

## Brands and bands

Pop music has always been used to promote products. In the digital age, what is different about the latest hook up between musicians and companies?

1 List your three favourite singers and pop groups. Compare your list with a partner and discuss your musical taste. Use some of the words and phrases in the box below.

love    enjoy    (don't) like    hate    don't know    listen to

**Brand:** a product or group of products that has its own name and is made by one particular company  
[www.macmillandictionary.com](http://www.macmillandictionary.com)

2 Scan the article and underline any names of bands or singers you can find in just one minute.

**Marketing re-mix** internet forums and blogs around the world are buzzing with people talking about Welsh singer Duffy's advert for Coca Cola, the one where she rides a bicycle through a supermarket and sings "I've got to be me". Unfortunately for the singer, most of the posts are not very complimentary. Does that really matter? The marketing people at Coca Cola are delighted that consumers everywhere are talking about their product.

Of course, the marriage of 'brands and bands' is nothing new. Madonna and Gap. The Spice Girls and Pepsi. But something has changed. In the past, musicians sold their music on CDs and worked for record labels. In those days, doing an advert was sometimes called 'selling out'. Remember how Moby was criticised for licensing his Play album to advertisers? His song 'We are all made of stars' was used to promote Intel. Then everything changed. Along came the iPod and file sharing. Last year, it was reported that sales of CDs were at their lowest for 20 years ...

Because today's bands are not making as much money through traditional CD sales, they are actively looking for advertising partnerships with companies. It is the rock bands themselves who are contacting companies to discuss ways of promoting their music. This month, U2 start a massive tour to promote their latest album and they are being sponsored by Canadian company, BlackBerry. Another example is the award-winning campaign partnering Groove Armada with Bacardi. The electronic duo performed live at various Bacardi-branded events around the world.

Is this win-win? Companies are keen to tap into the huge online following that some groups have, and get their product associated with some of the 'cool' names in music; they want to use the artist's reputation and fan-base to gain new customers. A new consultancy firm in Stockholm matches products to the music, and has created ad campaigns for many clients. We can expect to see many more exciting links between brands and bands emerging.

3 Read the article. What examples of bands linking with brands are given? What has changed in today's music industry?

4 Decide if the following words from the article are verbs (V), nouns (N) or both (B).

forum	post	consumers	label	criticise	promote
share	sales	partnership	tour	sponsor	reputation
product	award	consultancy	blog	campaign	link

5 Discuss the following questions and task in small groups and be ready to report your ideas to the class.

- Can you think of any more successful adverts which include the use of a famous song or piece of music?
- Do you agree that companies and brands benefit from their association with pop singers and musicians?
- You work for a consultancy company which links brands and bands. Decide on your clients' product and choose the music to promote it. Be ready to present your choice to the group.