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The Changing Shape of the Culture Industry; or, How Did Electronica Music Get into Television Commercials?

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This article examines the recent changes in the culture industry and demographics that permitted a formerly underground music to enter the mainstream. The demographic shift concerns the group that Pierre Bourdieu calls the “new petite bourgeoisie,” which in the 1980s began to use the music of their youth in commercials, signaling the beginning of the end of the commercial jingle, as well as the stigma that once attached to musicians who permitted their music be in advertising. But the yuppie baby boom generation that inhabited the new petite bourgeoisie has been succeeded by a younger group in the advertising industry, whose representatives are helping to bring underground electronic popular musics to mass audiences in television commercials. Automobile manufacturers in particular have gravitated toward this music.

Keywords: *advertising; Bourdieu; electronica; generation; music; television*

This article chronicles and discusses a brief but important transitory moment in the history of music used in advertising, a moment when composed music for advertising was being superseded by the use of previously recorded music, when advertising agencies thought of themselves as in the business of breaking bands, of imprinting their superior taste on vast swathes of the American television viewing public. That moment has already passed—advertising agencies are increasingly producers of popular music, not just its brokers; the boundary between “advertising” and “not advertising” in the realm of popular culture is even more porous.

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But the transitional moment that this article discusses is an important part of that shift, when advertising agencies were beginning to flex their muscles as arbiters of taste, brokers of the underground.

That underground was techno music, known more officially as "electronica." 1998 was supposed to be its year, the year of the "Next Big Thing" (Flick and Reece 1997; Schoemer 1997; Strauss 1997). This phrase had been used frequently to describe the music the previous year, when it received a good deal of exposure in the South by Southwest Music Conference in Austin, Texas and a large amount of coverage in the press. But in the fall of 1998, Scott Kirkland of the electronica band Crystal Method announced: "A year ago today the media pronounced electronica the next big thing; yesterday morning they pronounced electronica dead" (Rodman 1998, 65).

No such pronouncement was made, of course, yet there had been so much hype that the silence was deafening when the excitement petered out. Where did the hype come from? At first, from the music industry. In 1997, recording sales were down from the previous year, marking the end of a long growth period. The music industry was desperate for something or someone new to boost sales. MTV's announcement in the fall of 1996 that it would be increasing electronic sounds on the air spurred the music industry into considering electronica seriously (Catlin 1997).

Yet electronica pretty much fizzled, at least in terms of acting as the music industry's savior genre. Markets never developed and sales never amounted to much.¹ Most electronica musicians were not concerned, for they tended to view their music as underground, anticommercial, independent, though there were a few musicians who desired fame and fortune, which were proved to be difficult to achieve.

Electronica musicians and their fans with influence in the culture industry sought other ways to make their music known, including placing it in television commercials. As music journalist Frank Owen noted in the summer of 1998, "However you characterize it, 1998 may go down in pop history as the year in which the really cool music wasn't heard on MTV or the radio but on TV commercials" (Owen 1998, G1). Owen was quite right. Electronica music was heard, after all, just not in the usual place new music normally appears, namely, radio.

Electronica musicians arrived on the scene at an important confluence of historical and technological events that I will outline briefly below. The main thrust of this article, however, concerns a generational shift in what Pierre Bourdieu has termed the new *petite bourgeoisie*, the social group that plays an important mediating role in cultural production. It was a baby boom incarnation of this group that brought about the death of the jingle (the happy, snappy tune) in advertising, in part because of the entry of baby boomers into the realm of music production, and the rise of the use of pre-existing music in advertising in the 1980s. The 1990s witnessed

the increased use of alternative music such as electronica by a post-boomer generation, a new version of the new petite bourgeoisie that I will examine in some detail later in this article.

Before proceeding further, it is important to clarify just what I mean by electronica. The term was an invention of the music industry in the late 1990s to describe the increasing number of beat-heavy dance musics without vocals that employed digital technology in overt ways; initially, the term described music that was entirely, or almost entirely, computer-generated or manipulated. But digital technology has become so pervasive that virtually all popular musics use it, and the label "electronica" has come to encompass some musics that are primarily computer-generated but might include some vocals or other "live" sounds; and the term is used to label remixes of earlier recordings as well. I will employ this larger sense of the term here.

Changes in the Culture Industry

That electronica found a platform in television commercials was the result of a series of transformations that occurred in the music industry, the communications industry, and the major media, transformations that need to be laid out before continuing with electronica itself.

With the passage of the 1996 Communications Act, which lessened restrictions on radio station ownership, radio ownership began to be consolidated so that just a few years into the twenty-first century, two companies, Clear Channel and Viacom, control over 40 percent of radio stations in the United States. Houston-based Clear Channel controls 70 percent of rock music stations and is the single biggest broadcaster, concert promoter, and billboard advertising firm (Marshall 2003).

The consolidation that resulted from the passage of the Communications Act has had a number of ramifications.

1. Local DJs are disappearing as the monopolies attempt to cut costs by prerecording DJ talk and broadcasting it in several cities.
2. Playlists have been greatly restricted as a result of increasing market research; few stations venture beyond playing the same handful of hits.²
3. Clear Channel coerces musicians into performing at their concert venues by threatening to withhold airplay. Most artists comply (Boehlert and Hogan 2003).³
4. Also in the broadcasting field, MTV is playing fewer videos and airing more programs, further limiting musicians' access to the airwaves (Segal 2002).

Taken together, these changes mean that there is less variety of music being broadcast than in the past, making it much harder for musicians to find their way to the airwaves.

