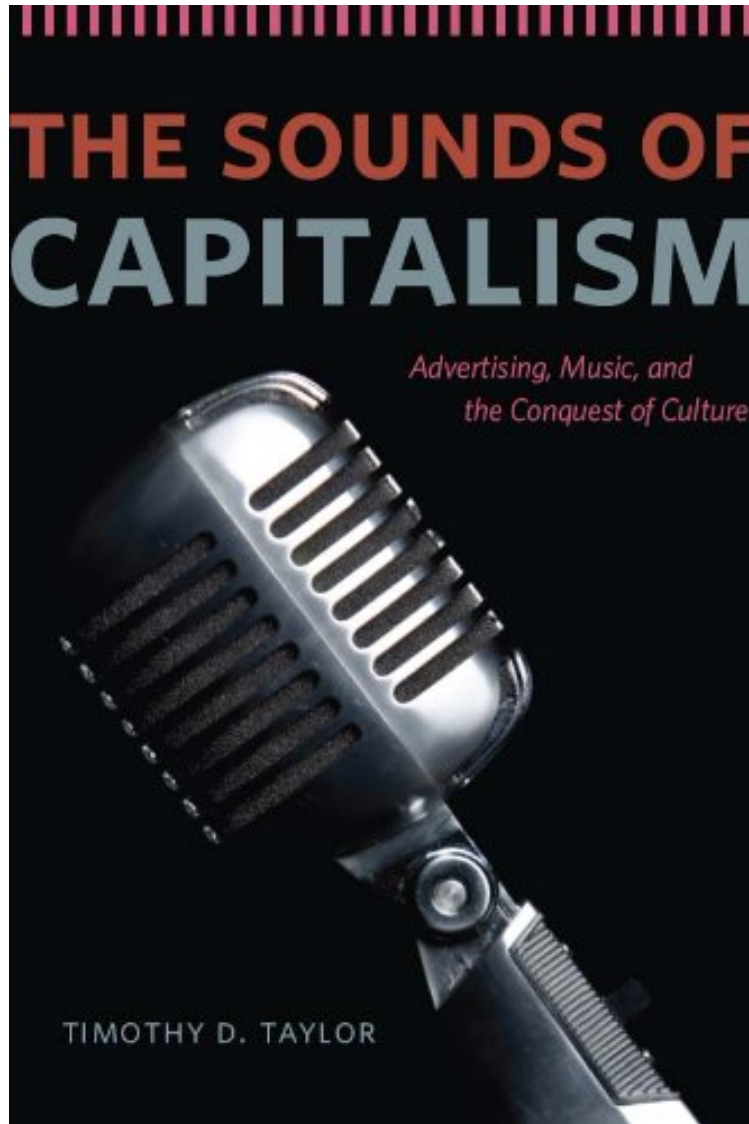


The Sounds of Capitalism: Advertising, Music, and the Conquest of Culture

Timothy D. Taylor

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Timothy D. Taylor : The Sounds of Capitalism: Advertising, Music, and the Conquest of Culture before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Sounds of Capitalism: Advertising, Music, and the Conquest of Culture:

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy J. CheungGreat!8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. The Soundtrack to SalesBy Rob HardyI often have a tune running in my head, an "earworm" that may be playing in my mind for a while before I even tune in and listen to the music. (I find this such an interesting

