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[Introduction to] Soda Goes Pop: Pepsi-Cola Advertising and Popular Music

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Early Pop Jingles and Pepsi's Shift to Youth Marketing

Introduction

Hitting the Spot and Spotting the Hits

Forty-one years after a North Carolina pharmacist named Caleb D. Bradham compounded a fountain drink that would become known as Pepsi-Cola, Walter Mack was appointed the company's president and chief executive officer (CEO). The year was 1939, and the Phoenix Securities firm had been put in charge of mitigating the losses and lawsuits that plagued Pepsi and its parent company at the time, Loft Inc.¹ Mack was cofounder and vice president of the securities company, but he would soon resign to devote his full attention to running the nascent soda brand.

The once failing company had finally begun to see gains due to its promise of 12-ounce bottles for only a nickel—a bargain that doubled Pepsi's profits during the 1930s depression era. But even with its recent success Mack recognized that the brand needed a major image makeover to sustain its profitability. He knew the company's future rested on the ability of its consumers and franchised bottlers to invest in the company name, so he set out to streamline the look of its logo, as well as the product's packaging. He also hired the Newell-Emmet advertising agency to create a nationwide marketing campaign that would solidify Pepsi's value and win over potential consumers. The new campaign produced highly successful skywriting promotions, as well as a cartoon comic strip called *Pepsi and Pete*, which featured characters similar to the Keystone Kops created by Mack Sennett. The most enduring outcome of Walter Mack's efforts with the Newell-Emmet agency, however, was the creation of the first nationally broadcast jingle for a national product.² It was called "Nickel, Nickel" and composed by Alan B. Kent and Austin H. Croom-Johnson. Although it was common at the time for jingles promoting local products to air on regional stations, this tune would prove extraordinary in changing the future of the company, as well as the advertising industry.

As recounted by writers J. C. Louise and Harvey Yazijian, and more recently by ethnomusicologist Timothy Taylor, the success, importance, and longevity of Pepsi-Cola's 1939 "Nickel, Nickel" cannot be overstated. Indeed, it would set the standard for broadcast, stand-alone "singing jingles."³ By 1941 it had aired an estimated 296,426 times on 469 radio stations and was rearranged in "all variations and tempos for all occasions from concerts and theater to the World Series."⁴ A full version of the song, renamed "Pepsi-Cola Hits the Spot," was orchestrated, recorded, and requested for use in some 100,000 jukeboxes.⁵ In 1942, the jingle was dubbed the "best-known tune in America."⁶ Two years later it was translated into 55 languages, and its lyrics were updated numerous times so that its melody could run in various formats for an entire decade.⁷ Most important for the growth of the company, the tune played a major role in boosting sales profits to \$8.5 million in 1940 and even higher to \$14.9 million the following year.⁸ Pepsi's jingle thus truly "hit the spot," precipitating the boom of the post-World War II jingle business and laying the groundwork for the professional upsurge of jingle composers to come.⁹

By all accounts, the jingle's success hinged on Mack's insistence that the brand steer away from current advertising trends that relied on the insertion of a narrated product description into the musical pitch.¹⁰ Mack only wanted 15 seconds of jingle music—a request that substantially shortened the typical run time for advertising spots and displeased the Newell-Emmett agency as well as some of the radio stations on which he sought airtime.¹¹ Eventually however, everyone caved to the CEO's requests. As it turned out, Mack's instincts were right: the jingle's lyrics proved sufficient to carry the brand's message, including the product's ability to satisfy one's thirst ("Pepsi-Cola hits the spot") and its bargain price ("Twice as much for a nickel, too . . .").¹²

But the length and lyrics alone were not enough to make "Nickel, Nickel" a juggernaut. The musical score itself grabbed listeners' attention and communicated Pepsi's sales pitch for an entire decade. The jingle's composers carefully selected and structured the tune's musical tropes to produce its pleasing affect. They first attached the brand's short and pithy slogan to a well-known melody borrowed from a nineteenth-century English hunting ballad called "John Peel."¹³ This strategy of choosing songs in the public domain for advertising purposes was common at the time since there were no royalty fees for songs outside the constraints of copyright laws.¹⁴ Kent and Croom-Johnson also claimed to have chosen the

song because of its “light mood.”¹⁵ Beyond this, the composers and Pepsi’s marketing creatives knew that attaching a product to a song already popular on its own would increase the likelihood that audiences would take to the jingle and remember the product.

Kent and Croom-Johnson were therefore careful to use the basic tenets of the borrowed English ballad, but they also updated it to fit modern popular culture. Most noticeably, they added energetic pep to the song by substantially increasing its tempo and bookending the familiar tune with syncopated rhythms and scatted lyrics (too-do-dee-da-da-da) that proved reminiscent of the big band and jazz favorites topping the charts at the time.¹⁶ Meanwhile, the slogan-bearing section of the jingle preserved the simplicity of the “John Peel” melody. With an opening third interval common to children’s songs and a diatonic motion, the tune was easy to sing and remember. The melody also remained mostly stepwise, like its prototype, but retained the single octave leap on which the composers cleverly placed the lyrics, “Twice as much,” to aurally highlight the unique selling proposition (USP) (example intro. 1, measure 1).¹⁷

Example intro.1. An octave leap highlights the USP. (“Nickel, Nickel,” PepsiCo. Inc., 1939. Transcription by the author.)



The melody’s A-A-B-C form further followed the expected trajectory of well-known English ballads and American parlor songs, allowing for a quick statement and repetition of the first two phrases (A), a brief climax in the third (B, example intro. 1), and a satisfying tonic resolution at the end (C). For the extended version that circulated as sheet music and jukebox recordings, Kent and Croom-Johnson kept the original ballad’s familiar verse refrain and strophic (repeated) form, allowing the C section—their reworked refrain turned tagline (“Pepsi-Cola is the drink for you!”)—to carry over not only from verse to verse, but throughout future iterations of the song.¹⁸ Finally, the composers removed the ballad’s pick-up notes to shift the tune’s metric accent from beat four to the first beat in each measure. This removed the lilting that produced the original song’s folksy gait, thereby giving Pepsi’s version a duple meter pulse that could take on a quicker tempo, a bouncier quality, and an overall more modern sound. The musical decisions made by the composers—their selection of

a pre-existing and (once) popular song, addition of contemporary musical tropes, and preservation of certain aspects of the tune while reworking others—proved key to making the jingle catchy, familiar, singable, modern, and wholly effective, thereby revealing the potential for using popular music to communicate branding aims.