The picture is not much better in the music industry, which, like radio, is in a state of near monopoly, though this monopoly is global. Yet this industry is in trouble. For a variety of reasons, there has been a noticeable drop in CD sales. It is not clear how much of this is because of the decline in variety of music played on the radio or digital piracy, but the statistics are striking: there has been a steady decline since 2000 in sales of CDs, down nearly 20 percent in 2005 from a high in 2001 (Recording Industry Association of America 2005b).

Other factors were at play in the music industry in this period. The development of high-end digital technology means that operating a professional recording studio costs more than ever, with the result that the cost of producing an album is higher than ever. In the past, labels could offset production costs such as these by using their high-selling acts to subsidize those musicians who sold moderately well, but the music industry has by and large dropped bands it doesn't expect to make much money to concentrate instead on blockbusters. And finally, record labels have tightened promotion budgets, making it harder for bands to find an audience.

The advent of digital technologies affected advertising musicians as well. These new technologies, particularly MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface), meant that the professional advertising musician quickly became a thing of the past. Steve Karmen, known for decades as "the King of the Jingle," says that he knew it was time to get out of the business when a client told him that his child was using the same synthesizer Karmen was (Karmen 2005). Musicians such as Karmen typically possessed some classical music training, could play the piano, and could usually read and write music. With MIDI, rock and pop musicians, who don't always play the piano or read music, entered the field of commercial music in increasing numbers. Linda Kaplan, senior vice president/creative director at the advertising agency J. Walter Thompson, New York City, said that jingles such as "Oh, I wish I were an Oscar Mayer Wiener" ". . . have been replaced by the progressive sound of the synthesizer, the dominant musical instrument of the 1980s" (Demkowych 1986, S-5).

Another trend is the increasing use of pre-existing music in advertising, known in the industry as licensing, that is, the licensing of copyrighted material for use in a commercial.⁴ This came about in the 1980s in part because of the entrance of rock and pop musicians into the realm of advertising, and the ascension of baby boomers to positions of power in the advertising industry and their use of 1960s music in commercials. Kendall Marsh of Mental Music Productions said that "The baby boomer generation grew up with this music. Ad execs are in love with it, so they want to see their products associated with it. . . . You don't have to say anything else. You're associating yourself with a product which has a resonance with this

tune. You're buying into a lifestyle" (Burlingame 2002, A4). One woman, a self-described "old hippie" who was director of music at Dancer Fitzgerald Sample (an advertising agency later acquired by Saatchi & Saatchi) said in 1985 that "You get some kind of immediate awareness when a voice comes on that you or I might know" (Robins and Reece 1985, M.M. 20).

Licensing became an important aspect of the advertising music business, another way of effecting the "conquest of cool," as Thomas Frank has written, the conversion by the advertising industry of rebellion into hip salesmanship (Frank 1997). Licensing displaced advertising music specialists to some extent, who either left the business or learned how to make themselves more flexible workers in the commercial music realm. By 2002, if not earlier, record labels were hiring "strategic marketing" executives whose job is to place recordings in films and television shows (Friedman 2002). Advertising agencies learned to be on the lookout for new music.

Newer music, rather than music from baby boomers' youth, began to make its way into commercials by the 1990s as a younger generation of workers in advertising began to assume positions of authority. The signal event for putting non-mainstream music on the mental maps of advertisers was Lollapalooza II, a traveling music festival of alternative music groups that toured twenty-seven cities in the summer of 1992. Bob Chippardi, president of Concrete Marketing, Inc., in New York City, which promotes alternative bands, said at the time, "I would think there would be some smart marketers and advertising guys on Madison Avenue who saw Lollapalooza and said, 'Hey, why don't we tap into that?'" (Miller 1992, 18).

Enter Electronica

And tap into it they did. With the structural, bureaucratic, legal, and technological changes described earlier, all the pieces were in place for electronica to enter the mainstream—not via record label marketing, radio, or MTV, but television commercials, a development unthinkable only a few years previously. Additionally, new advertising strategies that sold lifestyles rather than products helped make television commercials become much more interesting beginning in the 1980s, rendering commercials so much more artistic that musicians were less reluctant to permit their music to be used in them.

Mainly, however, it was the lack of a radio outlet that made many musicians feel as though they had no option but to license their music for use in commercials. According to one independent ("indie") rock musician whose decision to license his music saved his band, "Radio is controlled by this huge industry. Ads are controlled by a few creative people. They

probably did art in college. Maybe they were college radio programmers" (Leland 2001, 50).

Jim Powers, cofounder of the Minty Fresh label, which has some electronica acts, admitted the difficulty of making his bands known in 2002.

Is it a better world? I don't think so, but meanwhile I have bands that need to tour. My bands now are completely open to having their songs as part of television commercials. Seven or eight years ago, it was unseemly to even bring it up. At the time it didn't seem necessary, because there was still a sense that radio was willing to take a chance on adventurous music. That's not true anymore, so you have to look for other ways to get the music out there (Kot 2002a).

Advertising agency creative personnel defend their use of this music, most claiming that it is simply a form of corporate sponsorship. Said one, Lance Jensen, who co-owns a hot agency and is a fan of alternative music, "What's-his-name painted the Sistine Chapel not because he was a religious nut but because that was his job. I don't understand the concept of selling out. If you've been taking guitar lessons since you were five years old, why shouldn't you make some money?" (Anderman 2001, L1).