occurrence - it's an example of how I am not in charge of what goes on even inside my own cranium.) I usually don't mind this; the music will be a Bach cantata or a Gershwin tune, and those are not such a bad interior soundtrack. But every so often, against my will, whatever entity is pushing my cerebrum's jukebox buttons will pick a commercial jingle. Since I don't watch much commercial television these days, the inner DJ has to reach way back; not long ago I was hearing "Things go better with Coca-Cola," which was from over forty years ago. (I am worried now that mentioning it here will bring on a reprise.) Those advertising songwriters surely knew what they were doing. And they still do, although the role of music in commercials has changed a lot since those jingle days. That's part of the message of *The Sounds of Capitalism: Advertising, Music, and the Conquest of Culture* (University of Chicago Press) by ethnomusicologist Timothy Taylor. While it is an academic work, with about a quarter of its pages devoted to footnotes and bibliography, Taylor has a jolly subject, and there are many surprises and funny events recounted here. There is, too, a distressing analysis that shows that advertising and popular music have merged so that it is hard to tell them apart. The first real jingle seems to have been a heavy ditty from 1926 by the Wheaties Quartet ("They're crispy, and crunchy, the whole year through / The kiddies never tire of them and neither will you.") There were others, but the first jingle to have a life of its own (they didn't say "go viral" back then) was the "Pepsi-Cola Hits the Spot" campaign of 1939. ("Pepsi-Cola hits the spot, / Twelve full ounces, that's a lot...") The Chiquita Banana Song came out in 1944, and was so durable that it was last modernized in 1999. In the fifties, jingles were harnessed for the sort of consumerism that was supposed to show those commies how good we have it over here, and many of the tunes were marches, like the music for the 1953 Gillette ad "To Look Sharp", also known as the "Look Sharp March" ("To look sharp, every time you shave / To feel sharp, make your beard behave, / Just be sharp. Use Gillette Blue Blades / For the quickest slickest shave of all.") Fashions change in advertising, and by the 1980s, jingles were seen as too hard-sell and obvious. Rock and pop songs were thought to be purer and more authentic, and so what could advertisers do but make them impure and inauthentic? That there were baby-boomers who would respond to the tugs of the heart from nostalgic songs was realized in 1984 by Ford, which put seventeen classic rock hits into advertisements for Lincoln-Mercury. It was known as the "*Big Chill* Campaign," from the movie with the same boomer theme. A creative director at the agency that made the commercials said, "The music... recalls their adolescence, the most exciting time of their life and it transfers some of those good feelings to Lincoln-Mercury." MTV sparked a language of fast pace and quick cuts; not only did video directors shoot commercials, the MTV videos might well be considered commercials themselves. Volkswagen concentrated on rock in its ads so much that it sold a CD, *Street Mix: Music from Volkswagen Commercials*, and you could hear the music on an online radio station at its website. One job title at agencies might be "Trend Analyst," and one firm recruits 3000 people "between the ages of eight and twenty-four to investigate what is cool and trendy." CD manufacturers affix stickers to CDs saying, "As heard on the _____ commercial." It's easy to get cynical looking at such blatant manipulation, but manipulation is the point. Remember what Lily Tomlin said, that without advertising, people would just wander the store aisles aimlessly, unable to act. The commercials described here sometimes didn't just influence our feelings toward a product, but influenced our feelings toward the whole world (remember "I'd like to teach the world to sing"?) And best of all, *The Sounds of Capitalism* has a website, where you can hear the commercials referred to in the text. It is a wonderful way of pairing print and internet, and I have listened to a lot of the ads there. Now someone tell me how to get "When you say Budweiser, you've said it all" out of my head.

0 of 9 people found the following review helpful. question on this one
By sandiegomoe
Does *The Sounds of Capitalism: Advertising, Music and the Conquest of Culture* Kindle edition include actual audio of the jingles and advertisements? I think it would be very frustrating to read this book without audio accompaniment (sp?).

From the early days of radio through the rise of television after World War II to the present, music has been used more and more to sell goods and establish brand identities. And since the 1920s, songs originally written for commercials have become popular songs, and songs written for a popular audience have become irrevocably associated with specific brands and products. Today, musicians move flexibly between the music and advertising worlds, while the line between commercial messages and popular music has become increasingly blurred.

In *The Sounds of Capitalism*, Timothy D. Taylor presents a rich and compelling story about music's emergence within the broad fields of US advertising and consumer culture. With great clarity and critical acumen, Taylor charts a complex history of the various ways in which advertisers have relied on music in order to sell consumer goods, employing strategies which, over time, have produced a complex semiotics blurring distinctions between the auditory and the material, between taste in music and desire for purchasable things. Taylor's book is stunning in its exhaustive accounting of a vast, unexplored territory in US cultural history. And as we read through the tale, we gain something even more: a startling realization of how deeply intertwined our musical values and practices of consumption really are. The book promises to become a major text in the history of consumption as it establishes a new foundation in the study of US popular music.