenges.

Certainly, the relationship between digital retailers and some independents has so far at times been an uneasy one and the lack of independent repertoire in the current Download Chart was cited as the major reason for delaying the introduction of the new combined chart.

Since the emergence of legal download services last year, there are now numerous services available directed specifically at helping [independent labels] to get started in the digital world

Such issues are not going to disappear overnight, but there are now numerous services available directed specifically at helping them to get started in the digital world.

So what are the opportunities? How can labels on a tight budget take advantage of them? And what are the rules guiding this new chart?

Over the following pages, you will find some answers.

Contents

The basics
Knowing the rules

For any label looking to compete in the UK's charts, a key starting point is understanding the rules of engagement. For any digital release to qualify for the new consolidated singles chart, it must fulfil a number of key criteria:

■ Sales of digital formats will only count towards the new combined chart after the release of a physical single. Singles released only as digital downloads will qualify for the Download Chart. A digital single will qualify for the combined chart once a physical equivalent is released.

■ Digital formats can consist of a bundle of tracks as long as these are matched by a physical equivalent. All bundles must be identified by a relevant barcode as well as ISRC codes for individual tracks and must not exceed the running time of the corresponding physical format. They can also include sleeve notes, images and streaming video.

■ The minimum dealer price for a digital single must be £0.40p*.

■ The chart is compiled from sales of permanent digital downloads over a seven-day period from Sunday to Saturday inclusive.

■ Maximum playing time is 10 minutes for a single track download.

■ Only permanently owned downloads will be eligible. That means one song, purchased individually, which is digitally downloaded and permanently owned by the consumer.

■ All permanent digital downloads must be identified by a unique ISRC code of which CatCo must be notified at least three weeks prior to release. The job of supplying metadata is incredibly important and is discussed further opposite.

■ Sales of permanent digital downloads will be counted towards the Official UK stand alone Download Chart from the day of purchase as reported by retailers on the Chart panel.

■ Single tracks can be released in variety of alternative versions/ mixes. These sales will be collated into one featured track and one chart position.

■ Promotional tracks (free to consumer tracks) will not be chart eligible.

* Only tracks with a minimum PPD of 40p or more shall be eligible for the download chart. In the event that a record company has an alternative business model for the sale of downloads (ie one not based on a published dealer price), the price charged to the online digital retailer should not be less than 32p per track. OCC will monitor sales to ensure they are "genuine sales". Where OCC judges sales not to be genuine, they may be excluded from the chart at OCC's absolute discretion.

How will the chart be compiled?

The process by which download data is absorbed into the new Official UK Singles Chart is best illustrated by the flow diagram pictured right.

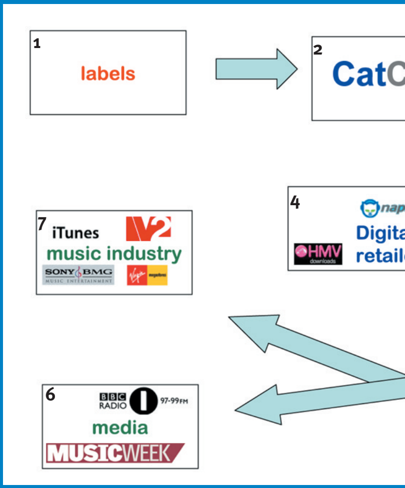
■ Labels (1) supply information to CatCo (2) including relevant ISRC codes and label copy three weeks before release dates.

■ All tracks are referenced by their ISRC code. Millward Brown (3) identifies tracks from information previously supplied by CatCo. Any tracks not identified will be sent back to CatCo in the form of an ISRC exception file for identification.

■ The chart is compiled from daily sales data received by Millward Brown (3) from all eligible retailers (4). Chart eligible retailers include 7 Digital, Big Noise Music, Bleep, DX3, easyMusic.com, Woolworths.co.uk, HMV, iTunes, Karmadownload, Meantunes, MSN, myCokeMusic.com, Napster, OD2, Recordstore.co.uk, Tiscali, The Music Engine, Virgin, War Child and Wippit.