The electronica music used in television commercials was occasionally composed for a particular ad. But most of the time it was licensed, and record labels with electronica lists, or that specialize in electronica, find that licensing is a growing part of their business. A senior vice president of visual marketing and licensing of the record label Astralwerks, a small label with some big electronica bands such as the Chemical Brothers, said in 2002 that

In the past two years [advertising] is one of the areas that has been exploding. The money [in the music business] is not what it used to be. And there is more money in advertising than in licensing to film and TV. Subsequently [sic] artists are lending themselves to sponsorship and product endorsement. . . . Record labels have to look into other ways to generate revenue and ad companies spend a lot of money in media. . . . [Also] television commercials have become a lot more worldly and edgy. There are some amazing commercials that people want to see. (Brown 2002, 42)

It was probably *Play*, the 1999 album by Moby, one of the biggest names in electronica, which alerted musicians to the promise of licensing. V2, Moby's label, signed over 100 licenses for songs on *Play* in North America alone, garnering nearly \$1 million for Moby; *Play* went multi-platinum (Leland 2001).⁵ Elsewhere, early in 2003, an official at the label said that "One year ago, and even with Moby's success, none of my co-workers were focusing on this area. But this has drastically changed internally.

Now I'm being asked why Underworld's music or Purotone's 'Addicted to Bass' are not being used in commercials. It's been a complete 180." (Paoletta 2003, 39). (Underworld and Purotone are electronica bands). One British advertising agency, Bartle Bogle Hegarty (BBH) even established an in-house publishing company so it could license its songs to other advertisers and reuse them (*Advertising Age* 2003).

Advertisers also realized that if they made an obscure band into a hit, their taste and perspicacity would make them look good to their potential customers. According to an executive producer/creative director at a music production company in California in 2003, "Breaking bands in commercials is definitely the new trend. It brings labels and advertising closer together. Advertisers are now, more than ever, interested in finding and breaking bands because it brings more attention to their brand" (Ostroff 2003, 45). It also brought more attention to advertisers as arbiters of taste, a position they increasingly seemed to enjoy and acknowledge. Emblematic of this position was the recent cover of *Creativity*, one of the main trade magazines of the advertising industry. The July 2004 issue showed 1980s band Survivor serenading a pajama-clad New York City advertising agency creative director in his kitchen, looking for work.

Advertising wasn't simply breaking bands, however. In the face of the dumbing down of radio, some people in advertising were attempting to reconfigure television commercials as an alternative non-mainstream site to hear new music. Saatchi & Saatchi licensed a track by the DJ Fatboy Slim designed to appeal to teenagers. A music director at the agency said in 1999 that "It was music that our target market would recognize, but it wasn't something you were going to find at the top of the charts. In some ways that makes it more interesting to the teens. It's just the fact that you're buying into the equity of a piece of music that teens are going to think is cool" (Lauro 1999, C1).

Yet musicians and others in the music industry wondered how much of their own creativity is being affected. A president/owner of a music production company asked in 2003, "are we trying to make commercials, or are we trying to make pop promos? The record business is rubbishy at the moment, so record companies have found the best way of exposure is through commercials. It starts becoming more of a commercial for the band than the product" (Ostroff 2003, 45).

Automobile Commercials

Electronica music wasn't used in all television ads, however, or even in a cross-section of all advertised goods and services. Electronica was mainly, though not exclusively, employed in automobile commercials. One advertising creative staffer who had used electronica in advertisements said

proudly in 2002 that "The music you hear in automobile commercials is better than most of the music you can hear on the radio" (Patton 2002, 21). Electronica became so ubiquitous in automobile commercials that in the fall of 2002, the L.A. Office Roadshow, an annual gathering of companies with licensable properties and firms looking for a deal, had to move to a bigger venue; the organizer said that all the record labels asked how many car companies were coming (Bloom 2002).

As I wrote in my book on music and technology, the special place long occupied by the automobile in the American imagination has resulted in advertising that for decades has frequently emphasized its technological advances (Taylor 2001). The automobile, as Michael L. Smith has noted, tends to be the main symbol of technological progress in American culture, in part because it is the single most expensive piece of technology most people are likely to purchase (Smith 1982).⁶ As a result, automobile companies have historically spared no expense on advertising, and there is a long history of the advertisement of automobiles, going back to the use of sheet music to sell cars (such as Gus Edwards and Vincent Bryan's "In My Merry Oldsmobile" from 1905); a recent advertising trade magazine observed that "The automobile has played a crucial role in the shaping of the advertising industry" (FitzGerald 2000, 41).

Without recounting the entire history of automobile advertising in the U.S., let me jump to the recent past and examine two cases.

Volkswagen

By all accounts, it was Volkswagen that set the trend of using new and interesting music in its television advertisements. For years, Volkswagen had been experiencing lagging sales in North America and wanted to attempt a comeback. They hired Arnold Worldwide of Boston in 1995 to bring their sales and brand image out of the doldrums. Arnold assembled the usual market research information on Volkswagen's audience and discovered that Volkswagen drivers tended to be younger than its competitors', make more money, and possess more education. Arnold devised a campaign to appeal to these existing buyers, strategically targeting this group rather than attempting to reach a broad market. Interestingly, however, they did purchase commercial time during the Super Bowl, which gave Volkswagen great national exposure. Most of Arnold's targeted buyers were probably not interested in the Super Bowl, but Volkswagen salespeople were, and part of the new campaign was to reassure salesmen that Volkswagen was back (Kiley 2002).

It was perhaps the commercials for the New Beetle in 1998 that awakened viewers to Volkswagen's new "Drivers Wanted" campaign. Liz Vanzura, director of marketing for Volkswagen, North America, said in 1998 that

TABLE 1. Volkswagen: Evidence of Success in America

	1995	2000	Results
Sales	115,167	355,479	+280%
Unaided brand awareness	11	31	+181%
Conquest/defection	0.5	5.6	+1,020%
Brand loyalty	31	50.8	+63%
Unaided purchase consideration	4	13	+225%
Aided ad recall	37	78	+111%
Brand buzz	Low	High	Way up!
Dealer enthusiasm	Low	High	Way up!

Note: See Kiley 2002, 248.