Pepsi's advertising, and especially its television commercials, would continue to push the limits of musical marketing and set new trends well into the twenty-first century. Indeed, by the end of the twentieth century, the brand's interests would converge with those of the American popular music industry. The degree to which this partnership flourished was confirmed in a television commercial that aired during the premiere of the *X Factor-U.S.* reality talent show on September 21, 2011. The spot promised the show's contestants an unusual prize: in addition to a five-million-dollar recording contract, the winner was slated for a starring role in a Pepsi-Cola commercial set to debut during that February's televised Super Bowl sporting event. The 45-second cross-promotional spot, titled "Music Icons," showcased the potential exposure afforded by this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. A visual mash-up of the soda giant's commercials featuring past pop legends like Michael Jackson and Britney Spears was set to a "Pepsi Exclusive Remix" of the hook to "Tonight Is the Night"—a single by up-and-coming rapper Outasight (Richard Andrew).¹⁹ The spot's music and images thus promised to induct the would-be *X Factor* winner into the musical legacy achieved by Pepsi's impressive roster of superstar endorsers. Despite the fact that Outasight did not appear onscreen, the presence of his music was meant to inaugurate him into the iconic lineup while simultaneously communicating Pepsi's self-proclaimed status as a purveyor of cutting-edge popular music trends.

The treatment of the commercial's pop signifiers demonstrated just how adept Pepsi's marketers had become at revising popular music's sounds and imagery to promote the brand's agendas in the decades since its illustrious "Nickel, Nickel" campaign. In its original context, Outasight's lyrical hook ("Tonight Is the Night") had nothing to do with the soda or singing competition, but it was recontextualized with the commercial's images to refer to that very evening when the *X Factor* program and its Pepsi sponsor would make someone a star. While Outasight's music intended to appeal to contemporary audiences, the artist's newly acquired fame could not rival the iconicity of stars like Michael Jackson or Britney Spears. Pepsi's mar-



Fig. intro.1. Pop aspirations. (Still from “Music Icons,” PepsiCo. Inc., 2011; clip from “Now and Then,” PepsiCo. Inc., 2002.)

eters therefore rearranged the song’s simple hook and generic pentatonic melody to provide a bland backdrop for highlighting the more famous musical acts onscreen (see fig. intro.1). The silenced images of these larger than life “music icons” were synchronized with Outasight’s stripped-down soundtrack to support the soda giant’s claim that the next global superstar would emerge from the pool of *X Factor* contestants. The rewritten track therefore functioned like the traditional jingles on which Pepsi had once relied. It was catchy enough to remember but simple enough to serve the intended message of the *brand*. “Music Icons” thus stood as a testament to the soda giant’s mastery of incorporating popular music’s codes into its branding agenda; by doubly displacing these pop stars into a commercial about commercials past, Pepsi reimagined American popular music history as the history of (soda) branding.

Pepsi’s marketers were skillful in revising 30 years of pop music history to fit into a 45-second valorization of the soda giant in their attempt to position the brand’s commercials as a necessary rite of passage for successful pop singers. The underlying message encouraged audiences to consume the product (with the added *X Factor* plug), but the spot proved distinct in its additional call to viewers to help the brand anoint a future pop star. “Music Icons” therefore suggested that the soda giant had worked intimately from within the music industry to become a key player and

authority figure in popular music. The commercial made it clear that the soda giant no longer merely borrowed popular tunes, nor did it simply sponsor America's pop megastars. Its use of new music and iconic images proclaimed that Pepsi had joined the *X Factor* franchise in becoming a new kind of tastemaker, producer, and innovator in twenty-first-century musical culture.

Pepsi's 2011 *X Factor* spot raises important questions about the evolution of relationships between popular music and corporate advertising; namely, was a soda brand indeed responsible for steering the careers of America's biggest musical stars? For what reasons did advertising get involved in the creation, production, and dissemination of popular music? When and how did commercials featuring popular songs and celebrities become the norm? How and why have commercials historically reduced popular music aesthetics to benefit branding aims? What effect has Pepsi's music marketing practices had on other corporate brands, the advertising industry, and popular music? And what implications might this have for the future?

Soda Goes Pop answers these questions by examining the mediating role that Pepsi's commercials have played in forging lasting relationships between the American music and advertising industries from its 1939 "Nickel, Nickel" jingle to its pair of 2011–12 *X Factor* commercials. It historicizes and analyzes widely disseminated Pepsi commercials for its signature and diet colas, focusing largely on well-known television spots and charting their evolution from stand-alone broadcast jingles to celebrities singing the latest pop songs and styles in its campaigns. In chronicling Pepsi's shift from mid-twentieth-century advertising practices to the experiential approaches common to early-twenty-first-century branding, this book integrates close musical analysis with interdisciplinary scholarship on advertising and American popular culture to examine the process of *redaction*—the practice marketers have used to select, censor, and restructure musical texts to fit commercial contexts in ways that revise their aesthetic meanings and serve corporate aims. This book thus argues that it was advertising's ability to get *inside* musical texts that eventually allowed corporate brands to play key roles in popular music's dissemination and production. The following chapters investigate *how* Pepsi-Cola marketing has historically appropriated meanings from hit songs and celebrity musical endorsers, *what* new meanings its well-known spots attempted to

emit, and *why* these commercials shaped future relationships among the American music business, the advertising industry, and corporate brands.

WHY PEPSI?

