

YAZ — Social Performance, Audience Insight & UGC Analysis

Single: “Difficult”

Timeframe: First 30 days post-release

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Client: YAZ, Independent Recording Artist

Engagement: Artist Positioning & EP Rollout Strategy

1. Executive Summary

Audience response to “Difficult” demonstrates clear emotional attachment, repeat listening behavior, and organic UGC adoption during an active release cycle. Across platforms, listeners consistently frame the record as a driving, summer-coded, cinematic song, using language associated with motion, coming-of-age moments, and personal relatability. TikTok is functioning primarily as a discovery and sound-propagation engine, Instagram as an aesthetic and identity validation space, and YouTube as a deep-fan capture platform. These signals align with industry-recognized early indicators of long-term scalability rather than short-term campaign response.

Methodology Note: This analysis is based on publicly available platform data (Social Blade), direct post-level performance, and qualitative audience signals (comments, UGC, creator adoption) observed during the first 30 days post-release. Internal DSP data, paid media performance, and backend audience analytics are not reflected here. This document is intended to contextualize audience behavior during an active release cycle, not to evaluate campaign final performance.

2. Platform Performance Overview

TikTok

Observed data

- Net followers: +1.3K over 30 days
- Video views: +100,000 over the same period
- Daily averages show consistent view activity despite follower movement

Interpretation

- During single-led release windows, TikTok commonly operates as a discovery-first platform rather than a community-retention platform.

- Follower churn during high-output periods can reflect casual discovery behavior, where viewers engage with content or sound without converting to long-term follows.
- Views exceeding follows indicate effective distribution and sound reach.

TikTok is functioning as a discovery and repetition engine for “Difficult,” which is consistent with platform norms during active release cycles and aligned with the intended role defined in Yaz’s rollout frameworks.

Instagram

Observed Data

- Net followers: –1.5K over 30 days
- Increased posting frequency during release window
- Strong engagement clustering on specific Reels and music video content

Interpretation

- Instagram is more sensitive to aesthetic density and campaign visibility than TikTok.
- During release periods, increased posting can prompt unfollows from peripheral viewers when content reads as campaign-forward.
- This behavior does not necessarily indicate negative reception. It reflects platform-specific audience filtering.

Follower movement on Instagram during this window should not be read as audience loss. Reach concentration, engagement depth, and content resonance are the relevant indicators during release cycles.

3. Top-Performing Content (Direct Links)

TikTok — Format Performance Breakdown

Highest Engagement

- Car singalong with lyrics (144.1K views):
<https://www.tiktok.com/@yazcaramanli/video/7594957832097746198?lang=en>
- At-home singalong with lyrics (120.7K views):
<https://www.tiktok.com/@yazcaramanli/video/7595200012468899094?lang=en>
- Singing with friends in car “rich because ____” (91.5K views):
<https://www.tiktok.com/@yazcaramanli/video/7595284960215420182?lang=en>
- Music video vertical on release day (47.6K views):
<https://www.tiktok.com/@yazcaramanli/video/7598525834021899542?lang=en>

- Music video landscape (33.5K views):
<https://www.tiktok.com/@yazcaramanli/video/7599362033166978326?lang=en>

Mid-Tier Engagement

- Photo with relatable text (19.5K views):
<https://www.tiktok.com/@yazcaramanli/photo/7595605870092766486?lang=en>
- Cute Tumblr/CapCut edit (15.7K views):
<https://www.tiktok.com/@yazcaramanli/video/7601171074142752022?lang=en>
- IRL vs music video (14.6K views):
<https://www.tiktok.com/@yazcaramanli/video/7600754876024376598?lang=en>
- BTS treadmill effect reveal (12.7K views):
<https://www.tiktok.com/@yazcaramanli/video/7600941806959791382?lang=en>
- Music video with lyrics (11.2K views):
<https://www.tiktok.com/@yazcaramanli/video/7598933469929950486?lang=en>

Format insight: Casual environments, lyric overlays, and motion-based settings (cars, home, treadmill) consistently outperform polished or explanatory content, reinforcing proximity-driven listening behavior.