We definitely wanted music that was contemporary and that had broad appeal. That's why we did five spots. We wanted to be sure that we covered with certain of our spots our baby-boomer contingency, the folks who had some recall or affiliation with Volkswagen, but we also wanted to have some types of music that had some appeal to the youth market as well. . . . There's really no nostalgic-oriented music in this. . . . We used very contemporary songs, but things that we thought, no matter what age, no matter what demographic you were, you'd think this was cool. (Morris 1998)

The music of these five ads was eclectic, to say the least, provided by five U.K. acts: Hurricane #1, Stereolab, the Orb, Spiritualized, and Fluke; most of these bands (except Hurricane #1) foreground electronic technologies in their music and could be considered electronica in the broader sense defined earlier.

Perhaps the most remarked-on of the new Volkswagen ads featured music by the late English musician Nick Drake, used in an ad that demonstrates Arnold Worldwide's changing attitude toward music.⁷ Jonathan Dayton (now famous for co-directing the hit film *Little Miss Sunshine* of 2006), who co-filmed the Volkswagen commercial, envisioned Drake's song "Pink Moon" not as selling the car, but as a song that people in the ad might be listening to themselves, a strategy that is employed in all the ads in the "Drivers Wanted" campaign. Dayton said in 2001 that "It's acknowledging the place music has in peoples' lives. It's not meant as an endorsement" (Leland 2001, 51).

By any measure, Volkswagen's commercials in the "Drivers Wanted" campaign were hugely successful (see table 1). Sales were way up, as was brand loyalty and what is known in the industry as "brand buzz," all of which were tabulated for Volkswagen. The mixture of hard statistics with completely unscientific impressions is striking in this table and gives evidence of the kind of scientization and hunch-driven nature of the business.

The buzz generated by the music used in the ads resulted in a 2001 CD entitled *Street Mix: Music from Volkswagen Commercials* (Volume 1), which was for a time available from Volkswagen's web site for \$10. This disc contains ten tracks that are well known from their advertisements, including Nick Drake's, as well as music by the techno band Hooverphonic, Charles Mingus, and others. The liner notes contain little information except some details about the songs (though without saying which albums they're from). There is an introductory note, however, which is suggestive:

We chose these bands because they had something to say, because they felt like kindred spirits. When our creative team set forth to convey the essence of Volkswagen, we needed music that had soul. Well, we got soul and here's 12 tracks of it. Enjoy.⁸

Volkswagen also began an online radio station at its web site. If you visited it, you would have seen the text: "MUSIC'S BEEN GOOD TO US. So we thought we'd return the favor."⁹ Volkswagen offered four channels with music from their advertisements, as well as music not on their ads. While the music played, the album cover appeared in the corner of the tuner application, and you could click on it to purchase. You could also click on links that recalled old advertisements, though it wouldn't play those ads' music.

One of the most prolific musical contributors to Arnold Worldwide's Volkswagen commercials was Ben Neill, a "downtown" New York City musician well known in the experimental music scene. Neill says that people at Arnold knew his earlier music and that he was hired to produce his sound for their Volkswagen commercials. In the course of writing music for these ads, Arnold produced an extended version of Neill's songs. Then, says Neill, "I got the idea to turn them all into full-length songs. It's a new model for artists to get their work out, in working with labels, brands, and ad agencies" (Koransky 2003, 20). The result was a CD called *Automotive*, which, according to a cover slipped over the disc, ". . . features expanded arrangements of music Ben Neill composed for a series of groundbreaking VW television ads" (Neill 2002).¹⁰ On the album, there are live vocals and flute, plus Neill and his electronically manipulated trumpet. Everything else is electronically generated and manipulated.

Arnold Worldwide designed the cover art of the album, which is a colorized still from one of their ads called "Nite Nite." And they designed the liner notes as well, which include a fictitious encounter between Neill and his employers at Arnold, who are represented as hip and easygoing (Neill 2002). "Nite Nite" was recognized by the International Automotive Advertising Awards in 2000.

Neill seemingly rejected a time-honored "downtown" New York aesthetic, claiming that "There is no difference between something that is

considered art and something that is a commercial. My album is a statement of that" (Bees 2002, 11). Neill said,

It's a real convergence between a brand, an ad agency and a record company and it has worked out really well for me. . . . It gives my music a lot more exposure. That was one of the things that appealed to me when I was doing it because having my music on television means millions of people are becoming familiar with it. (Huckman 2003)

Mitsubishi

As startling as Volkswagen's successes with music were, it may be that Mitsubishi, whose advertising agency Deutch LA essentially copied Arnold Worldwide's strategy, achieved more notice for its advertising music.

In 2002, reflecting on the success of their campaign called "Wake Up and Drive," Pierre Gagnon, president and chief operating officer of Mitsubishi Motor Sales of America, said that "We realized that Generation Y would be reaching driving age soon. We knew if we were going to grow, we needed to reach them" (Scott 2002, Y6). Gagnon said that Mitsubishi had the second-youngest demographic of all foreign automakers in the U.S., behind only Volkswagen. The average age of Mitsubishi owners at the time was thirty-eight; thirty-eight percent of their customers were under thirty-five. Gagnon said that "Our cars are for people who think young. People who drive Mitsubishi may look different, but they all have a common youthful spirit. They're part of a club or family of Mitsubishi drivers" (Scott 2002, Y6).

