

SELLING POWER

Brands break through the sound barrier



THE WORLD'S MAJOR BRANDS ARE WELL AWARE OF THE COHESIVE POWER OF MUSIC IN THE MULTI-PLATFORM WORLD. CARS, FEATURE FILMS, VIDEO GAMES, TELECOMS OPERATORS, EVEN DEPARTMENT STORES, ARE ALL LOOKING TO PUSH THE SONIC BUTTON. GARY SMITH REPORTS

BACK in the Sixties and Seventies and even into the Eighties, it simply wasn't hip for rock musicians to ally with brands. There were some isolated examples where popular music and commercials found harmony: Coke's I'd Like To Teach The World To Sing and Wranglers' Jeans both became big hits for respective artists The New Seekers and David Dundas, but they were very much on the MOR side of the business. Generally, branding wasn't cool. Extreme examples of "brand resistance" were Led Zeppelin refusing even to publicise themselves by releasing singles, while Sixties mega-group The Doors reportedly turned down several million dollars in advertising income. But brands want music — and musicians, quite understandably, want the cash that can come from brand partnerships — and today, with massive names like U2 allying themselves to products, it seems branding is no longer a dirty word. MIDEM 2007 will be exploring the ins and outs of the relationship between music and brands at the Frukt-partnered session entitled Working With Brands... Without Selling Out. According to conference speaker Cornelia Schneider, Volkswagen's head of services and

sponsorship, music can avoid unhealthy brand associations through long-term initiatives. "Consumers are able to differentiate between the purely sales-driven integration of music in brand communication, and long-term emotional brand building supported by music," she says. "We have been using supportive music for more than 20 years. Ten years ago, we launched Volkswagen SoundFoundation, an initiative that supports new bands. Three months ago, we relaunched the SoundFoundation as a full-service platform for artists and as an entertainment platform for fans and consumers."

One of the highlights of Bon Jovi's 1996 European Tour was the open-air concert at the Volkswagen group headquarters in Wolfsburg, Germany. Before Bon Jovi, previous bands whose tours had been sponsored by Volkswagen included Genesis in 1992, Pink Floyd in 1994 and the Rolling Stones in 1995 — although Bon Jovi was the only act to have a version of the VW Golf named after it. Jon Bon Jovi said at the time: "We are happy to be associated with Volkswagen. Who would have thought ten or twelve years ago that we would be designing automobiles. We were songwriters making a living in a rock 'n' roll band. We feel we will be



Volkswagen's Cornelia Schneider

in good company with the previous bands Volkswagen has worked with". Recent acts to have partnered with VW while on tour include Seal and Mando Diao — who will play live at the up-coming MIDEM Opening Night Party.

In a more recent pioneering move VW teamed up with guitar company First Act in the US for a collaboration that gave a customised First Act GarageMaster electric guitar to any customer that bought or leased a designated Volkswagen model from the new 2007 line. The guitar would even play through the car's audio system. The offer was supported through a television, print and radio campaign featuring Grammy-winning artist John Mayer, Velvet Revolver guitarist Slash (formerly of Guns N' Roses) and actor Christopher Guest, well known for his portrayal of Nigel Tufnel in *This Is Spinal Tap*.

When Microsoft Studios was searching for a partner to launch its series of video-game soundtracks, one of the companies it contacted was Nile Rodgers' Sumthing Else MusicWorks. Rodgers — who had already scored several of Nike's Just Do It campaigns — has written, produced and distributed a range of video-game soundtracks, including those for Halo: Combat



The VW Iroc and the giveaway First Act GarageMaster

Evolved, Age Of Mythology, Brute Force, Halo 2, Outlaw Volleyball, Outlaw Golf 2 and Rise Of Nations.

"I approach the job of scoring a video game in much the same way as I do scoring a film soundtrack," Rodgers says. "I start from the position that there are visuals that need to be enhanced and other people's opinions that need to be taken into account. Whether you are working with an orchestra or a small group, it's ultimately a question of talking to the music director and then pulling all the musical personalities together."

Rodgers' work for Nike with director David Fincher (who later went on to direct *Alien 3*, *Fight Club*, *Seven* and *Mission Impossible 3*) was, he says, an exemplary collaboration. "That initial series of TV adverts was all based around the basketball player David Robinson and Dan Wieden's (of Wieden & Kennedy) Just Do It slogan," Rodgers says. "The agency was extremely helpful — and Nike likewise. The whole thing was actually pretty easy, because everyone was clear about what they wanted."

According to Mike Mathieson, CEO of Cake Group, the relationship between brands and music has



Warner Bros Pictures' Niki Gascon: "One of the toughest parts of this business is deadlines or crunch time"

broadcast free-to-air in 33 territories." Cake Group is currently working on the January launch of Global Cool, a new charity whose aim is to persuade one billion people to reduce their carbon footprint by one ton, which would start to reverse the damage done by CO2.

Niki Gascon, director of music for Warner Bros Pictures, who is appearing in the New Role Of Music In Feature Film Marketing conference during MIDEM 2007, believes that, to break into the world of marketing through music, two things are of particular importance. "Knowing your clients' preferences and

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Niki Gascon

changed hugely over the last five years: "It's much more empathetic these days. For example the Motorola/Gorillaz tie-up was perfect because the thing that works best as mobile phone content is animation, and Gorillaz are all about animation. From Gorillaz' side, they wanted to crack the Chinese market and Motorola helped them a lot with that."