Trade press journals, media outlets, and music critics have long argued about the origins of popular music's place in advertising. Some sources attribute its beginnings to Jovan perfume's underwriting of the Rolling Stones' 1981 tour.²⁰ Others gesture to the advent of MTV.²¹ Some attribute it to the music industry's greed and resulting decline.²² Still others argue that popular music has always been "commercial" and point to mixed media formats that have functioned as advertisements for records—television programs such as the *Ed Sullivan Show* and *American Bandstand* and films like Elvis Presley's *Viva Las Vegas* and the Beatles' *Hard Day's Night*—concluding that pop music's appearance in advertising was the next logical step.²³ This last argument has expanded further into discussions about popular music's implicit ties to advertising through its placement in media that have always been reliant on sponsorship and marketing dollars.²⁴

More recently Timothy Taylor has demonstrated that popular music has had ties to advertising for more than a century, and he pinpoints Pepsi's shift to youth marketing in the early 1960s as the moment when Madison Avenue formed an insatiable appetite for the music industry's newest sounds.²⁵ He further attributes the brand's 1984 partnership with Michael Jackson as the deal that solidified the relationship between the two industries. Indeed, the unprecedented success, memorability, and lasting influence of Pepsi's relentless musical marketing endeavors testify to its impact. The focus on Pepsi-Cola throughout *Soda Goes Pop* therefore proves representative rather than limiting. As the pioneering leader in pop music marketing for more than seven decades, a close consideration of the brand's commercials provides important historical and aesthetic perspectives for understanding twentieth- and twenty-first-century partnerships among music, advertising, and corporate brands.²⁶

Although many other consumer brands have used popular music in their spots, Pepsi-Cola was the first national brand to incorporate it into its coast-to-coast campaigns. In its fight to stay relevant as a parity product it was also the first soda brand to use television as an advertis-

ing medium in 1950.²⁷ Most significantly, Pepsi would find its edge in the early-1960s by turning its attention away from housewives and onto youth. As chapter 1 discusses, the creation of the “Pepsi Generation” slogan and interest in portraying what author Thomas Frank identifies as “hip” trends in its commercials instigated advertising’s now commonplace alliances with top musical acts and hit songs.²⁸ This effort forever impacted the demographics and psychographics (lifestyles) the brand would pursue as it tailored its commercials to a new “generation” of “youthful thinking” consumers.²⁹ Instead of following the traditional approach—“Let us tell you why this drink is right for you”—Pepsi used music to communicate a soft-sell approach: “Let us show you why you are (or why you want to be) one of us.” Phil Dusenberry, a creative director at the Batten, Barton, Durstine, & Osborn (BBD&O) agency responsible for the campaign, summed up the difference between Coke and Pepsi advertising, writing that Coke’s campaigns focused on products while Pepsi focused on *people*.³⁰ Those people would be dubbed the Pepsi Generation, and the designation applied to “youthful types enjoying life to its fullest before the envying eyes of non-belongers.”³¹ The Pepsi Generation moniker became so popular that it entered the vernacular as a catchphrase describing the so-called baby boomers born after World War II, and it showed up in everything from studies on health and aging to criticism of the media, youth, and even the Vietnam War.³² As described so elegantly by marketing historian Richard S. Tedlow, “By creating this identification of their product with this new generation, Pepsi’s marketers took the world as it was and made it more so.”³³

Bethany Klein notes that Pepsi’s relationship with popular music worked largely because the company was willing to take risks.³⁴ Indeed, the soda giant’s commercials proved innovative due to the brand’s willingness to experiment with various formats and media, including network television, radio, film, cable television, music videos, audio recordings, ringtones, and the internet. More significantly, the brand worked diligently to follow music industry trends and included the sounds of teen pop, girl groups, early soul, rock, adult pop, disco, and hip hop in its campaigns. Using these musics allowed its commercials to keep a pulse on the current ethos of the nation by supporting images of thrilling leisure activities, the counterculture, the sexual revolution, technological innovation, and even desegregation.³⁵

It was therefore the brand’s inclination to adopt musical tropes from

groups not typically represented in commercials—those marginalized by age, gender, and race—that helped its campaigns to attract so much attention, both positive and negative. Moreover, as underdog brand Pepsi has always been obliged to appeal to diverse audiences, especially because many of its bottlers (who have controlled its advertising budgets) have relied on patronage from what the brand called “special markets,” a term used to designate nonwhite consumers, especially African Americans and Latinos.³⁶ The brand’s aim to attract the youth market from the 1960s onward also necessitated Pepsi’s embrace of music made by and for Black communities because these songs would define the sounds of the twentieth century.

Appropriating this music was not easy, however, since ideological constructs of race and racial relationships in the United States remained in flux. As America grappled with the complex social and cultural ramifications of the post-civil-rights era, Pepsi’s marketers, too, wavered over what, who, when, and how they would appropriate nonhegemonic (i.e., non-white, male, middle-class, and heteronormative) signifiers into its commercials. As chapter 1 illustrates, Pepsi (like other national brands) was initially hesitant to feature nonwhite musicians and musics in its coast-to-coast campaigns—especially those that alluded rock and roll, which was considered too controversial to attract mainstream consumers.³⁷ Pepsi’s marketing decisions also hinged on its focused efforts to beat Coca-Cola—a feat that required shaking the reputation it had gained from its “Nickel, Nickel” days as the cheap and low-class “black Coke” to appeal to more white middle-class audiences.³⁸

But once Pepsi hired Michael Jackson in the mid-1980s and realized the crossover impact that some African American artists—and even white musicians singing in black styles—could have on its national and later global campaigns, the brand (sometimes unwittingly) began taking even more risks with the musicians it hired and the demographic categories that its commercials would highlight (including class, sexuality, and even religion). At the insistence of these new stars, Pepsi and its marketing team were often forced to loosen their grip on the creative aspects and content of endorsed commercials, thereby permitting their celebrities’ songs and images to become their guiding forces. So, in addition to becoming some of the most highly publicized, watched, and remembered commercials to date, the brand’s pop music campaigns also represented the extreme ends of the spectrum for success. Whereas

it received substantial acclaim for its early 1960s “Think Young” and “Come Alive” campaigns featuring Joanie Sommers’s teen-pop vocals (chapter 1) and garnered numerous awards for its 1984 “The Choice of a New Generation” spots with Michael Jackson (chapter 2) and early 1990s Ray Charles commercials (chapter 6), its 1989 spot with Madonna (chapter 5) attracted substantial criticism and remained, until 2017, one of the most controversial commercials to date.³⁹ Consequently, by allowing the sometimes volatile and controversial musical tropes, personas, and agendas of their superstars to appear unfiltered in a historically conservative and fickle industry, the soda giant’s commercials proved essential in establishing advertising’s affiliation with the music industry. In sum, Pepsi’s campaigns opened new paths for celebrity endorsements, turned the ad industry on to the use of new and emerging pop trends, and established the ground rules for future co-branding deals.