Eclipse: "Fun" (2001). Eric Hirshberg, executive creative director of the advertising agency Deutch LA, said in 2001, "We had this very simple idea: let's make the Mitsubishi owners into a cool club. If they were all singing a Britney Spears song, the specialness of driving a Mitsubishi would have gone away" (Weiner 2001). Instead, Deutch used a song called "Start the Commotion" by the British hip hop/big beat band Wiseguys, in an ad for the Mitsubishi Eclipse which debuted in March 2001. (Big beat is a subgenre of electronica that emerged in the 1990s and was meant as a return to simple dance music as opposed to the more intellectual kind of techno in vogue earlier in the 1990s; Wiseguys is a "band" consisting of one person, DJ Touche, real name Theo Keating, whose music consists only of samples, that is, exact digital copies of recorded music).¹¹

Deutch's strategy stemmed from the simple desire to attempt to use music in ads that drivers might actually listen to. Their concept was to show what people, especially young people, actually do in their cars, such as singing along with the stereo, as in their ad called "Start the Commotion", which shows actors moving to the music. Deutch LA executives actually

drove around in their cars and thought about the music they were listening to. According to Eric Hirshberg, "You can't find great driving songs in a conference room. You have to find them in your car" (McCarthy 2001, B6).

Mike Sheldon, the general manager of Deutch LA who was the producer of the commercial, claimed that viewers are invited into the hip Mitsubishi club with ads that say, "Either you take a youthful look on life. Or you buy a Toyota and give up" (McCarthy 2001, B6). Significantly, the ads in the Wake Up and Drive campaign end with the tagline: "Are You In?"

Eric Hirshberg said, "Talk to consumers about cars and they rarely talk about the things car companies talk about—even handling and acceleration. They talk about what image they want to project through their cars: which one is me? We've turned Mitsubishi into the first fashion car brand. It's emotional territory that Mitsubishi can, and does, own." (Hatfield 2003a, 30). "Affinity marketing" is the term given to this kind of advertising. The strategy is to have customers discover the music and then latch onto the car brand to become part of an in-crowd, a peer group of those in the know.

Pierre Gagnon said that their use of popular music was successful. "The most powerful proof is when a DJ comes onto the radio and says, 'And now, the Mitsubishi song.' It's hard to explain the phenomenon. What we're so pleased with is we know we're breaking through when these songs become more popular" (Huckman 2003). And their use of popular music was successful in terms of sales. In spring 2003, Mitsubishi claimed that in the past four years—since they began using popular music in their commercials, sales grew 81 percent (TheAutoChannel.com 2003). Hirshberg claimed that their aim was for Mitsubishi to be "woven into the popular culture," and it appeared to work (Halliday 2002). The Wiseguys' album was released in 1999 but wasn't represented on the *Billboard* charts until heard on the Mitsubishi commercial in March 2001 (DeMarco 2002, 27). Then, "Start the Commotion" was on the *Billboard* magazine's Hot 100 chart for twelve weeks and peaked at no. 31 on August 25, 2001.

Electronica Aesthetics

Advertising agencies liked to use electronica music for automobile ads not just for its usefulness in signifying the hip and the technological, but for sonic and practical reasons as well.

Commentators were agreed that electronica sounds good coming out of television speakers. One music critic said that it has a lot of "cleanliness," it's crisp (Moon 2001). Mike Simpson of the Dust Brothers, the production team who worked with Beck and the Beastie Boys, among others, said that "When you hear electronic music in commercials, it jumps out

of the television in a way that other types of music don't. It has a certain manic dramatic quality that makes you pay attention, which is precisely what the advertisers want" (Owen 1998, G1).

Others commented on the affective qualities of electronica. Since it is largely synthesized and frequently employs samples, it has a great deal more sonorous range than the standard rock or jazz ensemble—it can be louder, softer, higher, lower, with a wider range of tone colors. It is, in effect, viewed as a kind of symphonic music. One critic likened electronica to an orchestral score with the range of sounds and emotions (Lynch 2000).

Other qualities made electronica attractive to advertisers and their agencies. The editor-at-large of *Advertising Age* wrote that "the pacing of ads today is so frantic that techno works really well with it. The composited images, saturated colors, bizarre camera angles and scrolling of text down the screen—that kind of imagery overload lends itself to a futuristic music treatment like electronica" (Reynolds 1999, AR27).

And electronica doesn't have vocals that can distract from the ad, an important issue for advertisers.

Interpretations Wanted

Now, at this point, let me start to take apart this music, these ads, and the larger questions of consumerism and social group in which they are caught up. There are a number of issues to disentangle here.

The New Petite Bourgeoisie

First, the question of the social group involved in making advertisements. Pierre Bourdieu's conception of the new bourgeoisie and new petite bourgeoisie, which includes cultural workers such as advertising agency personnel, is a useful starting point. Bourdieu described these groups in great detail in *Distinction* and it is worth reviewing some of his claims. Those members of the new petite bourgeoisie who come from the upper classes but have not made the most of the educational opportunities afforded them by their positions have tended to make their occupations into refuges: they make the most out of these occupations that aren't as prestigious as those that people of their background might have aspired to. Bourdieu notes that these members of the new petite bourgeoisie possess an ambivalent relationship with the educational system, which includes "a sense of complicity with every form of symbolic defiance," including cultivating a fascination for "the avant-garde underground, which is their monopoly . . . as a challenge to legitimate culture" (Bourdieu 1984, 360).

Bourdieu's point that new petite bourgeoisie operates against high culture helps point out that the baby boomer introduction of their music for

use in advertising wasn't simply a matter of taste, or changes in technology that brought more rock musicians into the realm of advertising. It was also a reaction against what had been dominant in advertising music: music by formally trained musicians who were adept at scoring music for orchestras, bands, and choruses.

Bourdieu also notes that the new *petite bourgeoisie* is involved in cultural production, frequently acts as a cultural intermediary, and has devised a series of middlebrow genres halfway between what he calls "legitimate culture" and "mass production" (Bourdieu 1984, 326). As many have noted, commercials beginning in the 1980s became more artistic, more aesthetic. Advertising agency creative personnel's discourse on their work has changed with this shift. For example, the vice president and associate creative director of Deutch LA, who oversaw the Mitsubishi commercials acknowledged in 2002 that "People hate commercials," and that what Deutch wanted to do was "make little pieces of entertainment" (Scott 2002, Y6). It was in part this new attitude that prompted many musicians to make their music available for commercial use.

