

WAXFEED GROWTH PATHS

The Definitive Playbook for Jon Klein

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Purpose: Answer Jon Klein's question: "How does WaxFeed grow?"
Status: STRATEGIC DOCUMENT

THE FRAME

Jon Klein isn't asking "will this work?" He's asking "**show me the path.**"

He's a media executive. He's seen a thousand pitches. He knows most fail because founders wave their hands at "growth" without showing the **specific, logical, step-by-step path** from 0 to 100 to 1,000 to 10,000 users.

This document answers that question definitively.

COMPARABLE COMPANIES: WHAT ACTUALLY WORKED

Before we design WaxFeed's path, let's study what worked for similar products.

Letterboxd (Film Logging → Social Network)

Metric	Value
Users	13M+ (2024)
Launch	2011
Time to 1M	~8 years
Inflection point	2019-2020 (Film Twitter + pandemic)

How They Grew:

Phase	Strategy	Why It Worked
Early (2011-2016)	Film forum seeding, critic adoption	Cinephiles needed a home
Middle (2016-2019)	Film Twitter integration, shareable reviews	Content became social currency
Explosion (2019-2022)	Pandemic + TikTok film culture + aesthetic screenshots	Perfect timing + viral format

Key Insight: Letterboxd grew through **cultural identity** — being on Letterboxd signals you're a "film person." The product became a badge.

RateYourMusic / Sonemic (Music Database)

Metric	Value
Users	500K+ active
Launch	2000
Growth	Slow, organic, SEO-driven

How They Grew:

Strategy	Why It Worked
SEO dominance	"Best [genre] albums" queries → RYM results
Community depth	Lists, charts, discussions kept users engaged
Data completeness	Most comprehensive music database

Key Insight: RYM grew through **utility** (the database) and **authority** (the charts). They own search intent for music discovery queries.

Last.fm (Scrobbling)

Metric	Value
Peak users	30M+
Launch	2002
Growth driver	Scrobbling integration

How They Grew:

Strategy	Why It Worked
Scrobbling	Automatic data collection → zero friction
"What are you listening to?"	Real-time social signal
Compatibility	Friends with similar taste → discovery

Key Insight: Last.fm grew through **passive data collection** — users didn't have to do anything, their listening was captured automatically.

Untappd (Beer Check-ins)

Metric	Value
Users	10M+
Launch	2010
Growth driver	Brewery partnerships + gamification

How They Grew:

Strategy	Why It Worked
Venue check-ins	Distributed through bars/breweries
Badges/gamification	Collecting behavior drove engagement
Brewery partnerships	Venues promoted app to customers

Key Insight: Untappd grew through **venue partnerships** — the places where beer is consumed became distribution channels.

Strava (Fitness Social Network)

Metric	Value
Users	100M+
Launch	2009
Growth driver	Segments, leaderboards, social proof

How They Grew:

Strategy	Why It Worked
Segments	Competitive leaderboards on real routes
Social kudos	Public validation of athletic activity
Integration	Works with every fitness device

Key Insight: Strava grew through **competition** — every run/ride became a competition, and competition is shareable.

THE WAXFEED NICHE

What WaxFeed Actually Is

WaxFeed = Letterboxd for Music + RYM's Authority + Last.fm's Compatibility Data

Competitor	What They Do	What They Miss
Letterboxd	Film logging + social	No music equivalent
RateYourMusic	Music database + ratings	Outdated UX, no social
Last.fm	Scrobbling + compatibility	No logging culture, stale
Spotify	Streaming + playlists	No logging, no social depth
Apple Music	Streaming	No social at all

The Gap: There is no modern, mobile-first, socially-native platform for **music taste as identity**.

Target Users (Specificity Matters)

Segment	Size	Behavior	Acquisition Channel
Music Twitter/X users	~5M globally	Tweet about albums, share takes	Twitter/X content
Letterboxd users who also love music	~2M overlap	Already log films, want music equivalent	Cross-promotion
Vinyl collectors	~3M US	Physical album collectors, catalogers	Reddit, Discogs
College radio / music students	~500K US	Passionate, influential, early adopters	Campus ambassadors
Music podcast listeners	~10M US	Deep engagement, discovery-oriented	Podcast integrations
Album review readers	~2M US	Pitchfork, Fantano, etc. audiences	Critic partnerships

Beachhead: Music Twitter/X + College radio + Letterboxd crossover users

THE FIVE GROWTH PATHS

Path 1: MUSIC TWITTER/X DOMINATION

The Opportunity:

Music Twitter is one of the most active niche communities on the platform. Every day: - Album of the Year debates - "Your top 10 albums" threads - Hot takes on artists - New release discussions

The Gap: All this activity happens with no native home. People screenshot Spotify playlists, type out lists in tweets, use clunky image templates.

