

forward™

Shield Piracy Pressure Index

Q1 2026 Catalog Protection Report
Anti-piracy enforcement metrics for independent labels

Forward Digital
Published March 2026
Data period: January - March 2026

Executive Summary

This report presents enforcement data from Forward Digital's Shield anti-piracy system across Q1 2026. All metrics come from automated detection, takedown dispatch, and verification. No manual reporting or third-party estimates are used.

1,747

DETECTIONS

25,839

FILE TARGETS

24,326

CONFIRMED
REMOVED

94%

REMOVAL RATE

Shield monitors 209 active labels. Each piracy page typically links to multiple file hosting URLs (average: 15 file targets per detection). 10,715 initial takedown notices were dispatched. Additional follow-up and escalation notices are sent when providers do not respond, but are not counted here.

How to Read These Numbers

Detection

A piracy blog page distributing unauthorized copies of a protected release. One detection = one infringing page.

File Target

An individual file URL linked from a piracy page. One detection typically yields 10-20 file targets across hosting platforms.

Takedown Notice

A DMCA or jurisdiction-appropriate notice sent to the hosting provider. Multiple notices may be sent per target (follow-ups, escalations).

Confirmed Removed

A file target verified as inaccessible after takedown, confirmed through automated HTTP and API checks.

Key Findings

- 1. Piracy runs on a small hosting layer.** The enforcement data shows a strong concentration in one hosting tier within the monitored environment. Other hosts appear (novafile, cosmobox, krakenfiles, nitroflare, rg.to), but at smaller volumes. The pattern is not about any single platform - it is the hosting infrastructure pirates rely on.
- 2. The real issue is the piracy workflow.** Detection, hosting, takedown, mirror replacement, and re-enforcement form a continuous cycle. After a successful takedown, piracy blogs replace download links with new hosting URLs within hours. Shield detects and re-dispatches against replacements automatically.
- 3. New releases are targeted fast.** Of 25 releases from Q1 2026 with detection data, 8 (32%) were detected on piracy networks within 24 hours of release. Sample size is small; this is indicative, not conclusive.
- 4. Catalog piracy is persistent.** The majority of detections involve titles released before 2026, confirming that piracy extends well beyond the release window into long-tail catalog.

Download Host Distribution

Where unauthorized files are hosted - Source: Shield enforcement targets



Enforcement actions grouped by file hosting platform. Q1 2026.

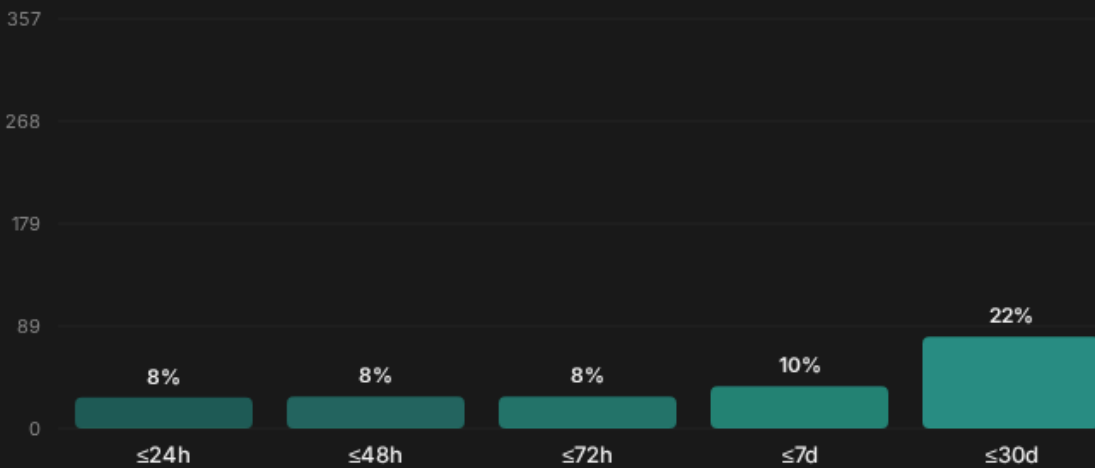
Detection and Takedown Timing

For the 25 releases from Q1 2026 with detection data: 8 (32%) were detected within 24 hours, and 10 (40%) within 7 days. The overall median across all 357 releases (including older catalog) is 3676 hours, reflecting that Shield also detects long-tail catalog piracy.

Note: The chart below shows the combined view. The high overall median is driven by pre-2026 catalog titles detected for the first time. The Q1 2026 sample (n=25) is small; these percentages are indicative.

Time to First Detection

Cumulative detections by time window — 357 releases tracked



Takedown Response by Platform

Removal times vary by hosting provider. Measured data: filecat.net: median 862h, 19,930 removals; novafire.org: median 503h, 67 removals; cosmobox.org: median 1632h, 3 removals.

