

# Warner Music turns to YouTube tastemakers

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To promote its new song from platinum-selling country music artist Hunter Hayes and Grammy winner Jason Mraz on Tuesday, Warner Music Group didn't book its stars on "Good Morning America" or "Late Night With Jimmy Fallon."

It made a [video](#) for YouTube.

YouTube has elbowed out radio, MTV, Yahoo and Myspace as the leading way to reach young [music](#) listeners, and some of its personalities have emerged as tastemakers.

"For teens through age 24, YouTube is where people listen to the most music," said David Bakula, a [senior vice president](#) at audience measurement firm Nielsen. "It's ahead of radio, it's ahead of things like Pandora (and other forms of) streaming radio or any other apps that they might use to listen to music."

Its power is hard to ignore. Robin Thicke's summer sizzler "Blurred Lines" received 464,000 spins at U.S. radio stations tracked by Nielsen and generated 6 million digital song sales through last week.

The two official YouTube versions of the song drew 217 million views worldwide over the same period.

For the record company, the value of the music video is largely promotional, much like traditional radio.

Although YouTube doesn't sell music, it can expose a song to its 1 billion monthly users. If the song is a hit, some portion of the viewers will spring for a download from iTunes, Amazon.com or a similar service. And even if they don't buy the song, YouTube and the record company share in the revenue from ads that accompany the video.

The idea for the collaboration was hatched at a dinner last March attended by executives of Warner Music and YouTube, a unit of Google Inc., who were attending the South by Southwest music and media conference in Austin, Texas.

Warner Music executives were looking for ways to reach consumers known as Generation C - a term Google uses to describe people ages 18 to 34 who watch online video, visit social networks and blogs, and use tablets and smartphones.

"We were trying to figure out this new concept of how to reach Generation C, how we connect with fans on a much deeper level," said Jeremy M. Holley, Warner Music Nashville's senior vice president of consumer marketing.

Working in partnership with YouTube, Warner Music embarked on a rare musical joint venture between its recording artists and the musicians who have cultivated their fan bases on the site.

Warner contacted seven YouTube creators whose musical styles were compatible with those of Hayes and Mraz. It invited Tyler Ward, Kina Grannis, Peter Hollens and other YouTube notables to record cover versions of "Everybody's Got Somebody but Me," which were incorporated into the original song to produce a new track.

The resulting musical collaboration served as the soundtrack for a music video, "The Hunter Hayes YouTube Orchestra featuring Jason Mraz,"

which debuts exclusively on YouTube, before the anticipated release of the official music video this month.

"When it makes sense and when there's a natural connection, we try to bring these collaborations together," said Ali Rivera, YouTube's West Coast head of artist label relations. "This is the first time we've created an entire music video, using more established musicians and the YouTube creators."

Warner even relocated the official music video shoot to Los Angeles from Nashville so Hayes and Mraz could accommodate the project, which is directed by filmmaker and YouTube music producer Kurt Hugo Schneider.

Warner Music executives hope the musical mash-up, together with individual music videos that have already been released by the YouTube collaborators, will introduce the song to a generation of fans who rely on YouTube personalities as tastemakers.

"For some kids, people like Kurt Schneider and Tyler Ward are people that they trust," said J Scavo, senior vice president of interactive marketing for Warner Bros. Records.

"We took a natural jump into getting our artists in front of a demographic that's tough to get 100 percent through traditional means."

Created purely for promotional purposes, [music videos](#) evolved into an art form during the early MTV days. Now they're a force online: The Vevo and Warner Music channels on YouTube each attract about 200 million viewers worldwide each month, according to measurement firm ComScore.

Among young adults, ages 18 to 29, music is one of the most sought-

after forms of online entertainment, according to new study from Pew Research. Music videos saw the largest growth in viewership over the last four years among all adults online, half of whom now say they watch, Pew found.

During filming for "The Hunter Hayes YouTube Orchestra," Hayes sat on a park bench at YouTube's production facility in Playa Vista, Calif., strumming his guitar and singing the upbeat country music lament.

Then the lanky Mraz strolled into frame, nodded in acknowledgment of Hayes and triggered a three-minute choreographed sprint through the YouTube campus. The duo were then joined by the YouTube stars and other Warner acts as they dashed down hallways, through alcoves, into a darkened recording studio and onto an enormous soundstage.

"When I walked in here, I felt like I was in old Hollywood - the way it's portrayed in movies, with people running around in costumes, moving things," Mraz said. "I thought, 'Wow, this is what YouTube looks like. Very cool.' "

Hayes said he was intrigued enough by the experience to want to try it again.

"There's no precedent for something like this," Hayes said. "Once it's done, there's obviously a fantastic opportunity to introduce yourself to people you may have never met otherwise, but through the connections of these other artists."

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