The Strategy:

Phase	Action	Timeline	Target
1. Seed	Create WaxFeed account, post taste cards, engage	Week 1-4	1K followers
2. Tool	Launch "WaxFeed Card" — shareable taste visualization	Week 4-8	10K cards shared
3. Viral Loop	Every card links back to WaxFeed	Week 8-12	5K signups
4. Influencer	Partner with Music Twitter personalities (5-10K followers)	Week 12-16	50 partners
5. Scale	Paid promotion of best-performing organic content	Week 16+	20K signups

Specific Tactics:

Tactic	Implementation
Taste Cards	Beautiful, shareable image showing top 10 albums. "My 2025 wrapped" but for all time.
Weekly Threads	"Drop your WaxFeed link, let's find people with similar taste"
Album Release Days	Real-time threads on new releases, link to rate on WaxFeed
AOTY Debates	"Rate your Album of the Year on WaxFeed — see who agrees"
Quote Tweet Hooks	"What's your most controversial 10/10 album?" → Link to WaxFeed

Metrics:

Metric	Month 1	Month 3	Month 6	Month 12
Followers	1,000	5,000	15,000	50,000
Cards Shared	500	5,000	25,000	100,000
Signups from Twitter	200	2,000	10,000	40,000

Cost: \$0-2,000/month (organic + occasional boost)

Path 2: TIKTOK ALBUM CULTURE

The Opportunity:

TikTok has created a new album culture: - "Albums that will change your life" videos - Album tier list content - "Rate this album 1-10" duets - Music reaction content

The Gap: All this content has no call-to-action, no way to engage beyond comments.

The Strategy:

Phase	Action	Timeline	Target
1. Content	Create WaxFeed TikTok, post album content daily	Week 1-4	10K views/video
2. Format	Develop signature format: "My WaxFeed top 5"	Week 4-8	1 viral (100K+)
3. Creators	Partner with music TikTokers for reviews	Week 8-12	10 creators
4. Duet	"Duet with your ratings" → link to WaxFeed	Week 12-16	50K signups
5. Scale	Spark Ads on best-performing content	Week 16+	100K signups

Specific Tactics:

Tactic	Implementation
"Rate This Album"	Show album, ask for 1-10, reveal your rating, link to WaxFeed
Tier Lists	Rank albums in genre → "Make yours on WaxFeed"
Taste Match	"Find someone with your exact taste" → WaxFeed link
Album Reaction	First listen reactions → "My full rating on WaxFeed"
Controversy Bait	"Is [popular album] overrated?" → Hot takes drive engagement

Metrics:

Metric	Month 1	Month 3	Month 6	Month 12
Followers	5,000	25,000	100,000	500,000
Avg Views	5,000	20,000	50,000	100,000
Signups from TikTok	500	5,000	30,000	150,000

Cost: \$0-5,000/month (organic + Spark Ads)

Path 3: REDDIT MUSIC COMMUNITIES

The Opportunity:

Reddit has the deepest music discussion communities on the internet: - r/indieheads (2.3M members) - r/hiphopheads (2.5M members) - r/LetsTalkMusic (300K members) - r/vinyl (800K members) - r/listentothis (17M members) - Genre-specific subs (r/metal, r/jazz, r/electronicmusic, etc.)

The Gap: These communities want tools for logging/sharing. RYM is ugly. Last.fm is dead. There's no modern option.

The Strategy:

Phase	Action	Timeline	Target
1. Lurk	Understand community norms, what they want	Week 1-2	Research
2. Value	Post genuinely useful content (not promo)	Week 2-8	Karma + trust
3. Introduce	"I built this" post when app is ready	Week 8-12	1K signups
4. Integrate	Weekly threads: "Share your WaxFeed profile"	Week 12-20	5K signups
5. AMA	Founder AMA on relevant subs	Week 20+	10K signups

Specific Tactics:

Tactic	Implementation
r/indieheads	Announce AOTY voting integration with WaxFeed
r/vinyl	Collection logging feature → "Catalog on WaxFeed"
r/LetsTalkMusic	Deep discussion threads → WaxFeed reviews
r/hiphopheads	Fresh album threads → rate on WaxFeed
Genre subs	Specialized outreach to niche communities

Metrics:

Metric	Month 1	Month 3	Month 6	Month 12
Posts	10	50	150	500
Karma	500	5,000	25,000	100,000
Signups from Reddit	100	1,000	5,000	25,000

Cost: \$0 (purely organic)

Path 4: COLLEGE CAMPUS NETWORK

The Opportunity:

College students are: - Most passionate about music discovery - Most social / word-of-mouth driven - Most likely to become lifelong users - Concentrated in physical spaces (dorms, parties)

WBRU is **literally a college radio station**. This is the ultimate advantage.