■ OCC are also in discussion with a number of digital services due to launch later this year and labels will be kept informed of any additions to the digital chart panel as they occur.

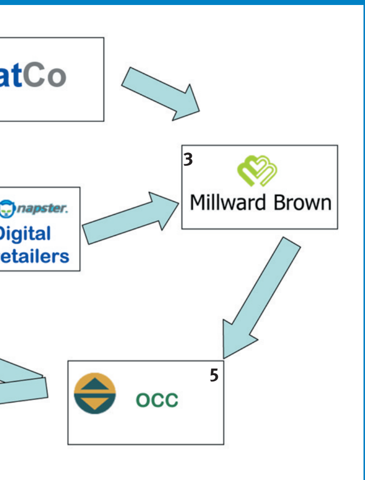
■ Millward Brown collates all received physical and digital sales and delivers the new Official Singles Chart to OCC (5) for broadcast each Sunday by media including Radio One and *Music Week* (6) and it is delivered to the music industry (7).



The basics
Getting the data right

Summary

1. Ensure releases are registered with CatCo at least three weeks in advance of being made physically or digitally available.
2. All physical and digital releases must be registered with CatCo via App v4 or the CatCo load specifications. To sign up contact info@catcouk.com or call 0207 534 1331.
3. All commercial products must be registered with a valid barcode.
4. All recordings must be registered with a valid ISRC.
5. Ensure data supplied is accurate and consistent.



For any release to qualify for the new combined singles chart, CatCo must be provided with the correct ISRC codes plus all relevant label copy (eg track, title and barcode information) three weeks before release date.

The 12-digit ISRC code is the key to how the new chart will work. It is the unique reference point between CatCo, the digital service provider (DSP), Millward Brown and the OCC for linking ISRCs to the barcode on the physical product.

When a track is downloaded from a DSP they report back to Millward Brown with the ISRC reference. This is then matched to a track and artist by CatCo and passed on to the OCC.

In effect, the ISRC will act as each track's individual catalogue number.

If the ISRC is missing or late, the relevant download cannot count towards the combined chart. If other key pieces of information (barcode, track title, label details) are not submitted to CatCo at the same time then the digital release will not be linked to the physical release.

If you want to be in the first chart on April 17, CatCo needs your metadata by March 23

Again, this will mean your track will not appear as high in the combined chart.

Also, as a record label, if your data is incorrect then you are not going to receive your full market share and retailers may be unable to account back to you accurately.

Certainly, the message from CatCo's Clive Bishop on metadata is clear: "Send it once, send it right."

Metadata is the information that uniquely describes the digital music file – vital when you are placing your music into what are essentially digital search and delivery engines.

The responsibility to supply this metadata falls at the door of the labels themselves.

With so much importance riding on its accurate delivery that means metadata should never be treated as a "back office" job, or the task for an intern or work-placement person.

Whether it is a distributor, aggregator or DSP, all will require 101% accuracy in terms of what they are supplied with.

Unfortunately, that means one of the more laborious tasks involved in the digitisation process is probably the most important. But every label must implement a watertight system where metadata is accurately fulfilled each and every time.

Metadata requirements are equivalent to label copy or a digital album sleeve – only more so.

In addition to the basics such as track titles and artists, labels will be providing dates, composers, musicians, genre and contacts as well as tracking information such as ISRCs, barcodes and territory rights.

The task is made even more difficult when digitising back catalogue releases.

With timing already a growing issue in regards to digital releases going live on DSPs and being consolidated with physical releases, there is no margin for error.

Routes to market
Overview

Five questions for every label

When choosing a route to market, labels should consider:

- Can I get a deal?
- How competitive is it?
- How long is it going to take me to implement?
- Do they have the means to produce and supply?
- If they have, then are they able to see that through and get it live on the site?

