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CATERER

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THE CATERER AND HOTELKEEPER INTERVIEW

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critic looks back on a dining-out revolution

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BUSINESS

...USE MUSIC TO TEMPT GUESTS

WHATEVER THE VENUE, YOUR CHOICE OF MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT WILL AFFECT YOUR GUESTS' ENJOYMENT

Like lighting, interior design, artwork, books and furnishings, music plays an important role in creating an inviting atmosphere where guests want to linger and revisit.

It's a tool that, when used effectively, can really add to the guest experience as well as your brand positioning and even your repeat visit and F&B revenue. Get it wrong, though, and it is, at best, dull and insipid; at worst, downright annoying. You might be OK with your business sounding generic or nondescript – hopefully not, though – but you certainly don't want to be driving guests out of the door.

If music is used in a strategic and creative way, it can make you sound warm, alluring and inspiring – even unique.

So how is that achieved? First, don't rely on the radio or CDs. The last thing guests should be hearing when in your branded environment is depressing news broadcasts or adverts. CDs will invariably have gaps between tracks, which means the atmosphere regularly dips. CDs contain only a maximum of 76 minutes of music. Even with a CD changer, that won't be enough content to make your F&B outlets sound fresh and un-repetitive.

Digital hard-drive-based solutions are the best way to deliver music. The best technology allows the delivery of separate channels of music to different areas, so that each has its own musical identity. Different moods of playlists can also be timetabled to activate automatically as each day progresses.



Whatever device you use to play music, it is important to question whether every track is right. You should be asking yourself four key questions:

- **Is the music on-brand?** A soundtrack designed around your quirky brand personality could be impressive and memorable; or perhaps you should be evoking a sense of history and heritage through the music at an older property.
- **Is the music right for the area it is played in?** Up tempo music in the lobby might not be the relaxing welcome that guests want after their long journey, while hip electronica could be at odds with a fine-dining environment.
- **Is the music right for the time of day?** Mellow music is likely to have a place in most hotel settings, but you could consider energising guests at key trading

times. For example, you can use music creatively to add theatre to an F&B concept or to create a sense of story or occasion in a destination bar during the evening.

● **Is the music fresh?** Are you playing old, tired content that is the musical equivalent of a dusty trouser press? Or are you playing the same music again and again, demotivating staff and annoying guests? Music should sound non-repetitive and fresh. It should also be randomised and updated regularly.

Don't take music for granted. Hearing is the second most important human sense. Your guests are experiencing your brand through sound whether you like it or not.

Rob Wood is creative director and founder of Music Concierge
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FIVE WAYS TO SOUND INSPIRING

1 Spend money on decent speakers Despite what you are told, ceiling-mounted speakers often sound rubbish. They are fine for corridors or lobbies, but in key F&B outlets it is worth investing in high-quality speakers with a warmer, dynamic sound, it makes a tremendous difference to your ongoing atmosphere. Content is king, but speakers are queen. The two go hand-in-hand.

2 Don't let staff choose the music You wouldn't let your maintenance man design your lighting. We all love music, but that doesn't mean we all know where to find it, what effect it has on people, and how to sequence it. Let the experts design the music.

3 In the spa, offer a choice of music Many people hate the generic music often used in spas. Employ high-quality relaxing music or create something in line with the spa concept.

4 Avoid musical clichés Edith Piaf was an incredible singer, but we have all heard her too often in French restaurants. Modern France has a new generation of amazing young musicians. Choose music that's appropriate to the F&B concept, but dig deep and be inspiring.

5 Ditch the chart music, the piano music, the chill-out music There are hundreds of musical styles that can be tailored to create inspiring signature music identities. Use music creatively, and sound as unique as you are.