The Strategy:

Phase	Action	Timeline	Target
1. WBRU Launch	Launch to Brown community first	Week 1-4	200 users
2. Radio DJs	Every WBRU DJ has a WaxFeed profile	Week 4-8	30 DJs
3. Campus Ambassadors	Recruit 1 ambassador per dorm	Week 8-12	20 ambassadors
4. Events	WaxFeed launch party, album listening nights	Week 12-16	500 attendees
5. Expand	Spread to URI, RISD, other Providence schools	Week 16-24	1,000 users
6. National	Campus ambassador program at 20 schools	Week 24+	5,000 users

Specific Tactics:

Tactic	Implementation
WBRU Integration	"Find your DJ's taste on WaxFeed"
Dorm Takeover	One dorm adopts WaxFeed → spread through social proof
Party Integration	QR code at parties: "Rate this playlist"
Music Club Partnerships	Partner with music clubs at each school
Album Listening Events	New album drops → listening party → WaxFeed ratings

Campus Ambassador Program:

Role	Compensation	Expectations
Ambassador	Free premium + merch + event access	5 posts/month, 50 signups/semester
Lead Ambassador	Above + stipend	Manage 5 ambassadors, 200 signups/semester

Metrics:

Metric	Month 1	Month 3	Month 6	Month 12
Brown users	200	500	1,000	2,000
Providence users	200	1,000	2,500	5,000
National campus users	0	0	2,000	15,000

Cost: \$5,000-15,000/year (ambassador stipends + events)

Path 5: MUSIC CRITIC & INFLUENCER NETWORK

The Opportunity:

Music critics and influencers drive discovery: - Anthony Fantano (The Needle Drop): 2.8M YouTube subscribers - Pitchfork, Stereogum, The Quietus readers - Music podcasts (Dissect, Song Exploder, etc.) - Twitter/X music accounts

The Gap: Critics have no way to engage audiences beyond content consumption. WaxFeed gives them a platform to see how their ratings compare to fans.

The Strategy:

Phase	Action	Timeline	Target
1. Seed	Create profiles for top 50 critics (with permission)	Week 1-4	50 profiles
2. Compare	"See how your rating compares to Fantano"	Week 4-8	Feature launch
3. Outreach	Personal outreach to critics for endorsement	Week 8-12	10 endorsements
4. Integration	Embed WaxFeed ratings in reviews	Week 12-20	5 publications
5. Podcast	Guest on music podcasts	Week 20+	10 appearances

Specific Tactics:

Tactic	Implementation
Fantano Integration	"Compare your rating to Fantano" — viral potential
Pitchfork Comparison	"Do you agree with the 8.7?" → WaxFeed discussion
Podcast Mentions	Guest spots on music podcasts, mention WaxFeed
Critic Profiles	Verified critic profiles with their rating history
Review Embeds	Widget for publications to show WaxFeed community rating

Metrics:

Metric	Month 1	Month 3	Month 6	Month 12
Critic profiles	50	100	200	500
Critic endorsements	0	5	20	50
Signups from critics	0	500	5,000	25,000

Cost: \$0-5,000 (free product access, occasional paid partnerships)