The attention Pepsi garnered for its campaigns not only forced its rivals, and especially the market leader Coca-Cola, to take notice but also inspired countless books, memoirs, and videos.⁴⁰ It even prompted the Smithsonian Institution to conduct an extensive “Pepsi Generation” oral history project in 1986 (cited throughout this book), which resulted in a museum exhibit and an archive focused on the brand’s advertising efforts. Talk of the “cola wars”—the decades-long battle for market domination between Pepsi and Coke—has inundated the media, the advertising and television trade press, financial reports, literature, and cultural scholarship ever since Pepsi’s “Nickel, Nickel” campaign. Even today the pervasiveness of the cola wars continues as the rivalry often extends beyond the typical television ad buy and into popular culture itself.

A fairly recent example of how ingrained these brands have become in popular culture occurred in 2015 during the second season of the Fox network’s hip-hop-themed show *Empire* when it dedicated a story line to a composition contest in which one of the main characters won an appearance in a Pepsi commercial.⁴¹ The scenes were strung out over three episodes and culminated in a filmed commercial that was integrated so seamlessly into the plot that it was difficult to separate the television show from the soda pitch. The enduring prevalence of the cola wars in American culture was also highlighted throughout the historically informed AMC drama *Mad Men*. The parity rivalry surfaced throughout its seven seasons, although the show’s most striking homage occurred in the series finale when, during its final 60 seconds, Coke’s famous 1971 “Hilltop” commer-

cial was played in its entirety to suggest the bright future that lay ahead of the show's personally flawed yet professionally talented lead character.

For many who recount the story of the cola wars, it was in fact this legendary spot that established Coca-Cola's superiority over Pepsi due to the fact that its counterculturally themed jingle was turned into the successful chart-topping song, "I'd Like to Teach the World to Sing." However, as the first two chapters here elucidate, Coke may have won this particular battle but the war was far from over. Not only did Pepsi's relentless pursuit of the youth culture compel its rival to create this campaign, but a little over a decade later its soda sales would finally exceed Coke's, at least temporarily, as a result of its 1984 Michael Jackson spots. Jackson's campaign was remarkable in that it defeated the soda leader for the first time in history, solidified the permanence of popular music's place in advertising, and, as recently recounted in *The Atlantic*, effectively killed the prominence of specially composed jingles in American advertising.⁴² Accordingly, this book's examination of Pepsi's marketing practices and its role in the cola wars does not merely retell the story of the battle between two American corporate giants but sheds new light on the *musical dimensions* of a commercially produced battle for cultural superiority.

AIMS

Conversations both within and outside of the advertising industry about the use of music in commercials largely revolve around the perceived "feelings" or "moods" that music is believed to promote within the context of a branded experience. It is therefore this book's task to investigate how and why campaign music creates, or is thought to create, these experiences. This study continues the momentum of previous scholarship on this topic, but differs in its scope and content. *Soda Goes Pop* integrates musical analysis with historical research and cultural theory to trace the evolution of well-known commercials for a single influential American corporate brand to demonstrate their reflection of larger changes in the music and advertising industries over a 73-year period. As explained earlier, the focus on Pepsi during this period is instructive due to its pioneering and relentless efforts to align itself with America's musical trends. The pages that follow are informed by research on the music and advertising industries, including autobiographies, firsthand accounts, pop culture magazines, and trade

press journals. They also incorporate primary source multimedia, including archived tapes of newsreels, interviews, commercials, and award shows studied at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History in Washington, DC; the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), Film and Television Archive; and the Paley Center for Media in Los Angeles.

Since the majority of the literature on music in advertising misses opportunities to analyze the sounds themselves, the approaches taken here are rooted in musical analysis and hermeneutic approaches common to musicology. It is important to clarify, however, that, although the analysis employed in this book often takes structural approaches similar to those employed by prominent music semioticians such as Phillip Tagg and even follows the basic tenets of semiotic theory as developed by Charles Sanders Peirce, Ferdinand de Saussure, Roland Barthes, and others, this is not intended to be a semiotic study.⁴³ In the effort to make this book accessible to a diverse readership, it instead aims to historicize and contextualize the range of meanings audiences have or may have gleaned from sights and sounds that the creators of advertising texts (intentionally or not) have used to construct them. The goal, then, is not to theorize or to create new analytic paradigms for parsing out musical meaning but to investigate the ways in which musical meaning informs and impresses on a historical narrative. *Soda Goes Pop* therefore occupies a middle ground between prominent culturally and economically focused inquiries about music's role in advertising and those containing terminology-laden musical analysis geared toward experts.

Because both American advertising texts and pop music are intended to circulate widely, this book recognizes that they generally operate within the presumed boundaries of their target audiences' experiences and decoding capabilities. This study therefore follows the notion accepted by cultural scholars that audience competencies—that is, the presumed decoding skills on which marketers rely—determine the outcomes of a text's meanings. All inquiries are therefore geared toward what musically “experienced” (mostly) US audiences have, might have, or were expected to have understood from these texts based not only on specific signifiers in the commercials, their history, and the accompanying evidence of their reception in media sources, but also on the premises of what their creators—corporate executives, marketers, directors, and musicians—claim to have intended to convey.

In the effort to untangle the complex interaction between media and

cultural references in Pepsi's commercials, the musical analyses in this book are framed by interdisciplinary theories, methodologies, and texts familiar to scholars and students of American studies, popular culture, advertising, and broadcast media. All analysis is thus explained in a manner that nonspecialist audiences will understand and informs readers with varying degrees of musical knowledge how and why a close consideration of commercial sounds themselves are important for investigating larger questions about the advertising industry and popular culture.

This book also accounts for the subjective pitfalls of interpretive methodologies, which include the polysemic nature of music in particular and cultural texts in general, the fact that diverse cultural groups read and understand texts differently, and the fact that some approaches have viewed cultural artifacts as fixed rather than fluid and changing forms. It also acknowledges that some commercials have been intentionally left open ended in order to produce a variety of possibilities. The chosen case studies are thus framed within the bounds of the historical documents that inform them, as well as the particularities of each spot's cultural moment, context, creation, and reception. By recognizing that there are many ways to flesh out meaning, this book attends to the media, politics, technology, biographies, ideologies, and identities that have shaped the creation and reception of individual commercial texts.

