

Legal Alerts

Music Industry Considering Uniform Weekly Album Release Day

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Billboard reports that music industry leaders are considering a single worldwide weekly release day for new albums. The International Federation of the Phonograph Industry (IFPI) is proposing a uniform release day of Friday in a move that departs from the existing disjointed jurisdictional variation resulting from each territory's ability to select its own release day. As a result, albums are currently released on Friday in Australia and Germany, Monday in the United Kingdom, and Tuesday in the United States. The unification initiative is supported by the Recording Industry Association of America and executives in the major music territories and at the major labels.

The move appears to be an effort to combat music piracy. Under the current system, when an album is released on Friday in Australia and Germany, music piracy via sharing on the Internet is in full swing well before the album is released and available for purchase by fans a few days later in the United Kingdom and the United States. There are also reports that the initiative is in part a reaction to the industry shake-up resulting from the surprise global digital video album release by Beyoncé on December 13, 2013 (a Friday).

Labels may find themselves having to adjust their marketing and promotional plans for artists with the uniform release day. Where artists may have previously scheduled release day events over the course of a few days in various territories, they may now have to choose a single market for a release event. While digital music services are reportedly enthusiastic about the uniform release day, smaller independent labels and physical retailers have expressed concern that album sales will be affected, as they say earlier-in-the-week album releases generate greater sales for the entire week of release. Industry sources note that this may require physical retailers to change their operational models, as they could see the bulk of album sales occur on the one uniform release day. The new release schedule could also require changes in manufacturing and distribution operations. The impact on music charts remains to be seen as well.

Other industries in the United States, like home video, books, and video games, have long followed a Tuesday release day model. Time will tell if this change in music industry practice will affect other entertainment products.

If adopted, the new release structure would become effective in July 2015.

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