Bourdieu's analysis of the new *petite bourgeoisie* as a cultural intermediaries is dependent on high culture's claim to prestige, and thus he makes a good deal of the new *petite bourgeoisie*'s middling class position. The new *petite bourgeoisie* mediates between high and low culture, but their mediating, and the cultural forms that result—such as advertisements—are never seen as being as consequential or prestigious as "legitimate culture." The new *petite bourgeoisie* is a popularizer of high culture, Bourdieu says, but does not possess the competence of legitimate simplifiers and popularizers such as academics. The new *petite bourgeoisie* has to invent for itself something resembling the authority of the author apart from the modes of competence that mark the legitimate popularizers, resulting in a role of what Bourdieu calls the "presenter," which he says is "devoid of intrinsic value" (Bourdieu 1984, 326). Recall Mitsubishi's pride in its musical selections, hearing a song on the radio described as "the Mitsubishi song."

Bourdieu is in effect describing the decades-old dilemma of the advertising man (and they are mostly men): they consider themselves to be highly creative, but what they create is not particularly valued by the culture, even though they have frequently adapted high art techniques, including from modernism, in the production of advertising copy, visual imagery, and music, especially new music technologies.¹²

One last observation of Bourdieu's is worth noting, and it concerns the new *petite bourgeoisie*'s concern not simply with the production of symbols, as in advertising, or the mediation of cultural forms, but consumption as well. The new *petite bourgeoisie*, writes Bourdieu, is engaged in struggles "over everything concerned with the art of living, in particular,

domestic life and consumption. . . ." (Bourdieu 1984, 366). The new petite bourgeoisie, then, is not necessarily involved with the production of goods, but is intimately concerned with how goods are made to insinuate themselves into peoples' lives.

Generational Shift

Bourdieu's analysis, while useful, has been taken to apply to the new petite bourgeoisie generally. But time has passed since *Distinction* was first published in 1979; another generation enjoys a position of authority in the new petite bourgeoisie. What does this group look like now? As a class with certain structural characteristics such as those analyzed by Bourdieu, I think the new petite bourgeoisie is reasonably stable, but with some changes; the main update and amplification concerns this issue of mediating cultural forms, and, additionally, the attitudes toward consumption held by this younger generation in the new petite bourgeoisie, as Bourdieu saw as it was beginning to take shape.

The baby boomers in the advertising industry, who were responsible for bringing about the demise of the jingle and the rise of the practice of licensing music, are being superseded by late- or post-baby boomers, who now hold sway in advertising agencies, and, thus, the authority to choose the musical selections to license in advertising.¹³ These are frequently people who listened to alternative radio in college, or were perhaps involved in college radio themselves; perhaps they played in a band. According to one longtime ad industry member, "These guys are people who grew up with The Cure, with The Police, with The Smiths and they're bringing their taste to Madison Avenue and consequently to the rest of America" (Del Grando 2003). Time and again, this latest generation of the new petite bourgeoisie is shown to possess large amounts of what Sarah Thornton influentially labeled "subcultural capital," a kind of Bourdieuan capital that is apart from high cultural capital (Thornton 1996).

The people in the advertising industry whom I have interviewed do, for the most part, belong to Bourdieu's group: they are highly educated young people from upper-middle-class families. One small firm in New York City is comprised entirely of such people: two are children of doctors and went to elite eastern colleges; the third is the son of a banker and also attended an elite eastern college.¹⁴ For them, making advertising music was a way to make a living in music. They are under no illusion that they make "art," saying that that question is irrelevant. But at the same time they realized that as a small firm, they have produced a body of work that has a signature sound, and "It becomes our art, our trade," one of them told me.

I want to consider briefly who these people are in this new petite bourgeois today and their relationship to electronica, and alternative music

more generally. In the early 1990s, when I taught a class on popular music for the first time, my students were obsessed with arguing about which musicians or bands were sellouts and which weren't. They had a set list of criteria: a sellout was someone who (1) signed a contract with a major label; or (2) appeared on MTV; or (3) allowed their music to be used for commercial purposes. This was a period when "alternative"—i.e., non-mainstream—music was all the rage, when many young people in college or just out were turning their backs on "corporate music" and seeking something that they felt was less commercially compromised.

Many of these people are in the new petite bourgeoisie and they continue their attitudes. They still have no tolerance for what they view as commercial music, and have latched onto electronica as one of the kinds of noncommercial music that they like, for it has a good deal of credibility as underground music. At the same time, however, they have no compunction about using this music for commercial purposes. For them, this does not compromise the music: they believe their motives to be altruistic in that they are helping obscure musicians survive, and they effectively wield discourses that argue for the artistic worth of commercial production, as we have seen.

For example, Apples in Stereo, an indie band with deep anticommmercial tendencies, decided to allow their music to be used in a Sony ad because a friend who worked as a sound designer suggested their music for Sony's ad. Band member Robert Schneider said in 2001, "You imagine that it's a crass process. But it's not like Sony used our song in the commercial, which is how it looks to the indie kid. It's just one guy who liked our music" (Leland 2001, 50).