The technology – and the jargon – of downloads may be novel to many record companies, but the commercial fundamentals are surprisingly familiar to anyone who has run a label.

Just as CDs needed to be manufactured and distributed to the right destinations, so digital files need to be encoded, delivered to retail and marketed.

And again, just like the physical world, the process of getting product into a small independent store will require a different strategy to gaining access to a major retailer. Needless to say it all has cost attached.

When choosing a route to market, labels should consider a number of questions (see breakout above).

Of course, ideally speaking most labels would like to be represented across the board in both independent stores and the major retailers. However, as each retailer will require both its own licensing deal and the music digitised to its own specific requirements, this may not be financially feasible or an effective use of resources.

However, breaking the process down, the first two factors to consider are encoding and distribution.

The encoding process essentially involves turning your CD into a digital file and "fingerprinting" it with the relevant metadata.

There are several options here.

Some retailers, such as Bleep and KarmaDownload, will encode data free of charge. They will usually just require a master CD of the finished tracks plus all the necessary metadata and JPG image files.

The larger retailers will require that music is supplied to them already digitised and in the format they require – eg iTunes will need your music encoded as AAC files, while Napster would need them in WMA.

Just as CDs needed to be manufactured and distributed to the right destinations, so digital files need to be encoded, delivered to retail and marketed

Unless a label can physically do this itself and deliver the results, this will then necessitate either employing a distributor/aggregator or a company specialising in digital rights management.

Both will cost money, but there are obvious benefits to using an aggregator.

There is some blurring of functionality here – some companies cover a whole bunch of different functions, or maybe even just one or two – but there are feasible options for independents and these are growing all the time.

1. Selling downloads from your website

Summary

- Can drive traffic straight to website and enhance fan/artist relationship.
- Can help sell other merchandise.
- Dual option – single track or digital single downloads – gives flexibility.
- Can be turned around quickly.
- But less appropriate to artist/label without catalogue.
- Have to work with recognised players for sales to be chart eligible.

Working outside the main retailers will usually involve either a custom-made digital store being built into an artist's or label's website or the creation of a stand-alone digital single package.

The digital store's primary advantage is that it drives traffic straight to an artist or label website and can enhance fan/artist relationships. Digital stores can also sell and promote a wide range of catalogue as well as physical merchandise such as CDs, clothing and so on.

Simon Moxon of Recordstore.co.uk – which has set up shops for Bloc Party and Stereophonics – says, "If you were a fan of an artist, then you would want to go directly to that artist's website. It's just so much easier to have one shopping basket that bundles everything together, their digital downloads, CDs, T-shirts or other merchandise."

Similarly, the digital single usually works by bundling additional content into one contained package. In effect, this distinguishes the digital single from a "track". Additional content may include streaming video, artwork, lyrics or competitions. These are then hosted on any number of partner sites.

Singles, in particular, can be used as promotion or advertising on third-party sites such as NME.com, MTV.com or The Sun.

Download singles offer a good way for a label or artist to dip their toes into the digital world without locking into a fixed-term licensing contract with a distributor or DSP. Cost is usually limited to a one-off set-up fee and then data management on a monthly basis.

Digital stores are usually more appropriate for artists with a deeper range of catalogue but indies such as Rough Trade, Independiente and V2 have all released digital singles.

Ben Drury of 7Digital says, "There are some downloads we have done on a promotional basis which work brilliantly for developing artists where they might not have a strong fanbase, you can get people interested in them and get some customer information."

The digital store's primary advantage is that it drives traffic straight to an artist or label website and can sell and promote a wide range of catalogue as well as physical merchandise

Recordstore.co.uk and 7 Digital are among the providers which are also chart eligible retailers, who take care of all payments/reporting and encoding master recordings.

Players include

7 Digital; Recordstore.co.uk; Blueprint; Consolidated Independent; DRMP; Rightsrouter.

See back page for contact details.