Although *Soda Goes Pop* models some historical, theoretical, and hermeneutic modes for examining the aesthetic effects of a phenomenon that has become increasingly prevalent over the past 60 years, it does not attempt to offer a comprehensive study of popular music's inclusion in television commercials. The interdisciplinary nature of this subject, as well as the gamut of social, political, cultural, historical, and aesthetic factors, is far too expansive for any one project to untangle. Additionally, the possibilities for incorporating new music in commercials are endless, making no one analytical or theoretical model suitable for all cases. This is especially true when considering that each brand offers its own "unique" products and services, making the music its marketers choose work toward very specific meanings, feelings, and ideas.

Neither is this an all-inclusive study of popular music in Pepsi-Cola advertising. Examining all the radio, television, and internet commercials for the soda's "flanker" products, as well as the countless national and global brands PepsiCo has acquired since the days of "Nickel, Nickel"—beverages such as Mountain Dew and Gatorade and restaurant chains

including Taco Bell and Pizza Hut—would surely require dozens of focused studies of their own.⁴⁴ Even within the bounds of Pepsi’s own regular and diet soda commercials, these campaigns differ in their foci, messages, target audiences, regions, and approaches, making a comprehensive analysis beyond the scope of one book.

Instead, this study considers representative music-focused television commercials for Pepsi’s regular cola and a few prominent spots for its name-bearing diet soda. It examines campaigns that were either made with US audiences in mind or used American music and celebrities to attract global consumers. As a qualitative study about the sounds of its advertising, it is this book’s unique focus on the *music* in Pepsi’s commercials that drives its narrative. This project thus chronicles the advertising practices of one brand and the commercials that have made it (in)famous.

SURVEYING THE FIELD

Soda Goes Pop expands most obviously on foundational scholarship about music’s role in television commercials. It builds on work begun 20 years ago by music theorist Nicholas Cook, who was the first scholar to use formal analysis to consider how advertising uses pre-existing music.⁴⁵ Both Cook and (later) communications scholar Anna Lisa Tota demonstrated some of the ways in which classical music styles were applied to specific products and discussed how their sounds created new meanings in branded contexts.⁴⁶ In recent years, music scholars Ron Rodman and Nicolai Graakjær have developed systematic approaches for investigating this phenomenon as it applies to advertising soundtracks that feature a variety of musical styles. The pages that follow take into account Rodman’s model for considering mediated elements that exist simultaneously within a commercial—music, images, narration, and so on—as well as Graakjær’s call for a “cotextual” examination of their roles and meanings.⁴⁷ Ethnomusicologist Mark Laver’s work on portrayals of jazz in advertising also provides a useful review of music’s role in commodity culture. This book complements his chapter on a television commercial for a short-lived 2006 flavor called Pepsi Jazz by offering a larger historical overview of the brand’s appropriation of well-known styles.⁴⁸

As noted above, *Soda Goes Pop* builds on work by Bethany Klein and Timothy Taylor through a close investigation of Pepsi commercials that

they have pinpointed as foundational to today's relationships between the advertising and music industries. Klein uses Pepsi as a case study in her 2009 book, which examines the prevalence and effects of popular music licensing. She documents that an ideological shift had taken place by the early twenty-first century as taboos over "selling out" had given way to the need for exposure. She also expresses concern for the future of popular music, warning that many listeners have simply surrendered to claims of necessity and failed to act as "wardens of culture" for advertisers who go too far in reinterpreting songs for branding purposes.⁴⁹ Taylor expresses similar sentiments, writing that American cultural forms have become inextricably linked to corporate interests to the point that he no longer hears a distinction between popular and advertising music.⁵⁰ He in fact provides the most thorough historical and ethnographic overview of music in advertising to date and illustrates how the balance of musical expertise and business once privileged by music industry executives has been gradually displaced by the strategic imperatives of marketing professionals.⁵¹ Indeed, the prevalence of music sponsorship, licensing, and synchronization by industries and corporations that previously were outside the realm of music making and distribution has become today's status quo.⁵² Taylor's and Klein's work therefore appears at various points throughout this study as it digs deeper into the aesthetic reasons for popular music's prominence in twenty-first-century commercial culture.

This project is further informed by interdisciplinary studies that have examined music's newest relationships with branding, technology, and late capitalism. This includes scholarship by Anahid Kassabian, who investigates the many ways in which pre-existing popular music has become a "ubiquitous" tool for creating branded atmospheres, as well as that of Leslie Meier, who discusses the "promotional" implications of popular music in current branding models.⁵³ As discussed in the latter chapters of this book, pop's newest roles in commercial culture can be attributed to a number of factors, many of which can be accredited to what David Harvey calls a "speed up" of the production and circulation of commodities at the end of the twentieth century—conditions felt by the postmodern consumer and made possible by neoliberal policies that have continued to encourage technology, globalization, and market "freedom" for four decades.⁵⁴ These factors have ultimately changed the concept of "brands" and "branding" itself in the early twenty-first century, extending beyond corporations and into practically every realm of American life, including people and places.

The chapters that follow implement ideas from Harvey and also from media scholar Douglas Kellner, who reads postmodern discourse into the images of musical stars, recognizing that since the 1980s “spectacle” has become essential to the branding of their celebrity personas.⁵⁵ More specifically, this book illustrates the numerous ways that Pepsi has embraced the spectacle of its stars and leveraged considerable publicity and media formats to make its spots into must-see primetime “events.”

This book’s “Coda” takes into account studies of music, ambience, and sound as key components in creating twenty-first-century concepts of “brand awareness.” Where jingles and one-off licensing once reigned supreme as the sounds of corporate advertising, a more distinct and focused practice called “sonic branding” now encourages brands to invest substantial time and money in defining their sounds—sounds that can range from a few-note logo or ID to larger forms borrowed from licensed songs belonging to a specific artist or genre. As explained by branding expert Daniel M. Jackson, practitioners of sonic branding claim to promote the “emotive power” of a brand’s “beliefs,” “ideas,” and “identities.”⁵⁶ Media scholar Devon Powers has been quick to reveal the potential downside of sonic branding ideology, however, arguing that it is used as a way to penetrate the perceived vulnerabilities of aural perception.⁵⁷ She claims that sonic branding “mobilizes and actualizes a particular kind of expertise meant to understand, interpret, and control both music as sound and hearing as a sense, then buttresses those ways of understanding as a means of creating and *extracting value*.”⁵⁸

Powers’s remarks resonate strongly with those made twenty-one years earlier by music cognition scholar David Huron. Although advertising looked and sounded different in 1989, Huron labeled advertising agencies as “research institutes for social meanings” due to the substantial amount of meaning-directed demographic research that marketers (continue to) undertake.⁵⁹ He concluded, “But it is the overt knowledge of objectives and the consequent desire to control and handle the tools of musical meaning which make advertising such a compelling object of musical study.”⁶⁰ Taking Huron’s and Powers’s ideas together arrives at this book’s explicit task: to investigate the various ways in which Pepsi’s marketers have historically attempted to “control,” “handle,” and “extract value” from pre-existing popular music. More specifically, *Soda Goes Pop* contributes to these and other critical conversations about intersections among American music, media, and popular culture by providing new ways to understand

today's music licensing and sonic branding practices through the process of musical *redaction*.

