

## A Biased "State Of Ad Music"



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As broadcast TV advertising fears for its life, music remains a high profile and sustainable element of an industry at the crossroads... There have been some notable recent trends: Brands are starting to release music on their own, outside the jurisdiction of the established music industry; music publishers continue to make their biggest percentage of revenue from fees for ad sync licenses; with the (well documented) decline of the record industry, much of its creative force has migrated to the ever-expanding world of music for TV and advertising; artists, emerging and old, peddle their wares to ads and brands so as

to make enough money to either pay their rent or maintain their uber-lavish lifestyles; the most popular bands and producers in the world are producing very good "jingles," just as some of the best directors today produce only very good commercials; original tracks created for ads are being blown out into full-length singles and seeping into the public consciousness and consequently establishing a permanent residence in the frontal cortex of our collective brains.

For the most part, advertisers are using original music, either created specifically for their TV spots, or culled from a music house's unused archives, a stock

library, a friend's of a friend's band's EP, a director's cousin's self-produced Apple Garageband demo, or possibly an editor's self-made scratch track/soundscape.

Creatives rarely attend music sessions, utilizing "music houses" that, more and more, are becoming booking agencies for freelancers. Here the "music house" methodically, and with perspicacity, types out a music brief, deploys it as a group email, and receives massive amounts of demo files from their stable of freelance composers, at \$250 or less per pop, cut to a .mov or .mpg video file, and sends them as a link to the ad agency. Maybe we should call these entities "Music Hubs" or "Music Filters" or even "Music Conduits." Or maybe/possibly, mindful musical entrepreneurs should entertain the idea of an in-house music component at the ad agencies themselves, cutting out these middleman middle-of-the-road musical conduits.

Or perhaps the brands should take it a step further and cut out all the middlemen (record labels, music publishers, ad agencies, music houses, editor's wives' best friend, etc.) and establish in-house, producers, bands and/or artists-in-residence—as has been alluded to by the culture sage Kevin Kelley of *Wired*. In this scenario, "The (band or artist) will write and play whatever music it feels like, but it will grant first option to the sponsor to use the sponsor's materials in commercials. The sponsor gets cool, hip music, and the band gets its

stuff heard by millions, and anything the company doesn't use is the company's to pass out, free of charge."

The traditional agency music producer, once necessarily skilled in the art of music making, studio music production and traditional musicological performance, theory and history, now has been replaced by the new age music consultant/producer/supervisor/fan who is an artisan of iTunes, a master of iPods, and a practitioner of Google. The once important trained ear has been overtaken by the search "engineer." The highly skilled music translator, guide and expert executor of the creative musical concept has been passed over for the schmoozer, the musical "hyperbolist"—aka the purveyor of the playlist.

When the agency music producer is embraced, I would be willing to bet that the evasive, yet (somehow) quantifiable musical factors of creative enhancement, brand resonance, sonic persuasion and strategic reverberation would, more times than not, be at a higher level.

Advertisers continue to utilize well-known songs in their ads, but curiously many of them opt to use the same song. Can you say "creative accountability?" If I hear "It's Your Thing," "Magic Carpet Ride" or "More, More, More" or another WHO song in an ad, I may have to scream as loud as Roger Daltrey does in "Won't Get Fooled Again"... It's like deja Who all over again!!!

Mainstream advertising

## FLASHBACK

5 YEARS / 10 YEARS



### 5 Years Ago

□ August 24, 2001/Director **Scott Burns** has departed bicoastal **Tool** of North America, the shop he co-founded with director **Erich Joiner**....Director **Kieran Walsh** has signed with bicoastal/international **Chelsea Pictures**....The national office of **Association of Imaging Technology and Sound (ITS)**, based in Vienna, Va., has closed its doors....**Harley Rinzier**, founder/president of Santa Monica-based editorial and design shop **Harley's House**, has purchased **Click 3X**, Los Angeles....

### 10 Years Ago

□ August 23, 1996/**The Filmworkers Club**, Chicago, has added colorist **Lynette Duensing** to its expanding roster....Director **John Alper** and executive producer **Kent Feuerring** have formed **A Pictures**, New York, signing London-based director **Simon Fellows**, who recently departed **Original Film**, Los Angeles....**Arturo Cubacub**, an effects editor, colorist **Alex Scudiero** and engineer **Mark Adler** have teamed to open finishing and effects house **i3** (read "I-cubed")....

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strives, with a few exceptions, to utilize music that is firmly entrenched in mediocrity. Many creatives wait ‘til the 11<sup>th</sup> hour, and use music as a thrown/add-on, embracing the process of music with a pinky instead of two fully extended, wrapped-around arms.

Music houses complain about costs for demos, sinking creative and arranging fees, and declining vocal contracts, when some of the best musicians, songwriters, and bands continue to play clubs, bars and college gigs where they net \$50 each and a bellyful of beer for their efforts.

Recently, for a panel presentation, I plucked the below text, which I scored with well-known tracks used in advertising, existing and original. It speaks to the science of sound:

“It is one of the peculiarities, of human audition and cognition, that music tends to linger in the listener’s mind. Surprisingly, such musical lingering occurs even when the mind is an unwilling host. Despite the largely visual orientation of human beings, photographs and visual images do not infect human consciousness to the same extent that melodies do. Listeners are sometimes known to display evasive behavior in an effort to prevent being seeded by a melody they know will persist mentally long after the actual sound disappears.”

**EMBRACE MUSIC!**