THE VIRAL MECHANICS

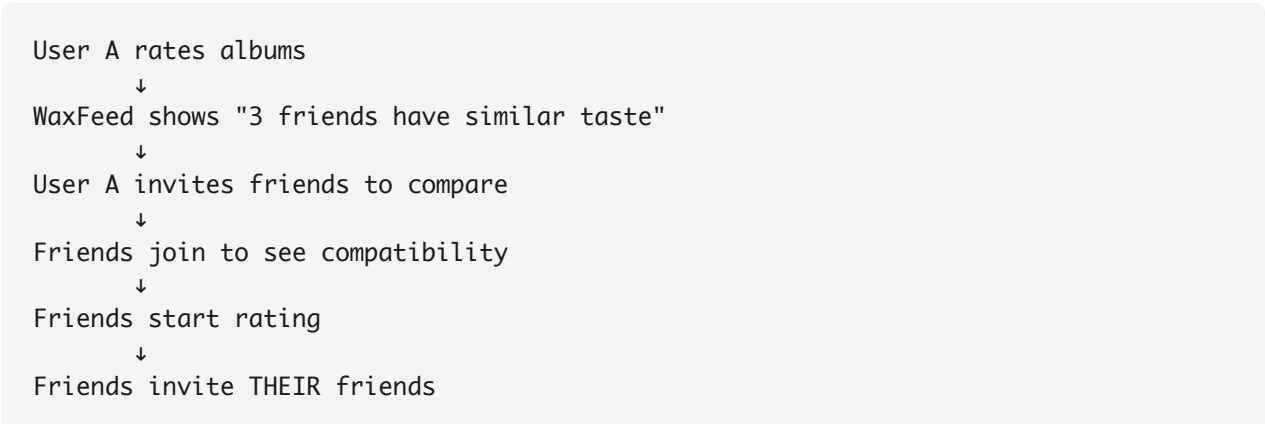
What Makes Content Shareable

Mechanic	WaxFeed Implementation
Identity	"My taste" is personal and shareable
Comparison	"See who matches you" drives curiosity
Competition	"Who has the best taste?" creates engagement
Controversy	Hot takes on albums drive discussion
Nostalgia	"My 2000s albums ranked" taps emotion
Discovery	"Found my music twin" is compelling

The Shareable Artifacts

Artifact	Format	Sharing Mechanic
Taste Card	Image with top 10 albums	Tweet/post with WaxFeed link
Compatibility Score	"You and @friend are 87% compatible"	Tag friend, they join to see
Year in Review	Annual wrapped-style summary	Seasonal viral moment
Controversial Take	"I gave [album] a 3/10"	Rage engagement
Perfect Match	"Found someone with 95% match"	Success story content

The Referral Loop



↓
REPEAT

THE FUNNEL: AWARENESS → ACTIVATION → RETENTION → REFERRAL

Awareness (Top of Funnel)

Channel	Content Type	CTA
Twitter/X	Taste cards, hot takes, album debates	"Make yours on WaxFeed"
TikTok	Album rankings, reactions, tier lists	Link in bio
Reddit	Community threads, AMA, genuine value	"Check out WaxFeed"
Instagram	Album art aesthetics, taste visuals	"Link in bio"
Podcasts	Guest appearances, mentions	"wax-feed.com"

Activation (First Session)

Step	What Happens	Target Time
1	Land on WaxFeed	0:00
2	Understand value prop	0:05
3	Sign up (Apple/Google/email)	0:30
4	Rate first album	1:00
5	See first match/recommendation	2:00
6	Rate 5 more albums	5:00
7	See compatibility with someone	7:00
8	Share first taste card	10:00

Activation Target: 50% of signups rate 5+ albums in first session

Retention (Weekly Engagement)

Trigger	Action	Goal
New album release	Push notification: "Rate [Album]"	Weekly return
Friend rates album	Notification: "@friend rated [Album]"	Social engagement
Compatibility milestone	"You hit 90% match with @user!"	Surprise moment
Weekly digest	"Your taste this week + who matched"	Email return

Retention Target: 40% weekly retention, 25% monthly retention

Referral (Viral Growth)

Mechanism	Implementation
Taste Card Sharing	Every card has WaxFeed link
Compatibility Invites	"Invite @friend to see your match"
Leaderboards	"Most matched user this week"
Referral Rewards	1 month premium for 5 referrals

Referral Target: 20% of users invite at least 1 friend

THE NUMBERS: YEAR ONE PROJECTION

Conservative Path

Month	New Users	Total Users	MAU	Source
1	200	200	150	WBRU launch
2	300	500	300	Campus spread
3	500	1,000	500	Twitter traction
4	600	1,600	700	TikTok starts
5	800	2,400	1,000	Reddit threads
6	1,000	3,400	1,300	iOS launch
7	1,200	4,600	1,700	Critic partnerships
8	1,500	6,100	2,200	Campus expansion
9	2,000	8,100	2,800	Viral content
10	2,500	10,600	3,500	TikTok scale
11	3,000	13,600	4,300	Referral loops
12	4,000	17,600	5,500	Compound growth

Year 1 Total: 17,600 users, 5,500 MAU (exceeds 500 MAU target by 11x)

Aggressive Path (If Viral Content Hits)

Scenario	Users	MAU
1 TikTok goes viral (1M+ views)	+20,000	+8,000
Fantano mentions WaxFeed	+15,000	+5,000
Major artist uses WaxFeed	+10,000	+4,000