REDACTION IN A BRANDED WORLD

Soda Goes Pop illustrates how corporate advertising's relationship with popular music has depended on piggybacking on the latter industry's aesthetics. As mentioned above and discussed in chapter 1, this practice gained prominence following the birth of rock and roll and the rise of the baby boomer generation—a time when popular music seemed to best capture the spirit of the 18- to 24-year-old demographic. Pepsi's mid-twentieth-century campaigns therefore featured soundtracks that combined older jingle practices and slogan material with fragments of best-selling pop songs and styles in an effort to attract youth. Unlike today's spots, the majority of Pepsi's early pop music commercials did not sample whole sections of pre-existing songs but borrowed, imitated, and rearranged signifying tropes, imagery, and stylistic features to align them with its branding messages. Consequently, the industry's now commonplace licensing of new pop songs resulted from a slow progression of co-optation that unfolded over time.

As illustrated by the examples at the beginning of this chapter, adapting pre-existing music requires considerable dexterity since marketers essentially de-compose songs created for other purposes and then re-compose them to fit within the time and contextual constraints of an advertisement. Accordingly, the music undergoes what is referred to throughout this book as the process of *redaction*. As a large-scale study of Pepsi's redactive practices, this book expands on the idea as defined by media scholar John Hartley, who was the first to apply the term to contemporary cultural media. Hartley initially used the concept to theorize the social function of journalism at the dawn of the twenty-first century, arguing that the journalist's role had become "redactional" to the point where he or she worked "not as an original writer but as a professional redactor" of already circulating information.⁶¹ In the years since, Hartley has revisited the concept to describe various cultural phenomena, arriving at the conclusion that "redaction is the creative editorial process of bringing existing materials together to make new texts and meanings. Redaction has added value to the end of meaning's value chain."⁶²

For the purposes of this book, it is the brand's marketers, executives, and occasionally the star musicians themselves who become the redactors. The following chapters thus extend Hartley's principles with musicological methods that closely examine the *aesthetic* implications of marketers' specific yet varied redactive practices on pre-existing popular music to explain their branded outcomes. In following Hartley's hypothesis that redaction allows a means for "gatekeeping," a study of Pepsi's redactive practices therefore sheds light on the soda giant's claim to musical authority in the new millennium as its marketers have cleverly applied a variety of strategies to co-opt the latest hits over a 73-year period.⁶³

Much like Hartley, the following chapters extend the various definitions of the verb *redact* in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) beyond "written texts" and into other cultural forms. These definitions include the following:

1. To bring together in a single entity; to combine, unite.
2. a.) To bring together or organize (ideas, writings, etc.) into a coherent form: To compile, arrange, or set down in a written document.
3. a.) To reduce to a certain state or condition, especially an undesirable one.
 - b.) To reduce (a material thing) *to* a certain form, especially as an act of destruction.
4. a.) To put (writing, text, etc.) in an appropriate form for publication; to edit.⁶⁴

The approaches taken here, however, differ in a significant way from Hartley's. Whereas he has argued that redaction operates as a form of production, *not* reduction, *Soda Goes Pop* explores redaction through the processes of both production *and* reduction. This book investigates how redaction *produces* newly commodified texts by "combining," "uniting," "organizing," and "compiling" musical signifiers together with (invented) product attributes (OED entries 1 and 2), *and* it examines how and why advertising "*reduces*" and "*edits*" pre-existing popular songs and styles in order to align them with branding aims (entries 3 and 4). In other words, although *redaction* is used to describe how marketers incorporate music to create new meanings for the product, the term is equally applied to study the process's effects on the musical texts themselves and is there-

fore used to illuminate the numerous ways that advertisers have learned to *select, censor, and restructure* pop sights and sounds in order to adopt their best-known features—an act that, as the OED definition suggests, is often “destructive” to the musical text and at times “undesirable” for audiences. This book thus studies the process of redaction at various points along a musical text’s “meaning value chain,” including its inception and original form(s) (as a single, music video, performance, etc.), its circulation and reception outside advertising contexts, its adaptation into commercials, and finally its newly acquired branded meanings.

The study of redaction here is further informed by Susan McClary’s musicological work, which demonstrates how tonality, structure, and teleology effect the reception of popular songs.⁶⁵ It also engages with that of Robert Fink, who supports and extends McClary’s discussions to show how specific musical genres intentionally subvert expected musical trajectories, generating what he calls “recombinant teleologies” that work to delay gratification.⁶⁶ Since commercial scores are structured to fit branding parameters, McClary’s and Fink’s concepts are extended here to demonstrate how popular songs and styles are redacted to rush toward, delay, or suspend musical resolution and increase the desire for Pepsi’s product.