In part it is a question of agency: musicians and post-boomers in advertising are using the music for their own ends, not simply accepting what the industry gives them. For this younger new petite bourgeoisie, controlling how their music is used, controlling how they consume, is all-important.¹⁵ Controlling consumption is a way of making it manageable, acceptable, which marks another more general difference between today's new petite bourgeoisie and the one Bordieu studied nearer its beginning. Today's has a much less ambivalent attitude toward consumption generally. Even though it was the baby boomer generation that began the practice of licensing, the practice was quite controversial. The chief strategy officer for the advertising agency Portland Wieden+Kennedy, a late baby boomer, says that "I grew up with the Clash, and the idea of the Clash making a ton of money by being commercial was horrifying, OK?" He thought that

They should not sell out. We used to talk about people selling out. Well, that's not what's going on in youth culture today. They fully embrace the entrepreneurial and the business side of it. Being entrepreneurial—'It's a

business, make it a success'—all of that's got a lot of credibility among the young. (Schoenberg 2002, 5)¹⁶

Members of today's late- and post-baby boomer generations aren't just shoppers, or even consumers of goods and the sign-values that the culture attaches to them, but are in effect consumer/participants. Television commercial viewers/listeners are not simply "presented" with factual materials about automobiles as in early ads; they are not simply being shown a lifestyle they can identify with as in more recent ads. Instead, they are being invited to participate, to join the hip club. They are shown scenes they can imagine themselves in.

This kind of advertising—dubbed "invitational advertising" by Steve Willhite, Volkswagen's senior executive in charge of marketing who was involved in the "Drivers Wanted" campaign at Arnold Worldwide—(Kiley 2002, 213) is instrumental in forming a new kind of consumer, as well as a new kind of relationship to goods. Marketing to yuppies marked the rise of this mode of advertising. "Before yuppies," observes anthropologist Grant McCracken, "there was no compelling connection between the Rolex and the BMW" (McCracken 1988, 121).

Today, it is not simply that there is thought to be a connection between a car and a watch—and social class, habitus, lifestyle, etc. Consumerism today is more integrated into everyday life than before, as many have observed, and today's young consumers consume unabashedly and unapologetically, while they discursively protect certain arenas—such as their music—from the taint of commercialism, even if that music is commercial through and through.¹⁷

The members of the new petite bourgeoisie who work in advertising are uniquely situated in that they, like all consumers, possess the identifiable tastes of their social group, but they have the power to share, and promote, their tastes in particularly influential ways. Bourdieu argues that each faction of the bourgeoisie wants to impose its tastes on the other, each wants to be hegemonic. In addition to their altruistic motivation of helping struggling musicians, these members of the new petite bourgeoisie are attempting to educate audiences by promulgating their musical tastes on the masses: they control the use of their music in an attempt to manipulate the tastes of others.

And they are, by and large, successful. I have already mentioned the surge in sales that resulted from the use of music in automobile commercials. Many observers of the music scene have noted the rise of interesting music on television. Joan Anderman of the *Boston Globe* writes, "The Ad Guys—historically derided as smarmy salesman—are suddenly the hippest DJs around" (Anderman 2001, L1). Barry Walters included a song by Dirty Vegas called "Days Go By," used in another Mitsubishi Eclipse

ad in 2002, in his list of the top 10 dance music tunes of 2002 in *Rolling Stone*, writing that "Proving that Madison Avenue is the new MTV, Mitsubishi's TV commercial popularized this wistful U.K. folk cut with a fat electronic throb that radio wouldn't have touched otherwise" (Walters 2002, 112).¹⁸

And fans write in to internet newsgroups wondering about the music they're hearing in commercials; some enterprising fans compile lists of ads and the music used on them, though this activity has largely been superseded by a commercial site, *adtones.com*. Record labels affix stickers to the cellophane of CDs saying, "As heard on the such-and-such commercial." CD "reviewers" at *amazon.com* write how they discovered a particular band through a commercial.

Last, and most suggestive in my efforts to detail the new generation of the new petite bourgeoisie, for these post-baby boomers, "legitimate culture" is of no interest; Lance Jensen didn't know Michelangelo's name, even as he compared advertising work to painting the Sistine Chapel. The new petite bourgeoisie attempts to confer legitimacy on itself not by brokering high culture or importing techniques associated with high culture in the production of advertisements. They remain intermediaries, or presenters in Bourdieu's sense, but are instead presenters of hip, underground culture, not high culture. Their "subcultural capital" isn't opposed to legitimate cultural capital; it is supplanting it. The structure and practices identified by Bourdieu are intact, since the new petite bourgeoisie still performs a mediating function, it's just not between "high" and "low," but between underground and "low." The new petite bourgeoisie in advertising is not educating mainstream viewers about the glories of art, but instead are introducing them to the sounds of the underground.

While Bourdieu understood the changing cultural landscape of France when he studied it as increasingly displaying a conflict between "legitimate culture" and more commercial values, the next chapter in the story he began doesn't simply say that commercial values have been ascendant—even dominant—but that the new petite bourgeoisie has retained its mediating function, its taste-making function, although its taste is organized not around "legitimate culture" but the underground.

It is striking how much the authority and prestige of high culture appears to have waned, especially that of classical music. The newest petite bourgeoisie simply isn't interested in it. To be sure, the previous generation of the new petite bourgeoisie wasn't much interested in it either, but they were concerned with issues of prestige and utilized techniques from high arts such as literature and the visual arts in the production of their ads.

Now, however, as Ben Neill said, "There is no difference between something that is considered art and something that is a commercial" (Bees 2002, 11). Whether or not this statement is "true" is not the point. The point,

rather, is that musicians like Neill are increasingly common, and their practices are organized around these kinds of statements and positions.

What happens to complicated structures, a system of habitus, as the prestige and hegemony of legitimate culture fade? In some sense, legitimate culture was the structure against which all other cultures reacted. In *Strange Sounds* (Taylor, 2001), I employed the term "little culture," first forwarded by Grant McCracken, to describe the psychedelic trance scene that I studied in New York City (McCracken 1997). I used this term because it seemed to me to be much more useful in describing this scene than the usual "subculture" appellation, for that concept has become laden with notions of resistance that I simply didn't find in my ethnography of the psy trance scene.