Meanwhile, advertiser-funded programming (AFP) is successfully replacing the music shows that terrestrial TV no longer shows: "The Orange Playlist is about to start its third series in the UK and we re-skin it for a further 15 territories," Mathieson says. "The Axe/Lynx concert that we staged up on the Arctic Circle, featuring Faithless, Shaznay Lewis and The Thrills, was

staying accessible are the keys," she says. "Every music supervisor is different and each has his or her own process. Don't be afraid to get to know your client, and ask them how they like to have music serviced to them." Sometimes the smallest things can help an artist's chances. Music is much more likely to be noticed or shortlisted if it is delivered in a way that suits the client's modus operandi. "For instance, I prefer a brief sampler over a full collection of songs," Gascon says. "The piles of CDs on my desk are higher than my lamps — it's much easier to go through a few samplers. And when you send a sampler, make sure all the songs are entered into the iTunes database (cddb). That way, when it's loaded in the computer,



Upcoming rock act Mando Diao at a VW Iroc-sponsored event



Felix Cutillo: "Bergdorf Goodman's music service is more involved and service-oriented than a traditional music retail outlet"

the song titles automatically come up and you can import the music. These little things play a huge role in zipping your ideas to my speakers."

Also, don't call us. "Once I listen to a sampler, I can decide if I need more from you," Gascon continues. "Which brings me to point number two: be accessible. This business is governed by deadlines and crunch time. There are many instances when I only have a few hours, if that, to come up with a lot of song ideas. Whether by e-mail, instant messenger or phone, I work most effectively with people who are easily and quickly accessible."

And it works both ways: "I also understand the importance of making myself and my music needs available. At Warner Bros Pictures, we have created a movie release chart that lists our upcoming projects all the way through 2007, along with project descriptions and general music notes of what we are looking for. It's meant to help you to help us."

Alongside Cafe del Mar and Buddha Bar, French label Pschent's Hotel Costes series is one of the best-known and longest running branded compilations. Now on volume nine, the series has sold two-and-a-half million units and is also proving to be a very popular download. "The CD-version is selling a little bit less than a few years back but in October, when volume nine was released, it sold 5,000 full album downloads," Pschent CEO Eric Hauville says. Following the success of the series, Pschent is ap-



BG's Volume Music and Book Bar

proached regularly by advertising agencies: "We do several bespoke compilations per year," Hauville says. "It works very well in that it's a gift that people tend to go back to, which is great for the brand, of course."

Many hotels now use music to create both a sonic identity and extend their brands. But for a clothes store, particularly such a venerable emporium as Bergdorf Goodman, to make music part of the shopping experience is a new departure.

"We began over a year ago," says Felix Cutillo, Bergdorf Goodman's (BG) DJ/music buyer. "The senior vice-president of the men's store, Margaret Spaniolo, realised that music was an important part of Bergdorf Goodman's environment and approached me to implement the idea." The result was an in-house music department called volume music and book bar, which features a selection of books on photography, fine art

and fashion, as well as CDs. "We now have two locations — one on the third floor and one on the fifth, in the ladies building. And we also sell music from the Bergdorfgoodman.com website," Cutillo adds.

Part of Cutillo's in-store service includes previewing BG's music catalogue on an MP3 device. He also downloads and organises music into customers' iPods, and creates a customised library of music for shoppers. "What we do is more involved and service-oriented than a traditional music retail outlet," Cutillo says.

Cutillo's job demands a varied and very precise form of sonic science: "We use music in many ways, the most obvious being in-store play. We match the music to the clothing styles on each floor to create the right mood. It's well thought out and clients take notice of our play list and music selections. It's really something special that reinforces our brand. We also have two full-time DJs who play music seven days a week.

"One of my goals is to make BG synonymous with music," Cutillo continues. "We plan on releasing an official Bergdorf Goodman compilation, which will include tracks by Cassandra Wilson, Herb Alpert, Pink Mar-



Ricall's Richard Corbett: "We saw that the market needed a disenfranchised music company."

tini, Robin McKelle and Mardi Gras. BB, to name a few. It's a spectacular selection designed to thrill, and the disc will only be made available through BG. It also has brilliant packaging design, as well as a strong track selection. If that's not synergy I don't know what is..."

Increasingly, the real intelligence behind music choice in branding is moving away from the advertising agencies. "Historically, brands have used agencies to source their

"Some ad agencies regard music as an area in which money can be saved — which is ironic at a time when brands are more aware than ever of the power of music"

Richard Corbett

music," says Richard Corbett, CEO and managing director of the music research and licensing network Ricall. "However, a lot of clients are now finding that not only are some agencies really not music experts, but there can also be a conflict of interest in using them at all. Having quoted for a job, which is then commissioned, an agency will tend to regard the music choice as an area in which money can be saved — which is ironic at a time when brands are more aware than ever of the power of music." Ricall's system offers close to three million tracks and features a direct and simplified licensing system. This allows the client to source the music they want through an interface, which uses algorithms to recognise and compare songs. "Since we saw that the market needed a disenfranchised music company, we've been constantly trying to simplify the processes of sourcing and licensing," Corbett says. "Plus, we are about to launch an unsigned bands area. There is a huge amount of unsigned talent out there and, more importantly, there are increasing numbers of brands that are aware of the power of being associated with the next big thing. Ultimately, our aim is to be a one-stop shop for everyone who needs music."