2. Dealing direct with the retailers

Summary

- Cutting out distributor cuts out middle-man.
- Some retailers digitise for free.
- Some retailers prefer to deal with distributor.
- Retailers often need tracks encoded to certain format specifications.
- Can use aggregator to handle logistics.

In theory, dealing directly with retailers looks like a good idea. Cutting out the middle-man of distribution not only appears more cost effective but also means – potentially – a greater share of the profits.

Retailers such as Bleep and KarmaDownload, which essentially act as independent record shops, can remove one of the headaches involved in online retail as they will digitise your masters for free.

"We're structured to take labels' music however they want to get it to us," says KarmaDownload MD Jamie Estrin. "We don't mind. We just want the music. If the label sends us CDs we will digitise them."

This is a real benefit for small labels which may not have a huge catalogue or might only want specific tracks online, adds Tom Panton from Warp's download service Bleep. Bleep has now expanded to sell content for more than 50 labels including Accidental, Memphis Industries and One Little Indian, with the likes of V2 and Rough Trade to be added soon.

However, for an indie with limited resources there are drawbacks to dealing direct, especially if you intend to target multiple retailers.

The majority of online retailers, including iTunes and Napster, will expect your masters to be fully encoded to their own particular format specifications. You will also have to sign separate licensing deals for each retailer and coordinate it so that each track goes live at the same time.

Add to that the marketing factor and the hassle of tracking royalties, reporting and business management and the workload can be prohibitive.

One way round this is to employ an expert in the field of digital rights management. These companies (such as Consolidated Independent, Blueprint and Rightsrouter) will shoulder the burden of your digital workload: encoding your files, delivering data, managing online licenses and tracking your royalties.

Able to speak the language of the retailers and offer a depth of technological experience, such rights management companies can allow labels to build relationships with retailers (as Beggars Group or Sanctuary do through Consolidated Independent) while freeing them up to concentrate on marketing and doing what they do best – finding and releasing new music.

Dealing directly with retailers not only appears more cost effective but also means – potentially – a greater share of the profit

Players include

iTunes; Napster; Real; Sony Connect; OD2-Loudeye.

See back page for contact details.

3. Using a physical distributor

Summary
- Directly mimics physical world, therefore familiar structure – labels can therefore broaden existing physical deals.
- Distributor has the weight of an aggregator.
- Can handle all logistics – from encoding to delivery and marketing.
- Not all distributors offer a comprehensive service.

In the physical world, it would be highly impractical for most labels to operate without a distributor, or manufacture their own CDs.

When faced with the prospect of negotiations with numerous online retailers, this is also true of the digital world.

One of the most straightforward routes for labels wishing to enter the online marketplace is to sign up with the digital arm of their physical distributor.

Ideally, the digital relationship should mirror what goes on in the physical world – except that your distributor will also take responsibility for digitizing your music

Ideally, this digital relationship should mirror what goes on in the physical world – except that, in addition to delivery, marketing and royalty reporting, your distributor will also take responsibility for digitizing your music.

"Digital is now another format," says Adrian Pope at Vital:Pias Digital. "And because of the merging of the charts, that format has been put front and centre – so you now have to decide whether you want to go CD1, CD2 or seven-inch, as well as digitally. The only complication [regarding the charts] is that you have to release things that are physically available."

Not only should a distributor remove the hassle of attempting to negotiate directly with retailers (the best will have blanket agreements in place with the major ones, as well as the main international sites), they will also provide the marketing muscle to help place downloads in their most productive setting.

Universal Music UK's new Digital Services Division offers electronic music distribution across all its download partners. Combining a digital development label and distribution roles alongside more traditional activities such as building artist websites, the division's Rob Wells says, "Being 40% of the legitimate download business in the UK proves we can (a) deliver on promises when it comes to making the third party repertoire available and (b) we have the robust central systems and accountancy structure needed to ensure our front line label repertoire is represented on the various services."