Instagram — Visual + Narrative Performance

Highest Engagement

- Music video release day landscape (210K views):
<https://www.instagram.com/reel/DT2kWsYDSo5/?hl=en>
- Car singalong with lyrics (59.7K views):
<https://www.instagram.com/reel/DTfffG8jfe-/?hl=en>
- Singing with friends in car (43.2K views):
<https://www.instagram.com/reel/DTnhebJDfFq/?hl=en>
- “I wrote this song about being a bit** sometimes I guess” (27.7K views):
<https://www.instagram.com/reel/DTyJakHDXWM/?hl=en>
- Small clip from music video horizontal (25.8K views):
https://www.instagram.com/reel/DUG4_EtDfHQ/?hl=en

Static Post Performance

- 10-day countdown announcement with handmade merch (6.4K likes):
https://www.instagram.com/p/DTdIPxzDcaW/?hl=en&img_index=1
- Photo dump including 6 pics using Difficult sound (3.7K likes):
https://www.instagram.com/p/DUEQAb5ja6o/?hl=en&img_index=1
- 2-photo carousel on release day (3.6K likes):
https://www.instagram.com/p/DT2fbTSjQ-B/?hl=en&img_index=2

Format insight: Instagram engagement concentrates around car-based Reels, music video visuals, and identity-forward moments rather than volume posting.

4. UGC + Comment Signal Analysis

Driving / Motion-Based Listening

Observed Signals

- “this is such a driving song. i need to get my drivers license just for this” – 60 likes
- Multiple car singalong videos performing at 91.5K and 144.1K views

Consensus Level: High

This association appeared independently across multiple users and platforms without strategic suggestion. The connection between car-based content performance and audience language suggests this usage context emerged organically rather than being imposed by the strategy.

Industry Context: Songs that organically acquire motion-based associations (driving, running, commuting) tend to perform strongly in activity-based playlist curation. This audience-led positioning may create sync licensing opportunities in automotive advertising and film/TV scenes involving travel or transition.

Strategic Implication: The audience is pre-positioning “Difficult” for specific behavioral contexts before marketing has formalized these associations. This is an early sign of broader scalability.

Seasonal Coding (Spring/Summer Identity)

Observed Signals

- “Feels like summer 🌻 🌻”
- “this is so spring, polka dot, whimsical and sweet core”
- “summer girls trip”-style visuals performing well
- Multiple commenters independently referencing seasonal mood

Consensus Level: Multiple users, no pushback, repeated phrasing across different posts.

The song is already being mentally placed in Spring/Summer 2026. This is early positioning, especially notable this soon after release. The audience is pre-branding the record as seasonal before marketing does.

Cinematic / Film Associations

Observed Signals

- “should be played in theatres xxx”

- “This song makes me feel like the main character in a coming of age movie”
- “you belong in a zara larsson mv 💜” – 22 likes
- “Put this in a movie” sentiment echoed across YouTube and Instagram

Consensus Level: High, repeated across platforms with specific sync language.

The audience is placing the song in films, trailers, and cinematic moments. This is organic sync signaling, not forced branding. The repeated use of “coming-of-age” and “main character” language suggests the song activates narrative and identity frameworks.

Emotional Relatability / Self-Identity

Observed Signals

- “this song got me CRYING... it’s so relatable i’ve definitely felt like i was too difficult for my partner to love me”
- “I watched it 700 times... this truly made me rethink how i felt like this”
- “on repeat every hour since it came out”
- “song has a special place in my heart”

Agreement Pattern: Multiple comments echoing repeat listening, no negative emotional framing, reinforced by likes and replies.

This is self-recognition music. Audience language suggests strong replay value and attachment behavior beyond what surface metrics alone can show.

5. High-Value Emotional Signals

Long-form comments that demonstrate repeat listening, emotional identification, and personal narrative attachment provide deeper qualitative insight than surface engagement metrics alone. Audience members who articulate personal emotional connections may signal stronger long-term listening potential than passive consumers.

Key High-Value Comments

- **Repeat Listening Behavior:** “I watched it 700 times... this truly made me rethink how i felt like this”
- **Emotional Processing:** “this song got me CRYING... it’s so relatable i’ve definitely felt like i was too difficult for my partner to love me”
- **Identity Integration:** “song has a special place in my heart”
- **Habitual Replay:** “on repeat every hour since it came out”

These comments indicate the audience is using “Difficult” for emotional processing and self-reflection, not background listening. This type of engagement can be associated with playlist saves, repeat streaming sessions, and stronger long-term catalog performance. The language used (“rethink,” “special place in my heart”) signals emotional ownership, hinting that the listener sees themselves in the music.

6. Organic UGC Adoption

Documented UGC Activity

Influencer Adoption: Influencer @harrietvalerie created content using the “Difficult” sound, achieving 103.2K views:

<https://www.tiktok.com/@harrietvalerie/video/7597960500143607062?lang=en>

Creator Content Types:

- Singalong videos
- Aesthetic edits
- GRWM (get ready with me) videos

Sound-Led vs. Trend-Led Adoption

Sound-Led Adoption (observed here): Creators use the sound because it fits their content naturally. Adoption feels organic, not choreographed. Content varies widely in format and context.