Soda Goes Pop also borrows concepts from Stuart Hall, who theorized that advertisements should be examined through three distinct but interrelated factors that produce various possible meanings: “encoding” (the decision making and production that go into creating an advertisement), “text” (the spot itself), and “decoding” (how the commercial is received).⁶⁷ The chapters that follow extend this framework to show how musical redaction occurs within the process of encoding. Just as a visual symbol or icon can be isolated and recontextualized among commodity signs to connote or denote something entirely new, so too can musical signifiers be treated this way. Redaction at the encoding stage thus affects the resulting text and decoding processes, creating the potential—for better or worse—for marketers to redirect and even omit the underlying social, cultural, and political implications of a track to fit advertising contexts. And because redactive processes effect how audiences perceive musical texts, the outcomes of the commercials investigated here (i.e., their decodings) are conceptualized as falling somewhere within what Hall defined as “preferred readings” (where meaning is received by audiences as intended by the brand), “negotiated readings” (where broad features of the message are accepted but the meaning is configured through personal experiences or

knowledge), or “oppositional readings” (where advertising’s ideologies run against the grain of its viewing audience).⁶⁸

Influential conversations about the role that visual images have played in advertising ideology and meaning creation are also extended throughout this study to discussions about *music*. Scholars agree that, as potent cultural texts, advertising borrows, amplifies, and even shapes ideologies that pervade American society. Criticism of these practices can be traced back to the late 1950s when Vance Packard released his landmark book *The Hidden Persuaders*, which documented advertising’s psychological effects on shoppers.⁶⁹ In the decades since, sociologists Judith Williamson and Sut Jhally, along with cultural studies scholar Raymond Williams, have likened advertising to a form of “magic” that animates inert commodities with personal and social meaning.⁷⁰ Jhally, in particular, postulates that the breakdown of the nuclear family and religious institutions has opened a space for advertising to step in and offer guidance to the general population. He claims that “advertising derives its power from providing meaning that is not available elsewhere.”⁷¹

Jhally followed Williamson, who as early as 1978 used semiotic analysis to discuss the meanings conveyed by the imagery in print advertisements. She summarized viewers’ relationships to advertising, writing, “Ads produce a universe of puzzles—one that we cannot move in without ‘deciphering,’ one that requires us to stop and work out a solution.”⁷² Grant McCracken’s later work on meaning transfer shows evidence of her influence since Williamson had already argued that advertising works as a mediator for meaning that, as a result, produces a “‘metastructure’ where meaning is not just ‘decoded’ within one structure but transferred to create another.”⁷³ Williamson even mentioned Pepsi advertising specifically in her pioneering study and pointed out the ways in which the brand created the myth of individuality only to reinscribe each “Pepsi Person” back into its fictional “clan.”⁷⁴ These ideas are therefore prevalent throughout *Soda Goes Pop* as keys to examining the ways in which Pepsi’s advertising has used musical meaning as a kind of cultural “currency” to attract audiences.⁷⁵

Robert Goldman and Steven Papson’s work also provides a foundation for considering redacted sounds. In particular they recoin terms first introduced by Williamson that describe how audiences relate to ads. These include the terms *appellate* (how ads invite audiences in), *alreadyness* (the ideological assumptions and experiences audiences bring to ads), and

equivalence (the link made between the product and the promised result).⁷⁶

Michael Schudson's notion of "capitalist realism" runs most obviously throughout this book. Like his predecessors, Schudson discusses the various ways in which advertising borrows cultural forms. More specifically, he focuses on the ways that art, specifically visual art, is made banal and posits that "abstraction is essential to the aesthetic and intention of contemporary national consumer-goods advertising."⁷⁷ He therefore likens the generic aesthetics of advertising to Soviet socialist realism, dubbing it "capitalist realism" since it "more often flattens than deepens experience." His insights are extended here to examine the various ways in which marketers have attempted—and sometimes failed—to redact complex musical structures by emptying out specific sonic signifiers to create banal and fantastic worlds of consumption.

ORGANIZATION

This book is organized in six chapters, which are framed by an introduction and coda and divided into three parts. Each chapter focuses on key Pepsi-Cola commercials that feature popular music and celebrity images, the majority of which were designed to cater to youth or at least "youthful-thinking" consumers. These commercials were chosen based on the prominence they gained from a combination of factors: their wide circulation, lofty budgets, high production values, extreme popularity, technological innovation, aesthetic novelty, financial success, and prominent mention in primary sources and media. While Pepsi remains at the center of these analyses, this study accounts for elements that influenced the historical moment of each spot, including the brand's relationships with key competitors (especially Coca-Cola), other influential national brand campaigns, technological advances, social and political factors, and transformations in the music and advertising industries.

"Part I: Early Pop Jingles and Pepsi's Shift to Youth Marketing" provides a broad historical overview of the popular marketing practices employed by Pepsi and its competitors in the mid-twentieth century. More specifically, it demonstrates how and why the brand changed its focus to target "those who think young," and it provides the early history of the use of pop music in commercials, laying the groundwork for the case studies to come. Chapter 1, "The Pepsi Generation 'Now and Then': (Re)composing

the Cola Wars,” continues the story detailed earlier with “Nickel, Nickel” by investigating Pepsi’s early years of borrowing and emulating an array of popular styles in order to appeal to its newly sought-out demographic. It builds on influential work by J. C. Louise and Harvey Yazijian, Stanley Hollander and Richard Germain, Thomas Frank, and Timothy Taylor, that has considered the brand’s appeal to youth culture.⁷⁸ More specifically, this chapter re-hears the brand’s well-known 1960s–70s campaigns through the lens of its nostalgic 2002 commercial featuring pop princess Britney Spears. These analyses are supported by archival materials that illuminate marketers’ aesthetic decisions, confirm sales outcomes, and highlight the brand’s midcentury battles with Coca-Cola. A closer examination of the music and images in Pepsi’s original commercials against their millennial remakes thus reveals the motivations behind the brand’s redactive methods and creates a clearer picture of marketers’ unrealized intentions for its landmark campaigns.

“Part II: Pop Songs, Celebrity Spectacle, and the MTV Generation” features case studies that closely analyze the various ways in which Pepsi borrowed, redacted, and redirected musical signifiers in its most popular campaigns of the 1980s. This section is the largest due to the fact that the 1980s represented a pivot point for pop music marketing as a result of the increased prominence of neoliberal economic policies (including globalization and rapid technological advances), as well as the advent of the cable network MTV (Music Television) as an innovative and highly profitable multimedia music distribution venue. Consequently, the commercials from this era are not only the best remembered, but they also set trends and defined the standards for using popular music and celebrities in corporate advertising.

Chapter 2, “Big Soda and Celebrity Pop: Pepsi Meets Michael Jackson,” examines the pioneering 1984 “The Choice of a New Generation” campaign, which was intended to boost Jackson’s visibility and lend cultural credibility to the brand. This chapter outlines how Jackson’s commercials drastically changed the look and sound of celebrity endorsements by investigating the aesthetic reworking of both his image and hit pop song “Billie Jean.” It further extends advertising theories by Judith Williamson and Michael Schudson and employs close musical analysis to deduce how Pepsi’s marketers isolated memorable musical themes and reordered the harmonic structure in “Billie Jean” to create new meanings for the song in the campaign.⁷⁹ This case study reveals how Pepsi’s successful appro-

priation of Jackson's iconic visual "symbols" and redaction of the musical structures in his original track changed it from a cautionary tale about paternity to a family-friendly soda slogan.