Using a physical distributor means a complete service from conception to completion – from the encoding of metadata, to the provision of sales reporting, while making sure retailers receive data files weeks before release and that they get everything from sales notes to radio plots.

Players include
Vital:Pias Digital; Pinnacle.
See back page for contact details.

4. Hiring an online aggregator

Summary
- Aggregators are fully familiar with digital processes.
- Can handle all logistics – from encoding to delivery and marketing.
- Can fulfil the distributor function, but only for digital.
- Can use their market influence to maximise potential for label.
- Not as familiar with repertoire as a physical distributor.
- Will licence digital rights for fixed term and seek to exploit them.

The alternative to using a physical distributor is to employ an online aggregator.

In effect, an aggregator will fulfil exactly the same role – overseeing a label's entire digital business affairs from encoding data to delivery and marketing.

Napster's Leanne Sharman says, "We will take people working directly with us, but it is easier if they go through an aggregator such as The Orchard, or any of the other ones. It makes massive sense and, if I was a record label, I could see no reason why I wouldn't do it."

Working for a number of labels, an aggregator such as The Orchard will license a label's digital rights for a fixed term and seek to exploit them in the online marketplace.

"Just as a small label might have a press and distribution deal," says The Orchard VP Scott Cohen. "we would do encoding and delivery."

Similar to a distributor, the great advantage of employing an aggregator is in terms of marketing.

With competition increasing in the digital marketplace, gaining

5. Label deal vs single track deal

editorial access to retail sites is of huge importance.

And the practicalities of business mean they often prefer to deal with collective bodies representing many labels rather than the individual labels themselves.

In practice, the marketing clout offered by a distributor/aggregator can allow even the smallest artists to gain prominent placements on key retailers and reap the rewards.

Players including

The Orchard; Consolidated Independent; Universal Digital Services.

See back page for contact details.

Four benefits to using an aggregator/distributor

- Production – these companies will have the facilities to transfer your music into all relevant digital formats.
- Delivery – many will often have licenses with several, if not all, online retailers. This means, instead of attempting to negotiate deals with the numerous online retailers, labels can take advantage of the blanket licenses which are already in place.
- Management – ensuring files are available and coordinated to appear in the right place at the right time is a key issue, especially for the new chart.
- Marketing – distributors and aggregators already have relationships with the retailers and can get effective and innovative placement for your music. Good marketing is key to sales and offers the greatest prospect of making a return on your outlay.

Summary

- Single track deals give labels a simple route to market.
- Can offer low cost and rapid turnaround option.
- Enables label to ensure correct representation without a full label deal.
- Retailers often not keen on doing single track deals.
- For single tracks, can be simpler to approach a flexible, independent retailer.

As a rule, it will usually be easier to negotiate a label deal than a single track deal, especially with key retailers who tend to work on a "bulk buy" basis.

"For the DSPs, there is actually no business for them in just putting, say, five tracks into a service," explains Beggars Group's Simon Wheeler. "It's got to be on a bulk basis for those companies for it to be financially feasible."

Many argue that those wanting to sign up a single track, or who can only afford to digitise a proportion of their catalogue, would be better advised to approach an independent retailer which operates a more flexible approach, or to consider releasing a one-off digital single.

As already noted, some independent specialists will digitise your music free of charge, although this might mean it is licensed on an exclusive basis.

For the key retailers, the most likely option to prevent an impasse is to sign up with an aggregator or distributor who can remove the burden of digitisation and deliver your catalogue in its entirety.

That, at least, is one view. The single track deal does have a place – even if it just as an initial holding position. With the new consolidated chart, download sales will have an additional benefit aside from the immediate commercial one – namely the potential to improve a single release's chart position.

