



# No. 1 with a bullet - How to use music to send your brand to the top of the charts

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**A funny thing happened at the end of last year. Three briefs come across our desk, all from different clients, all with the same issue. ‘We’re making an ad, we don’t know which music to use’.**

You might think that these questions were being asked because of the financial implications, the actual cost of purchasing or licensing particular songs. It’s true, that in one case, there had been an enormous increase in the licensing fee. However, the questions were mainly being driven by the brand implication of music choice. At this stage in the creative process, we find that the risk is not about choosing the wrong music, but about not choosing the right music, the music that can give the ad and the brand that bit extra, and boost it up and above everything and everyone else.

Every day, Luma works to understand the effect of advertising, and so we were genuinely interested in exploring this topic further. Let’s face it there are three main channels of communication in an ad; music, visuals and words. We have gone down a number of paths to put together today’s presentation. We have a huge database of responses to advertising (over 6,000 ads), collected over the last 21 years using our add+impact® ad test. Immediately after showing respondents an ad we ask people about how they feel about the brand and about various aspects of the ad – music being one of them. We have analysed this database to get

a very broad indication of how music can make a difference in the way people respond to an ad, and looked for trends in the use of music in ads (the ‘science’), for example, if jingles are more common than popular music. We have tapped into our creative networks and have spoken to Creative Directors, Music Selectors and experienced marketers for their perspective on the role music has to play in advertising, and how they go about choosing and using music in advertising (the ‘art’). And we have looked at existing literature, all with the objective of discovering if choosing music for advertising is art or science, how you can do it better, and if you feel you need to research it (which you should), what is the best way to go about it.

The literature does confirm that brands recognise the power and opportunity of music. A study by brand communication consultancy Heartbeats International of 70 global brands found the vast majority think that music can strengthen their brand (97%), actively use music in their marketing (76%) and believe it will become more important in the future (74%) (Heartbeats International ‘Sounds Like Branding™’ 2008)



In the ongoing research and investigation, we find time and time again that music has an important role to play in effective advertising (advertising that will get noticed and have a positive impact on feelings

towards the brand). A recent academic literature review, based on non-copy testing experiments found that likeable music increased memorability, purchase intent and attitudes and preferences for brands (Oakes.2007).

We have found that music is one of three major contributors to 'watchability', along with 'people' and 'fun'. The successful interplay of these three elements determines how watchable the advertising will be. When advertising is watchable, it becomes far more effective in enhancing the relationship the viewer has with the brand. A strengthened brand relationship is the dominant determinant of increased propensity to purchase (Cramphorn & Meyer, IJMR,2009).

These quantitative findings make sense on(at?) a qualitative, intuitive level. Our 'taste in music' is often a signifier to the rest of the world of the way that we see ourselves. It is very personal and subjective. There are many parallels with brand choice and preference. Brands are a badge, music is too. When a brand can tap into that it can be very powerful.

Emma Hill, a former Creative Director at Clemenger BBDO believes you cannot underestimate the importance of music in advertising. When you get it right, it signifies an understanding of the consumer. It's one of the best ways to demonstrate 'we get you, we know what you like'. There is a lot to gain by getting it right.

One of the most interesting things about music in advertising is the variety.....whether it is One Direction or the Rolling Stones, a cheesy jingle or an all time classic, a simple instrumental piece or Beethoven's 5th it has been going on for years.

The earliest use of music in advertising was the good old jingle, developed first for radio commercials and back then, they were considered

fresh and fun.

We all know the purpose of the jingle. They're intended to be extremely catchy (or ingratiating) and designed to deliver information that will stick. Even today, it is probably easier for you to sing the Vegemite jingle than recall the brand claims of the ad you saw over your tea and toast this morning.

Today jingles have seem to be the domain of the less 'glamorous' advertisers (never pay more at Furniture Galore, call call Carpet Call, the experts in the trade, or heaven forbid 'round the clock, 13 cabs - ' for 20 minutes on hold on a Saturday night). And it's true, jingles can be cheap, and according to one of our experts, can be cheaper than all other musical alternatives, depending on who is composing them.

In our expert interviews, we learnt that they were much used in the 80s and 90s, and then as a new breed of creative came through, much maligned in the 2000s. Maligned because they were perceived as the fall back position, when there was no other idea, hence the quote "When in doubt, wheel the jingle writer out", reportedly from Mike Brady, writer of Up There Cazaly, Hard Yakka, Lucky you're with AAMI and the SPC Baked Beans and Spaghetti jingle.

Is the jingle worthy of such negative associations? Well of course it depends on which jingle you're talking about, and your definition of a jingle.