It may be that "legitimate" culture is devolving into just another little culture, or a series of little cultures, sometimes dominant to some others, sometimes subordinate. Raymond Williams's influential discussion of tradition as dominant, residual, or emergent seems to be increasingly volatilized. Or perhaps irrelevant (Williams 1977).

Advertising practices were and remain deeply caught up in these transformations. Advertising employs people of a particular social group, of a particular habitus, who have the power to extend their tastes beyond this group. In doing so they help demonstrate that advertising is not simply part of a "top-down" process by which the faceless culture industry imposes its wares on an unsuspecting public. The advertising industry is populated by real people on whom structures act, just as they have the ability to influence structures themselves, bringing their taste for underground music to the mainstream.

Notes

1. 2002 RIAA figures put "electronic" music in the "Other" category, which is about 8.1 percent of all recordings and includes many genres; they also note that their category "R&B/Urban," which accounted for 11.2 percent of all sales, includes "dance" and "disco" (Recording Industry Association of America 2002). By 2005, the most recent year for which statistics are available as of this writing, the "Other" category still contained electronica and was 8.5 percent of all sales (Recording Industry Association of America 2005a).

2. Clear Channel claims that there has been an increase in diversity of radio formats—kinds of programs—but a 2002 study by the Future of Music Coalition revealed that there is as much as a 76 percent overlap in playlists between radio formats (Eliscu 2003; see also Leeds 2001).

3. There is also an existing "legal payola" system. It has long been illegal for radio labels to reward radio stations for playing their songs, so an industry of intermediaries known as "indies" performs this function. Major labels hire indies to represent their interests to radio stations. Money is exchanged for "promotional

support"—giveaways, free tickets, etc.—but not directly between radio stations and labels (Boehlert 2001a; see also Boehlert 2001b, 2001c; Doerksen 2003; and Kot 2002b).

4. Licensing has received a good deal of coverage in both the trade and mainstream presses (see Alsop 1985; Boehlert 1998, 1999; Block 2003; Diaz 2003; Farhi 1998; Forkan 1985; Goldman 1997; Hatfield 2003b; Kaplan 2003; Levine 2003; McLaren 1998; Pate 1984; Vanderbilt 2002; Wall 1986; and Wilson 1999).

5. Moby was at the vanguard of licensing; some reports say that the tracks on his 1999 album *Play* have been licensed up to 600 times (Lawson 2001. See also Smith 2002; Wiener 2001).

6. In some ways this might seem counter-intuitive in this computer age—electronica would seem the best music to sell computers. Computers, however, are usually advertised for how they will enhance human relationships through communication, sharing music, images, videos. Their cutting-edge technology is not thematized unless there is some new development that the advertiser feels should be trumpeted.

7. This is the commercial used to advertise the Cabrio in 1999, available at <http://www.hvwc.net/movies>.

8. Liner notes from *Street Mix*, Volume 1, 2001.

9. <http://www.vw.com/musicpillar/listen.htm>; uppercase in original. This URL is no longer active.

10. For more on Neill and *Automotive*, see <http://www.benneill.com>.

11. The video for this song, available from <http://mammoth.go.com/wiseguys/>, shows DJ Touche shuffling through his vinyl collection which generates “real” musicians executing what is sampled in his track.

12. See Lears 1994 for a discussion of high art techniques used in advertising in the past. Composers’ ideas were less used in advertising music, though most people were probably introduced to new music technologies in advertising (see Pinch and Trocco 2002).

13. It’s not just that the advertising industry is controlled by young people; it is quite ageist. Richard Sennett writes in his book on work that, in the New York City advertising agency where one of his interlocutors worked, “Everything in the office focused on the immediate moment, on what was just about to break, on getting ahead of the curve; eyes glaze over in the image business when someone begins a sentence ‘One thing I’ve learned is that . . .’” (Sennett 1998, 79–80). One advertising executive acknowledges this orientation, telling a researcher that “If you’re in advertising, you’re dead after thirty. Age is a killer. . . .” “Flexibility equal youth, rigidity equals age,” Sennett concludes (Sennett 1998, 93).

14. I should make clear, however, that there is a distinct difference in the advertising world between the “creative” and the “business” sides. The creative side produces ads, the business side manages clients and accounts. Judging from my interviews, the creative side is much more populated by people in this group described by Bourdieu; the business side seems to be populated by people who enter the field with less cultural and educational capital.

15. Nick Gadsby, a British-based market researcher, has discovered that today’s consumers want to “control the agenda” (Gadsby 2003, 38). Interestingly, Gadsby singles out contemporary electronica music as a new kind of “brand”—or perhaps

“b(r)and”—naming the British band Aphex Twin as a group that commands the loyalty of underground fans—famously sensitive to questions of selling out, unlike the mainstream groups I have been describing—even as it permits its music to be used for commercial purposes.

16. An article in *Adweek* in 1985 noted the “deep-rooted suspicion of the corporate sell” possessed by baby boomers, which the use of music from the 1960s was meant to circumvent (Robins and Reece 1985, M.M. 20). Some baby boomers were appalled by the use of licensed music. A particularly notorious ad was Nike’s use in 1987 of the Beatles’ “Revolution,” largely seen as one of the most influential acts of licensing. As a response to this and other uses of 1960s music, Neil Young wrote an antiadvertising song called “This Note’s for You” in 1988.

17. See, for just two examples, Lee 1993 and Holt 2000.

18. For more on this Dirty Vegas song, see Halliday 2002; Paoletta 2002, 44; Sanneh 2002, E2; and Walker 2002.

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