

CASE STUDY

Tia Ray

'We wanted to help her achieve her dreams'

Tia Ray is an artist who encapsulates not only the ambition and potential of China as a region, but also the drive and determination of a new generation of homegrown artists to achieve worldwide success in partnership with global record companies.

Andy Ma, CEO, Warner Music, Greater China, describes her as "not traditional pop, but more soul and R&B" and believes that her ongoing ascent is partly down to a broadening of taste amongst Chinese music fans.

He says: "They are catching up with other markets and becoming more interested in international artists and a wider variety of genres. It's a more dynamic market today than ever, especially for hip-hop, EDM and R&B."

Warner Music's relationship with Tia began when the company purchased the Gold Typhoon label, to which she was signed, in 2014. At the time she was known for having been a contestant on TV talent show, *The Voice of China*.

Ma says there was a sense straight away that here was an artist who could appeal to a global audience. "There was something in her voice and her performance that we felt could travel – and we also spent time getting to know her as a person and understanding her ambitions.

"I told her we didn't want to put out an album, see how it performs, put out another album, see how that performs... We wanted to help her achieve her dreams, we wanted to share a vision with her. And she told us that she wanted to help soul and R&B become mainstream in China. So that's what we've been doing, while also making sure that this is a global story."

A major breakthrough came with Tia's 2018 single, *Be Apart*, which was the seventh biggest selling track in the world that year, with a total converted track equivalent of 10.9 million units – and over four billion streams worldwide at the time of publication. Its success was aided by Warner securing a sync in the hit movie, *The Ex-Files 3: Return of the Exes*.

Ma explains that the success of the track accelerated her trajectory considerably, "for example, her followers on [Chinese social media platform] Weibo went from four million to 11 million."

He continues: "Tia represents a new spirit in China, she is part of a generation of artists that thinks outside the box. And she is brave, she wants to conquer the US and the rest of the world, she is not afraid of stepping outside of safe territories and genres."



Tia Ray photo
by Sasha Samsonova

"Warner is very supportive of artists, particularly giving me space and resource to create the music I love and want. Being able to work with the Warner global team, including WM China, Warner Records USA and Atlantic UK, I really feel a part of the bigger Warner family. Very grateful! Blessed!"

TIA RAY

"So, we connected her with producers from LA and the UK, and then last year we released some big collaborations, with Kehlani (*Just My Luck*), Gallant (*Trust Myself*) and Jason Derulo (*Champion*, which was the official song of the FIBA Basketball World Cup).

"We are making the right connections for her, and that is part of the dual process of helping her make the music she wants while also increasing her international appeal. But apart from the collaborations and the syncs and the producers, all of which are very important, I think what Tia appreciates most about working with Warner is how much we share her vision and her passion.

"We have grown together and our team, which is her team, really care about taking this as far as we can and helping make her dream come true."

Tia Ray photo by Sasha Samsonova