Takedown Response Time by Platform

Hours from detection to confirmed removal - p50 (median) and p90

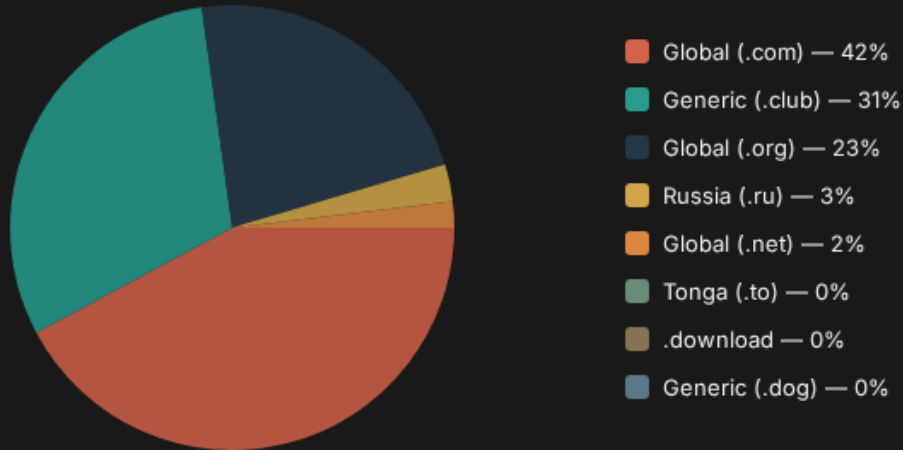


Distribution Patterns

Domain TLD provides an approximate indicator of where piracy infrastructure is hosted. Generic TLDs (.com, .net, .club) dominate. Russian-associated domains (.ru) account for a small share of detections (46, from one active site) but present distinct enforcement challenges due to jurisdictional differences.

Piracy Distribution by Territory

Domain TLD as territory proxy — infringement count by top-level domain

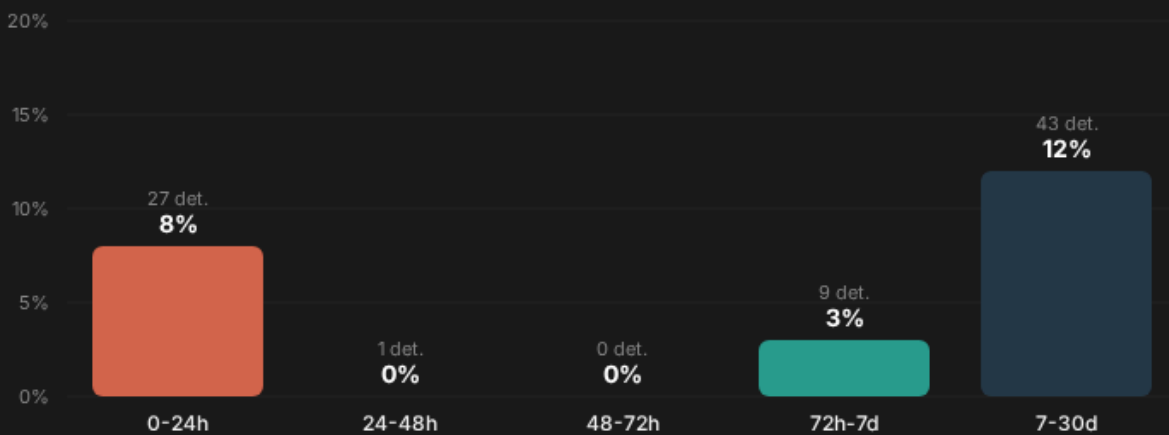


Post-Release Risk Window

For releases with known dates: 8% of detections fall within the first 24 hours. Cumulative risk reaches 11% by day 7.

Piracy Risk by Post-Release Window

Percentage of detections occurring within each time window after release



Methodology

How Shield works

Shield is an automated system that scans known piracy networks, detects unauthorized copies of protected releases, sends takedown notices, and verifies removal. It runs continuously without manual intervention.

Detection

Automated crawlers scan piracy blog networks and file hosting platforms. Detection is based on title matching and ISRC verification. Each detection is timestamped.

Enforcement

For each detection, individual file hosting URLs are identified and targeted. Notices are sent via DMCA email, platform-specific forms, or jurisdiction-appropriate legal frameworks depending on the hosting territory.

Verification

After a notice is sent, Shield verifies removal through multi-method accessibility checks. Content is only marked as removed after confirmed inaccessibility.

What each chart measures

Chart 1: File targets grouped by hosting platform.

Chart 2: Time between official release date and first detection.

Chart 3: Time between detection and confirmed removal, by platform.

Chart 4: Detection volume grouped by domain territory (TLD).

Chart 5: Detection count by time window after release.

Limitations

Detection coverage depends on which piracy networks Shield monitors. Piracy on unmonitored platforms is not captured. TLD is an imperfect proxy for territory. Response times include system processing time alongside provider response time. The Q1 2026 new release sample is 25 unique titles - percentages derived from this sample are indicative, not statistically conclusive. File targets exclude defunct platforms (e.g. zippyshare.com, which ceased operations in 2023). Removal rate is calculated on active file hosting targets only.

About Forward Digital

Forward Digital is a music distribution and services company based in La Plaine Saint-Denis, France. We provide distribution, analytics, and catalog protection for independent labels.

Shield is Forward Digital's automated anti-piracy system. It detects, takes down, and verifies removal of unauthorized music across file hosting platforms, piracy blogs, and cyberlockers.

Shield currently protects 209 active labels, with 1,747 detections and 24,326 confirmed removals in Q1 2026.

For inquiries about this report or Shield:
copyright@fwdmusic.com

© 2026 Forward Digital S.A.S. All rights reserved.
13 Avenue des Fruitiers, 93210, La Plaine Saint-Denis, France