

Apple's music service losing key player as exec resigns

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Apple's online music subscription service is losing a key player as millions of listeners near the end of a free three-month trial period that has drawn mixed reviews.

Ian Rogers, part of a team acquired last year, is leaving Apple to take a job at an unidentified company in Europe. Apple confirmed Rogers' departure Friday without providing additional details.

Apple's \$3 billion acquisition of Beats last year was driven in large part by the iPhone maker's desire to draw upon the musical chops of Rogers, longtime recording executive Jimmy Iovine and hip hop artist Dr. Dre. Both Iovine and Dr. Dre, whose real name is Andre Young, remain with Apple.

Rogers got his start running a fan website for the Beastie Boys in the 1990s and later became involved in various musical endeavors that tried to blend tunes with the latest in technology. He had been CEO of Beats Music at the time of the Apple acquisition.

After working with the Beats team, Apple launched its music streaming service in late June to compete with more established rivals such as Spotify and Pandora. Rogers had been overseeing Apple's online radio stations, including Beats 1, that will remain free even after people have to start paying to use most of the company's music service.

Apple Inc. says 11 million people have tried its music service during its

trial period. In contrast, Spotify boasts 75 million users, including 20 million subscribers to a more sophisticated, ad-free version of its service.

Music streaming services that charge monthly fees or play ads are becoming increasingly popular as people gravitate away from digital stores, such as Apple's iTunes, that sell entire albums or individual songs that can be stored on devices. The shift is the main reason that Apple decided to build its own streaming service with a library of more than 30 million songs.

Since its debut, Apple's music service has been criticized for being too complicated to use and for having trouble customizing suitable song recommendations for the individual tastes of different listeners. Analysts believe the true test of the service's staying power will come after listeners' free trial period ends.

That expiration will occur in October for people who activated the service within the first few days that it was available. After the trial period ends, Apple will charge \$10 per month for individuals and \$15 per month for a family plan that gives up to six people unlimited access to the music library.

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