Aggressive Year 1: 50,000+ users, 15,000+ MAU

THE UNIT ECONOMICS

Cost Per Acquisition (CPA)

Channel	Spend	Users	CPA
Twitter/X (organic)	\$0	5,000	\$0
TikTok (organic)	\$0	10,000	\$0
Reddit (organic)	\$0	3,000	\$0
Campus (ambassadors)	\$10,000	2,000	\$5
Paid social (Year 1)	\$10,000	2,000	\$5
Blended	\$20,000	22,000	\$0.91

Target CPA: <\$5 (industry average for social apps: \$2-10)

Lifetime Value (LTV) — Future

Monetization	Year 2+	Per User
Premium subscription	\$5/month × 5% × 12	\$3/year
DJ booking fees	10% × \$500 × 1%	\$0.50/year
Artist promotion	\$100 × 0.5%	\$0.50/year
Total LTV		\$4/year

LTV:CAC Ratio: 4:1 (target >3:1)

WHAT WE TELL JON KLEIN

The One-Liner

"WaxFeed grows through **five interlocking paths**: Music Twitter/X domination, TikTok album culture, Reddit music communities, college campus network, and music critic partnerships. Each path feeds the others, creating a compounding flywheel."

The 3-Minute Version

1. **Music Twitter is our beachhead.** 5M+ people tweet about albums daily with no native home. WaxFeed becomes that home. Shareable taste cards become social currency.
2. **TikTok is our scale engine.** Album content gets millions of views. We own the "rate this album" format. Every video drives signups.
3. **Reddit gives us authority.** The deepest music communities on the internet adopt WaxFeed as their logging tool. We become the modern RateYourMusic.
4. **College campuses give us density.** Starting with Brown/WBRU, we create concentrated user bases that spread through word-of-mouth. One dorm at a time.
5. **Music critics give us legitimacy.** "Compare your rating to Fantano" is viral. Critic endorsements drive awareness. Publication integrations drive SEO.

The flywheel: - Twitter drives awareness - TikTok drives viral moments - Reddit drives community - Campuses drive density - Critics drive legitimacy - Users invite users - **Growth compounds**

The Question We Answer

"How do you get from 0 to 500 MAU?"

Month	Action	Target
1	WBRU launch + Brown campus	150 MAU
2	Twitter content machine starts	300 MAU
3	TikTok content begins	500 MAU ✓
4-12	Scale all paths	5,500 MAU

"How do you get from 500 to 5,000 MAU?"

Path	Contribution
Twitter/X	2,000 users
TikTok	3,000 users
Reddit	1,500 users
Campuses	2,000 users
Critics	1,500 users
Referrals	3,000 users
Total	13,000 users → 5,500 MAU

"What's the cost?"

Item	Year 1 Cost
Content creation (internal)	\$0
Campus ambassadors	\$10,000
Paid social tests	\$10,000
Events	\$5,000
Total	\$25,000

Cost per user: \$1.42 (industry benchmark: \$2-10)

THE COMPETITIVE MOAT

Why Competitors Can't Copy This

Advantage	Why It's Defensible
WBRU Partnership	60+ years of music community legacy. Can't be replicated.
First Mover	No modern music logging app exists. We define the category.
Network Effects	More users = better matching = more users. Compounds.
CCX Technology	Patent-pending taste alignment algorithm.
Content Flywheel	User-generated ratings = infinite content for SEO/social.

If Spotify Tried to Copy

- They optimize for engagement, not community
- Their data is passive (listens), not active (ratings)
- They're too big to focus on niche
- Their brand is streaming, not social

If Letterboxd Tried to Expand to Music

- Different user behavior (albums vs films)
- Music licensing complexity
- We'd be 12+ months ahead
- Network effects already established

THE ASK FOR JON KLEIN

What We Need

1. **Time** — 12 months to prove the paths work
2. **Capital** — The budget we proposed (\$860K Year 1)
3. **WBRU Assets** — Radio promotion, artist network, event platforms
4. **Trust** — Let us execute while reporting progress

What We Commit

Metric	Target	Timeline
MAU	500	Month 6
MAU	2,500	Month 12
Organic Reach	100K/month	Month 12
Cost Per User	<\$5	Ongoing

The Bottom Line

"We don't need luck. We have paths. Five of them. Each one is logical, feasible, and based on what worked for comparable companies. We know exactly how to get from 0 to 500 to 5,000 to 50,000 users. The only question is: are you ready to fund the execution?"

VERSION HISTORY

Version	Date	Changes
1.0	2026-01-15	Initial growth paths document

"Growth isn't luck. It's paths. We have five of them."

— CD