If everyone else in the market has downloads available, any label which doesn't have access to the digital market because it is trying to hold out for "the perfect deal" may be cutting off its nose to spite its face

And, if everyone else in the market has a download strategy, any label which doesn't have access to the digital market because it is trying to sign a more advantageous, all-encompassing deal may be cutting off its nose to spite its face.

"The great thing about doing a digital single is that it is pretty low cost and can be turned round very quickly – we can do stuff in five days or less," says 7 Digital's Ben Drury.

To compete in the singles market, it will become increasingly important to have a download release strategy. As the old adage goes, you have to be in it to win it.

Marketing
Overview

Digital singles

Summary
- Online marketing is crucial to maximise potential once a digital distribution deal is secured.

Digital singles
- Offer plenty of flexibility, especially for a smaller label.
- Key decision is which sites you partner with.

Distributors/aggregators
- Operate like physical distributor/sales forces.
- Can leverage their power for smaller labels.

Direct to retailer
- More appropriate for big name artists.
- But key independent sites can work for smaller acts.

Effective online marketing is the last piece in the jigsaw for record labels looking to make a digital impact. There are many parallels with the marketing of physical product, but also several key challenges.

Recent statistics from music marketing and research agency Frukt, comparing activity in the traditional and download charts over a seven-week period, highlighted the differences between the two.

Of 56 new entries in the download chart, only one single debuted at number one, while 20% of the total average consisted of new entries.

This is compared to the traditional chart, in which five singles debuted at number one and 25% of the total average consisted of new entries.

Tracing the chart trajectory of several different artists, Frukt concluded that the "shelf life" of a digital single was significantly greater than its physical counterpart, while its momentum was far more protracted.

But, if a single's longevity is likely to increase – a fact which is likely to have significant effects on artists with an established fanbase – what are the marketing opportunities out there?

This will depend very much on how a label went to market in the first place. The differences are comparable to the strategies needed in approaching an HMV or Virgin Megastore to a small local independent shop.

Beth Appleton of V2 says, "Like the physical world, it's all about the exposure you can gain. In the case of Stereophonics' Dakota, we gave iTunes an exclusive, but only for the week. We're learning which bits of promotional space deliver sales results – we now know that 'exclusive' section of iTunes helps boost your sales in a particular category, then hopefully you get into their Top 10 downloads on their home page which facilitiates more sales."

Effective online marketing is the last piece in the jigsaw. There are many parallels with the marketing of physical product, but also several key challenges

So what are the different types of markets and the different opportunities they offer? Here are some options.

If a label or artist's digital proposition centres around the release of one-off, ad hoc digital singles, the marketing challenge is very specific.

The digital single is, essentially, the digital counterpart to the traditional physical single. It is distinct from a single track download because, put simply, it may comprise a bundle of tracks – such as the A-side, plus relevant B-sides – which feature on the equivalent physical release.

In contrast, the single track download is what is says it is – a download of one track.

Since digital singles do not involve a direct approach to a retailer per se, they probably offer the greatest scope in terms of marketing, especially for a small label.

Their bespoke nature, the fact that they can be designed in a "package" and tailored to an artist's image and are usually offered via third-party hosts allows digital singles to stand out.

Add to this the incentive of bonus content (such as streaming video, lyrics, artwork or competitions) and the digital single is already relatively distinct from its more "vanilla" counterpart.

The main decision for labels is which sites you choose to host your single – whether it is an ISP, an online music magazine or a newspaper – and how prominently you can negotiate a link/ advertising space.

Your digital service provider should be able to help with this.

Distributors/ aggregators

As these have the strongest relationships with retail they also offer the greatest marketing opportunities.

Although essentially no different from physical marketing, the online approach does require a more hybrid strategy – somewhere between radio plugging and retail promotion.

"If you don't know who's programming the main pages of all these digital music stores then you don't have any chance of getting on there," explains The Orchard's Scott Cohen. "It's just not in the realm of possibility."

"A radio programmer doesn't sit around deciding what to play – a song plugger goes in there and says, 'Here's what you should play.' They make their choices from that."

