

# Universal Music Group removes music from streaming app Triller over pay dispute

February 8 2021, by Wendy Lee

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Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

Universal Music Group said it has pulled its music from Triller after no agreement had been reached with the L.A. music video app.

"We will not work with platforms that do not value artists," UMG said in a statement Friday. "Triller has shamefully withheld payments owed to our artists and refuses to negotiate a license going forward."

Universal Music Group represents hip-hop artists including Drake, the late Pop Smoke and Eminem. Yanking their [music](#) from the platform would hurt Triller as its users make videos that include parts of songs. UMG has a license with viral video app TikTok — Triller's biggest competitor.

Triller said in a statement that its agreement with UMG expired about a week ago and it has not withheld payments from artists.

"Triller does not need a deal with UMG to continue operating as it has been since the relevant artists are already shareholders or partners on Triller, and thus can authorize their usage directly," the company said.

"Triller's statements are 'removed from reality,'" UMG countered.

It is unclear how many UMG artists have individual deals with Triller. Neither company immediately responded to a request for comment on that.

At least one music industry group expressed concern over the dispute.

"It's sad to see Triller join the long list of tech companies that talk big about music but fail to deliver for artists, songwriters, and fans," said the Artist Rights Alliance, a group that advocates for artists, in a statement. "We strongly support the ongoing fight for fair treatment for music creators and an online world in which all music is licensed and paid for."

Triller CEO Mike Lu said he was not personally aware of Universal Music Group's decision until 5 a.m. PT.

"This has to be a bad Punk'd episode. I'm waiting for Ashton to jump out of my closet," Lu said in a statement. "Our relationship with UMG is solid. Its biggest artists are investors and partners in Triller and Universal owns parts of Triller."

But 7digital, which provided the back-end connection for Triller to UMG's library of songs, said in a statement made at 1:39 a.m. PT that it was aware of UMG's decision.

"The Company confirms that this announcement by UMG has no [financial impact](#) on its business nor does it have any impact on its own relationships with either party," 7digital said.

Triller, launched in 2015, rose to greater prominence last year, when rival TikTok was in danger of being banned in the United States due to the Trump administration's concerns about its ties to China. Triller is majority-owned by Proxima Media, an [investment firm](#) led by Ryan Kavanaugh. Kavanaugh was once the head of mini-studio Relativity Media, which later entered bankruptcy and underwent restructuring.

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