

# Using music effectively in advertising

By [Rob Boughton](#)

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LONDON, UK: The best adverts understand how to employ music as a powerful tool to connect with the audience. From classical music, with BA's iconic Flower Duet, to propelling a new band to fame, as was the case for Babylon Zoo when Spaceman featured on the Levi adverts; music plays a vital role in turning a good advert into a great one. Yet the process of finding the right sound track for an advert is not always as simple as it seems.

A recent advert we made for English bookmakers William Hill hit the headlines for being the first advert to use a sex pistols track. Our decision to use that track was driven by the desire to stand out and to get people talking, which it did. Making the decision to use this track was just the start of a process. It took time and effort to pull it off. Ensuring all stakeholders from the brand to the band are happy is crucial for a successful partnership.

For William Hill, known for being an iconic British brand, we created a hard hitting direct response advert with striking visuals, making perfect sense to marry this concept to the potency of the 'Pretty Vacant' track. An important step in the deal was getting buy in from the band; as part of this each member of the band got a £500 (about R5500) free bet where the winnings went to a charity of their choice. The response rate has been outstanding for this campaign and I've no doubt the choice of music played a part in that.

## Three reasons

There are three reasons why music plays a significant role in advertising. Firstly listening to a strong memorable track will add power to the spot. Consumers are surrounded by marketing messages so brands must continually look for ways to get real cut through. Secondly there is a tendency to focus on perfecting outstanding images and the soundtrack is left to the last minute. This doesn't make sense as the two can be equally compelling and all the more so when they are an intelligent match. Finally music can give your advert longevity and reach beyond the TV screen, as every time the track is heard it reminds the person of the advert.

When deciding which track would work best for adverts marketers need to consider either existing tracks or commissioning a new piece specifically for the advert. There are pros and cons to both approaches. Existing tracks will already have recognition and potentially emotional connections both good and bad with the consumer, whereas a new track is free of these existing associations.

## Challenges to overcome

Naturally there are challenges and obstacles for marketers to overcome when finding the right music for an advert. The most obvious one is simply cost. Licensing music from famous artists for the internet or TV can be very expensive. Another issue is artist approval. Some artists will refuse to be associated with certain types of products or brands, according to their own image, values and status.

If you are choosing the latter route of creating a new track, then an early 'demo version' must be created to get buy in from all the key stakeholders in the project. This is a delicate process because it can sometimes take a bit of imagination to understand what the final finished track will sound like from the original. The worst case scenario is spending a lot of time and money developing a track for it to be rejected at the last minute. For this reason there needs to be an open dialogue throughout the whole process, so issues can be addressed early on.

There is always a need to be innovative and unconventional with the use of music in advertising. Music is a powerful cultural influence. Marketers must constantly be exposing themselves to new tracks, building a deep understanding of the widest variety of music and where it might fit into a wider campaign.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rob Boughton is co-founder of The Bank, an advertising agency, film company and live events production house with offices in London, Cape Town, Rome and Amsterdam.

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