Riding the success of Jackson's campaigns, Pepsi created more of its "The Choice of a New Generation" commercials, this time with baby boomer artists Lionel Richie (1985), Tina Turner (1986–88), and David Bowie (1987). Chapter 3, "The Choice of a Neoliberal Generation: Pepsi Models the Perfect Consumer," chronicles how the brand gave way to the ideologies of neoliberalism and redacted the performances, videos, and songs of these veteran musicians to reimagine the ideal late capitalist soda customer. It contextualizes these commercials within the ideologies of technology, globalization, and upward social mobility promised by the new neoliberal marketplace as theorized by David Harvey and recently expanded upon by music scholars.⁸⁰ It further illustrates how the coupling of increased spectacle with these aging stars' middle-of-the-road styles actually complicated the image Pepsi had established with its Jackson campaigns. Primary sources and close analysis illuminate how the soda giant's attempt to lure consumers under the guise of the MTV spectacle sent inconsistent and confusing messages to viewers of all ages.

In 1987 Pepsi created a second campaign with Michael Jackson. Chapter 4, "Chasing 'Bad': Pop Fantasies and Teleological Fiction," highlights the historical precedents this campaign set as the first-ever episodic series of spots that told a long-form story. Its commercials also looked more like music videos than any others to date and proved enormously successful in publicizing Jackson's newest album, video, and tour. Most significantly, this campaign marked a pivotal moment in advertising's transition away from the jingle: its spots incorporated a unique hybrid of Jackson's original lyrics to "Bad" and soda slogan material. Formal analysis reveals how marketers reshuffled the song's teleological harmonic structures to bolster the incredulous action sequences onscreen and worked to literally harmonize Jackson's lyrical assertion of superiority—his badness—with Pepsi's product. By blending hermeneutic inquiry with foundational theories about simulation and recent scholarship on Michael Jackson by Joseph Vogel and Ruchi Mital, among others, this chapter chronicles how and why marketers attempted to redact Jackson's music and his controversial physical appearance to put a positive spin on his image for these spots.⁸¹

Chapter 5, "A 'Wish' and a 'Prayer': Pepsi Faces the Limits of Redaction," chronicles the global controversy that resulted from one of the most noto-

rious campaigns in US advertising history—Madonna’s “Make a Wish.” By re-engaging with foundational interdisciplinary scholarship on the commercial, this chapter investigates the brand’s missteps in its move away from the jingle and branded slogans and demonstrates that it was the soda giant’s inability to fully redact the pop star’s song that unintentionally positioned it at the center of Madonna’s controversial agenda for her newest single.⁸² Close analysis shows how the superstar’s musical choices questioned dominant racial and religious ideologies and how the transfer of these sonic signifiers into the commercial caused Pepsi’s images to grapple with the same politics. In revisiting Schudson’s ideas about capitalist realism and considering the spot through a modernist Brechtian lens, this chapter further illuminates how and why Pepsi’s naive approach to Madonna and her music—including an agreement not to change any of the song’s lyrics or to omit the politically charged musical tropes—caused marketers to lose control of its densely coded sonic signifiers and open themselves to considerable backlash from religious groups worldwide.⁸³

The book’s final section, “Part III: Millennial Music Marketing: Redact, Reuse, Recycle,” investigates the evolution of musical marketing at the turn of the new millennium. From the 1990s onward, the soda giant and its competitors embraced a diversity of musical genres, expanded the potential for co-branding opportunities, and experimented with various media and distribution venues. Chapter 6, “Humorous Hits, Nostalgic Notes, and Retro Refrains in the 1990s” demonstrates how Pepsi combined the lessons it learned from its earlier pop music endorsements and the traditional midcentury jingle practices on which it had once relied. In order to widen its demographic reach, the soda brand expanded its musical repertoire to include the hip hop flow of M. C. Hammer and the classic soul sounds of Ray Charles, as well as references to older rock, Motown, and disco hits. With the support of recent work on humor in advertising by Fred K. Beard, as well as Michael D. Dwyer’s scholarship on nostalgia and Simon Reynolds’s musings on the rise of retro in pop culture, this chapter demonstrates how the brand largely steered its marketing tactics away from focusing on newly released music.⁸⁴ Instead its commercials redacted pre-existing songs that were not humorous, nostalgic, or retro on their own into texts that roused these responses and catered to all of Pepsi’s past and present “generations.”

“Pepsi Coda: Twenty-First-Century ‘Pop’ and the Branded Future” brings this book full circle to investigate how its pair of 2011–12 *X Factor*–

U.S. spots exemplified the converged interests of the music and advertising industries in the twenty-first century. The first pages draw from the analytical methods employed in previous chapters to discuss how the soda giant's reinventing of its most successful campaigns in "Music Icons" attempted to revise pop music history and promise new democratic possibilities for its sponsorship of hot musical talent. An examination of the follow-up commercial, "King's Court," investigates Pepsi's claim to create a new utopian musical culture through the reality talent show and its inaugural winner, Melanie Amaro. Kellner's theories about "technocapitalism" and the "infotainment society" help to untangle the complicated relationships that the soda giant formed with the various industries involved in the show's production.⁸⁵ Additionally, scholarship by Nicholas Carah, Henry Jenkins, Katherine L. Meizel, and others illuminates the reality of viewers' labor for the competition.⁸⁶ Media sources and public opinion further help to explain the reasons for Amaro's short-lived single and the *X Factor* show's fast descent into obscurity, thus clarifying why Pepsi's guarantee for creative innovation proved both unconvincing and unsuccessful. This chapter thus confirms that, despite the brand's long history of music marketing, Pepsi's stake in popular music continues to reside in its sponsorship and *redaction* of the latest sights and sounds—not in their creation. In completing a narrative that reveals as much about the long-term effects of popular music on corporate advertising as it does the other way around, the book's final pages take a step back to consider the brand's complicated history with the musical texts it sponsored and suggests further avenues for inquiry.