Trend-Led Adoption (not observed): Creators participate in a specific challenge or trend format. Content is uniform and decays rapidly after the trend cycle ends.

The distinction matters for long-term scalability. Sound-led adoption can support longer active use periods than trend-led spikes, which often fade quickly after the trend cycle ends. This suggests that ‘Difficult’ may have more sustainable organic potential rather than relying on a short-lived trend.

7. Platform-Specific Behavioral Roles

TikTok: Emotional + Behavioral Activation

- **Function:** Discovery and sound propagation. TikTok is where audiences first encounter the music and begin associating it with specific behaviors (driving, singing with friends).
- **Performance Indicators:** View growth, sound adoption, comment replies, and duets/stitches. Follower count is not the primary metric during discovery phases.

- **Content That Works:** Car singalongs, lyric overlays, casual at-home videos, and friend-inclusive moments. Proximity and motion consistently outperform polish.

Instagram: Taste + Identity Validation

- **Function:** Aesthetic authority and identity affirmation. Instagram is where audiences signal taste alignment and validate the artist's visual language.
- **Performance Indicators:** Saves, comment quality, and Reels watch-through rates.
- **Content That Works:** High-production music video frames, landscape-oriented Reels, and narrative captions that frame vulnerability.

YouTube: Deep-Fan + Long-Form Emotional Capture

- **Function:** Long-form engagement and international reach. YouTube captures the audience segment seeking deeper connection and repeat viewing.
- **Performance Indicators:** Comment length, repeat viewing mentions, and international audience participation.

8. Observed Performance vs. Strategic Intent

The "Difficult" release cycle reveals a critical insight about audience positioning that extends beyond performance metrics. Listeners are helping shape the strategy through their own responses. The organic emergence of driving associations, spring/summer coding, and cinematic language suggests the audience is not simply consuming the music but actively shaping the story around it. This matters because it shifts the strategic approach for Singles 2 and 3 from "what story do we tell" to "what story is already being built, and how do we reinforce it without collapsing it." The audience has already positioned 'Difficult' within three valuable contexts: motion-based playlists, seasonal editorial, and sync opportunities, before formal pitching has begun. This is notable during an initial release window and suggests the song has inherent contextual flexibility that should be protected, not narrowed.

What the rollout plans predicted (platform behavior, follower churn, proximity content performance) all materialized as expected. What they couldn't predict was how the audience would position the music, and this is where the strategic opportunity lies. The fact that car content outperformed other formats (144K, 120K, 91K) suggests that the song connects with a specific emotional state centered on freedom, motion, and transition. For "Big Deal" and "PDA," the question is not "should we replicate car content" but "what emotional-behavioral state does each song activate, and how do we create space for audiences to discover and name it themselves." If "Difficult" equals motion and freedom, what does "Big Deal" equal, and what does "PDA" equal? The content strategy should test these ideas without forcing them, allowing format performance to show how audiences naturally interpret each song.

The most important implication for the EP rollout is that early signs of belief-building are appearing faster than the pacing model anticipated. High-value emotional signals (repeat listening, self-recognition language, personal attachment) typically emerge in Phase 3 through 4 of the Re-Decision Funnel (Commitment to Advocacy), but they're appearing in Phase 1 (Belief Setup). This suggests two possible adjustments. First, the March 6 release of "Big Deal" could introduce contrast earlier than planned, capitalizing on the established emotional foundation rather than waiting for it to deepen. Second, the period between "Difficult" and "Big Deal" (Feb 1 through Mar 6) should emphasize sustaining belief rather than building it, shifting content focus from discovery to reinforcement. Either path requires deciding whether the audience is moving through the funnel faster than expected, or whether early attachment signals are concentrated among a core subset while the broader audience is still in the Curiosity to Belief transition.

How To Find The Answer

Monitor Week 3 (Feb 9 through Feb 15) for two signals. Broadening engagement means new commenters using attachment language, UGC adoption expanding beyond core followers, and sound usage among unconnected creators. Deepening engagement means repeat commenters, the same creator circle, and playlist adds from existing followers only. If broadening, accelerate Phase 2 and introduce "Big Deal" contrast earlier. If deepening, hold current pacing and use Feb 1 through Mar 6 to expand reach before layering in new music.

9. Strategist Insight

Audience behavior around "Difficult" reflects strong long-term positioning signals. Listener language consistently frames the record as a driving, summer-coded, cinematic song with high emotional relatability, while organic UGC adoption indicates natural scalability. These signals suggest the audience is already shaping how the song is being used and understood, supporting a sustained rollout approach rather than a reactive one.

This analysis is interpretive, not corrective, and should be read in the context of an active release cycle and existing rollout frameworks.