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Products Placed: How Companies Pay Artists to Include Brands in Lyrics

By Eliot Van Buskirk September 19, 2008 | 9:09:55 AM Categories: [Music News](#)

Songs that refer to products and brands have been with us for years, from Simon and Garfunkel singing "Mama don't take my Kodachrome away" to Janis Joplin's plea for a new car in the song "Mercedes Benz" and beyond. Conscious of the branding value such mentions can bring, some artists have gone so far as to approach companies with offers to include brand and product names in their song lyrics.

A e-mail from Paul Kluger of the Kluger Agency, which performs such product placements, mistakenly sent to Jeff Crouse of the Anti-Advertising Agency and Double Happiness Jeans, provides a rare glimpse into the secretive market for song lyric product placement.

"I'm writing because we feel you may be a good company to participate in a brand integration campaign within the actual lyrics of one of the worlds most famous recording artists upcoming song/album," begins the opening e-mail in the eventual salvo between the two.

Yes, you read that right: things have gotten so weird in the music business that high-profile acts are inserting ads into their song lyrics. The next time you hear a brand mentioned in a song, it could be due to a paid product placement. And unlike magazines, songs are not required to point out which words are part of an advertisement.

In the e-mail, Kluger (who has [represented](#) Mariah Carey, New Kids on the Block, Ne-Yo, Fall Out Boy, Method Man, Lady GaGa and Ludacris) explained via e-mail that for the right price, Double Happiness Jeans could find its way into the lyrics in an upcoming Pussycat Dolls song. Crouse posted the e-mail on his blog at the Anti-Advertising Agency, an art project of sorts that's basically the philosophical mirror image of a traditional ad agency.

The thing is, [Double Happiness Jeans](#) is not your everyday brand -- it's a virtual sweatshop organized by [EyeBeam](#) for a display at the Sundance Festival, which involves paying Second Life citizens 90 cents an hour to make real, customized jeans designed in the virtual factory. Crouse and Steve Lambert, his partner at the Anti-Advertising Agency, are probably the last people on earth who Kluger would want to receive this e-mail. Both men spend a fair amount of their time questioning, undermining and criticizing the pervasiveness of materialism and advertising in our culture.

"It was hilarious," Lambert told us via telephone, "that he wanted to put Jeff's fake Second Life sweatshop company in a pop song. It's this desperation that advertising has come to because you can't just tell people about your product anymore, because nobody cares. Advertisers have created this situation where they've made themselves obsolete. There's too much advertising out there, so they try to find new ways to cut through the clutter that they've created. And this is one of those ways."

Soon after Crouse posted Kluger's e-mail and his own response on the blog, a commenter wrote, "Either a spammer/con-artist is using the name of Adam Kluger PR or Adam Kluger PR are really bad at marketing themselves." Kluger asked Lambert and Crouse via e-mail and telephone a number of times to remove the post and comment. "Will you please remove the post on your blog? Now a new comment was made basically calling us 'morons,'" he wrote in one of the requests. "When I google the blog or my name, the tag line is 'spammer/con-artist' using the name Adam Kluger PR. Obviously, this is not good for business, and more importantly, I'm quite embarrassed."

Never mind that it was he who first approached them via unsolicited e-mail by using a scraper program that identified them as potential clients for his product placement service. Or that the words he objected to were in readers' comments, not in the original post. Kluger doesn't like the comments and wants them removed from the internet.



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