The bottom line is that key retailers are simply unable to open dialogue with every label on an individual basis. This may mean devolving your catalogue to a third-party expert who can represent many different labels is the key to gaining any sort of access.

With consumers tending to congregate around certain hubs (such as genre-based or brand-centric services), prominent placement of artists is therefore essential.

Again, making the parallel with the physical market, a good placement on the right web page is effectively no different as racking displays or promotion by the front door of a high street retailer.

Such online marketing will only work in tandem with an artist's overall campaign (eg if an artist is creating a buzz in the press or creating news), but Cohen estimates that a prominent placement will increase the sales of a well-known artist by approximately 10 times.

For an unknown artist he puts the figure at between 100 to 1,000 times.

The good news is that retailers do run a fairly open editorial policy and evidence shows that, with the right approach, independent acts can get exposure – The Orchard runs an estimated 50-100 marketing programmes across each of the different services on any one day, with the likes of Grand National, Kaiser Chiefs and Roots Manuva (Vital:Pias Digital) and Azymuth, Tom Vek and Holly Golightly (state51) all getting front page placements.

Direct to retailer

The simple logistics of business mean that dealing directly with the biggest retailers will always be difficult unless you have got an artist who is huge in commercial terms or a catalogue with some depth.

However, if dealing with key independent sites – especially those built around a certain niche or genre – there will usually be the opportunity to negotiate placements onto a recommended section or to make sure you are listed with like-minded artists.

Overall marketing will very much depend on your relationship and affinity to the DSP.

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33 Glasshouse St
London W1B 5DG
T: +44 (0) 20 7434 5050

iTunes
www.apple.com
20 Garrick Street, London, WC2E 9BT
t: +44 (0) 20 7331 4409

Karma Music Group
w: www.karmadownload.com
3 Stucley Place
London NW1 8NS
t: +44 (0) 20 7284 4484

The Music Engine
www.themusicengine.com
81 Rivington Street,
London EC2A 3AY
T: + 44 (0) 20 7739 2611

Napster
www.napster.co.uk
57-61 Mortimer Street, London, W1W 8HS
+44 (0) 20 7101 7281

OD2-Loudeye
www.OD2.co.uk
On Demand Distribution Limited
Bush House, 72 Prince St, Bristol, BS1 4QD, UK
tel +44 (0) 117 910 0150

The Orchard
www.theorchard.com
25 Floral Street, Covent Garden, London WC2E 9DS
t: +44 (0) 20 7031 8278

Pinnacle
www.pinnacle-entertainmnet.co.uk
Heather Court, 6 Maidstone Road, Sidcup DA14 5HH
T: +44 (0) 20 8309 3897

REAL
www.real.com
32 Brook Street, London, W1K 5DL
t: +44 (0) 20 7290 1223

Recordstore.co.uk
www.recordstore.co.uk
Unit 5, Waldo Works, Waldo Road, London NW10 6AW
T: +44 (0) 20 8964 9020

Rightsrouter
www.rightsrouter.com
11 Sandyford Place Glasgow
G3 7NB
T: +44 (0) 141 222 1790

7 Digital
www.7digital.com
6th Floor, Palladium House, One Argyll Street, London W1F 7TA
t: +44 (0) 20 7494 6589

Sony Connect
www.connect-europe.com
The Heights, Weybridge, KT13 0XW
t: +44 (0) 1932 81 6698

Universal Digital Services
www.umusic.com
8 St. James's Square, London, SW1Y 4JU
t: +44 (0) 20 7747 4159

Vital:Pias Digital
www.vitaluk.com
Vital Sales & Marketing,
338a Ladbroke Grove, London, W10 5AH
t: +44 (0) 20 8324 2445

Warp Records/Bleep
www.warprecords.com/bleep
Spectrum House,
32-34 Gordon House Road,
London NW5 1LP
T: +44 (0) 20 7284 8350