

ROB WOOD ON WHY MUSIC IS ESSENTIAL TO BRAND EXPERIENCES

By Alex Hawkins

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Rob Wood, creative director of Music Concierge, explains how music and soundscapes can create distinct audio identities for brands and retailers.



Spiritland, London

Can you explain the premise of Music Concierge and how you help brands connect with their audience through music?

Music Concierge is a music consultancy. For more than a decade, we have been responsible for the signature sounds of internationally renowned retail and hospitality brands. We specialise in curating soundtracks or soundscapes that are in synch with their identity and in line with their brand story, while creating the right atmosphere to engage their audience. It's about using music in a particular way and putting it together with the utmost attention to detail. Key to that is the ability to connect brand, audience and physical space with music.

In terms of brand experience and personality, music is a good tool for differentiation. When I started Music Concierge, there was a real fight in terms of educating brands about music and its importance, and how to execute it well. But if you can curate it in a creative, sophisticated way, you can create so many different textures and cultural references that paint a very interesting picture as a backdrop.

What are the key considerations when crafting a musical identity for a brand?

It depends on the sector and the type of project, but the audience, the trading pattern of the space and the design ethos all come into it. We put a lot of emphasis on our initial consultation phase and understanding the space or the building we're working with.

With a brand, it's about establishing the pillars, the story, the DNA and the **type of experience** it is trying to create. It could be an established luxury brand that wants to convey style, glamour and heritage, or a new retailer that might want to articulate how it is youthful and fashion-forward. Very often, the music needs to fit that profile because a brand is evoking a certain era or feel, or it needs to touch a particular audience. But there are other projects where we might want to use music as a juxtaposition, because that's going to make the space more interesting, or surprise and stimulate people's thoughts.

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The other thing we try to help brands to understand is that how sound is delivered is very important in terms of auditory production. Ideally, they would have a really good, immersive sound system to deliver all the dynamic, subtle sounds. You might come up with a brilliant soundtrack for a brand, but if it has under-spent on its sound system, it's a missed opportunity for an engaging customer experience.



Spiritland, London



Dishoom, London

What role does music play in brand experiences today?

Consumers are looking for immersive experiences with brands, and brands are trying to stand out more. If music is carefully considered and well executed it can build a real emotional connection and consequently, brand recognition and loyalty, and even influence what customers do. Its effects need to be managed carefully, so that it has a positive and beneficial impact.

In retail, as more transactions go online, one shift has been the idea of the store not just being a place to purchase, but more of a lifestyle space. And in hospitality, there's more of a focus on wellness and co-working. But the common thread is that brands need to offer something more engaging. Music obviously plays a great role in that. There are even restaurants and bars springing up where **the focus of the whole experience is music**. They have an audiophile-level sound systems with great music, so you go there to be immersed in the music as much as the food.

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Music Concierge tends to curate music for trading spaces, but could brands use music in a similar way to reach consumers in their own homes?

Brands could take their soundtracks from the store to the home via their digital channels, if they have permission to do that. But more commonly, we work with brands through physical touchpoints. One area that we've enjoyed working on recently is the **resurgence of vinyl** and putting vinyl albums together for clients. Dishoom is a good example. We did a gatefold album with them. We curated the music, we licensed it, and we put together the artwork and the sleeve notes. That contained codes to download the tracks, so there was a digital aspect. The idea that you can have that brand experience and take it home is interesting, but it's more compelling if there's a physical element.

What's next for music in a branded context?

I think there's going to be more of a focus on how music affects people emotionally – their behaviour and their wellbeing. If it's well thought out in terms of atmosphere and environment, in terms of sound and temperature and lighting and music, you can create a sense of emotional connection. And my gut feeling is that brands will latch on to that more and more.

An example is Tottenham Hotspur Football Club, who we work with. It has an extensive training facility and academy in Enfield, and it has spent two years building the Lodge, which is essentially a retreat for the players. It incorporates elements of biophilic design and the idea of nudge theory, where if you fine-tune a lot of little details, you can achieve a big outcome. Everything in this space is minutely controlled to induce player wellbeing: the lighting, the temperature, the sound and the music.

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In retail, that thinking could be applied to a department store, where the objective could be to slow customers down and encourage longer browsing time. That is also coming through in office environments. More elements of biophilic design are going into office spaces, particularly using music and sound to help people to work more effectively or relax at certain times of day.

Lab Notes

: Music is a valuable tool for differentiation and should not be overlooked by brands and retailers. Consider how it can be used to build brand recognition and provide engaging, immersive customer experiences

: Consumers are taking a more considered approach to music. As we explore in our Listening Clubs microtrend, demand for listening experiences and events with **high-quality auditory production is on the rise**