We carried out a broader investigation of 'brand specific music', looking at ads we have tested for clients in Australia since 2007. We based the investigation on ads that had an obvious use of music removing ads where music was incidental, or hardly noticeable. We then classified the remaining ads as having "composed or adapted brand music" or "existing music licensed for use in the ad". Amongst the 116 studies that we classified,

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we observed, that ads using brand composed music were associated with a higher level of Brand Bonding.

This is a measure we use in our ad pre-test that predicts the impact of the advertising on feelings towards the brand. We know that the way people are left feeling about the brand is a strong predictor of purchase intent (Cramphorn, IJMR, 2006). This is an important finding, and a strong justification for using brand specific music.

This finding complements what we heard in the expert interviews. Those with a preference for brand composed over original music spoke of its advantages in being 'owned by and representing the brand', and 'becoming part of its personality'. Many of the brands in our study have been using the same music over many campaigns – and this was another advantage pointed out by our experts, that once you commission it, you own it, and can use it for as long as you see fit, so it can become part of the brand. You can't think of Medibank without hearing 'I feel better now'. However, rumour has it Medibank had a choice between this and the infamous 'I Feel Good' by James Brown. We think they made the right choice. I Feel Good does live up to its title, but it is so often used in music and TV, and to coin a phrase, has its own 'DNA'. It's highly unlikely that Medibank would ever have been able to 'own it' as they do their own theme.

There is the suspicion that you can get more impact, and more attention with a known, song. Given cut-through and interruption are major challenges in advertising at the moment we wanted to explore this further. Looking at our recent



studies we found some encouraging evidence. Amongst the 116 studies that we classified, we observed, that ads licensing original music were associated with slightly higher levels of Attention, a measure which translates to a greater ability to cut-through and get noticed.

The trade-off with licensing third-party music is of course, the cost. Last year, worldwide licensing revenue for popular music in ads, hit an all-time high of \$2.5 billion (Sanburn 3/2/2012 Time Business online edition).

So, is it a choice between cut-through and brand impact? We see examples of both kinds of music (commissioned or popular) that perform effectively on both Attention and Brand Bonding.

In our expert interviews, regardless of preference for commissioning or licensing, our experts talked about the importance of using the right music for the script, and allowing this critical element the time and consideration that is needed to get it right, rather than throwing it in as an after-thought, or using 'search terminology' to short-cut the process. We repeatedly read and heard about music being the sound of a brand' helping to establish its territory and voice.

So now we get to that tricky and

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controversial question, how do you research something as personal and individual as music?

'if it bombs in research it's probably the right track :)' This was suggested to us as the title of our paper when initially canvassing for interviews. It's no surprise that it was from the creative side of the equation, a person who is 'brains trust' for music to use in ads. It is part of that wider perception around testing creative, that 'research dulls creativity'. We can see they are coming from, and maybe some research does do this but it all depends on which way you go about evaluating the impact of the music.

In our experience, the most important thing is not to rely on direct questions about likeability – ie. did you like the music. Ads are an entire piece of work, you can't pull them apart into their components and then fit them back together again. Instead you need to look at the effect of the music in the context of what you are trying to achieve – an ad that people will see, that will make them feel good about your brand.

We're sure that you can imagine a piece of music that may not be liked, but it may be arresting, engaging, the element that makes someone look up from what they are doing, stops them in the middle of their conversation. It may be unique, soothing, edgy or able to transport them to another time.

In one study conducted by Luma, we researched the same ad visuals with two different tracks – one is a well known, popular song, the other is a newer song. The impact of the music was most obvious when we looked at measures related to the brand, rather than those related to cut-through.

Another very simple but useful technique we use is to ask for top of mind words to describe the music. We then look at this in the context of the brand identity - are these the words our client wants associated with their brand?

If it bombs in research and soars in real life, it was probably the wrong kind of research.

What we have realised in putting together this presentation, is that this is the tip of the iceberg. It is certainly a conversation starter, everyone can give you an ad they've seen where they love or hate the music, some start singing jingles.

Our first set of tips on the art vs science of choosing music for advertising are;

- Actively think about it, include it in the brief. We are often briefed to test animatics, and ask, will there be music in this ad?....and the answer is.....not sure!!
  - Don't rely on familiarity or direct questions about likeability alone, as this can favour music that is known
  - Use a range of measures related to watchability (originality, enjoyment) and brand feelings (relevance, affinity, identification) to decide if the music is a good fit with the creative and the brand
  - Choose music that helps to tell the story and supports the creative idea
  - Sometimes music can lead the creative idea (think Bonds '12 Days of Christmas' or Ski Yogurt 'I just can't get enough').
  - Remember the brand impact - even the most 'tactical' jingle will become part of the brand in some way.
  - Use your own and other's expertise to come up with choices, but remember you're not the target audience, so ask them too.
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