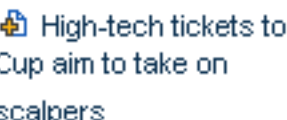
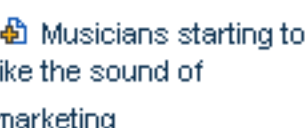
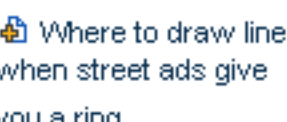



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 **Musicians starting to like the sound of marketing**

By Eric Pfanner International Herald Tribune

SUNDAY, MAY 7, 2006

LONDON A few years ago, Bent Fabricius-Bjerre was a semiretired 70-something musician, best known outside his native Denmark for a tireless 1960s hit, "Alley Cat," that had found its way into countless dance mixes.

Today, under his stage name, Bent Fabric, he is an 81-year-old international pop star, back on the U.S. charts and big in Japan.

Fabricius-Bjerre has advertising to thank: not ads for his own work but spots in which his music is used as the soundtrack. It is an increasingly common way for new musicians - or, in this case, an older one - to be discovered or rediscovered. And the music industry, where many used to turn up their noses at the tawdry business of marketing, is now pushing for closer links.

Fabricius-Bjerre, a prolific composer and keyboard chameleon, set his comeback in motion about two years ago when he recorded a new album with singers and other musicians in Denmark.

The breakthrough came last year when the first single, "Jukebox," found its way into a U.S. television commercial for Cingular, a cellphone operator, promoting a Motorola phone that plays music bought from iTunes, Apple Computer's music store. Would-be Bent Fabric fans tracked down the tune, and it entered Billboard's Hot Dance Club Play chart, peaking at No. 7 last month.

Aided by the Internet, word spread to Japan, where the album has sold more than 100,000 copies, making it one of the top-selling international titles. Globally, "Jukebox" has been downloaded from online music sites at least 150,000 times.

Now this virtual world tour is moving on to China, where another song from the album, "Bam Boogie," is set to appear in a Coca-Cola advertisement, said Claus Pedersen, director of international promotion at Universal Music Denmark, Bent Fabric's record label.

"To break an artist like this - it's not the normal way of doing things," Pedersen acknowledged. But he added, "I think we're looking at a very big year for Bent."

This kind of pragmatism is on the rise in the music industry, where the licensing of music for overtly commercial activities like advertising, a practice that used to be seen by some in the business as selling out, is being pursued ever more aggressively. It reflects a broader blurring of the lines in the media business as owners of "content" look for new ways to make money and consumers increasingly expect to get things for free.

In recent months, artists including the Kinks and Paul McCartney have agreed to let their work be used in commercials. General Motors is using a Who's Who of 1970s bands, including the Who, Led Zeppelin and Aerosmith, as soundtracks to ads for several cars.

Even the Sex Pistols, those anti-establishment punk icons, recently reached a deal with the publishing arm of Universal Music Group, in which the company said it "looks forward to aggressively promoting the catalogue for worldwide synchronization opportunities" - television, film and advertising deals, that is.

"There's been a sea change in attitudes toward music in advertising," said Richard Kirstein, managing director of Leap Music, a London-based affiliate of the advertising agency Bartle Bogle Hegarty that finds music for commercials.

One reason, Kirstein said, might be simply that "as artists get older, they become more flexible about this, and that principled stance looks less important when they realize they have no pension."

But record companies also are encouraging the trend as sales of music through the traditional channel - straight to consumers on compact discs - have plunged amid the spread of Internet piracy. Well-known tunes can generate six- or seven-figure payoffs from advertisers.

In the past, said Maarten Steinkamp, European president of Sony BMG, these deals "sort of happened by accident." Now the record companies have created separate departments that actively seek out commercial opportunities, which extend beyond simply using songs as advertising soundtracks.

Sony BMG, for instance, recently reached an agreement with OMD, a media strategy unit of the advertising company Omnicom, in which the two companies jointly pursue ways to match up OMD clients with Sony BMG music.

In one recent partnership in Spain, Sony BMG agreed to release a new album from a leading pop group, La Oreja de van Gogh, exclusively on a new mobile phone from Sony Ericsson, for subscribers of the wireless operator Telefónica Móviles.

By operating with a more commercial mind-set, Steinkamp said, the music companies are trying to emulate the movie industry, which learned earlier how to capitalize on the value of its products through marketing tie-ins and licensing deals related to film "brands" like "Star Wars."

"Our biggest problem is that we still call ourselves record companies," Steinkamp of Sony BMG said.

"This is one of the initiatives we are using to turn us into an entertainment company."

The advertising industry also is eager for closer ties to the music business. Cool tunes can give boring goods like laundry detergent and toilet paper an injection of rock 'n' roll attitude. Music also can provide a powerful mnemonic link to a brand. "I'd Like to Buy the World a Coke," the 1970s soundtrack to a long-running ad campaign, remained inextricably linked to Coca-Cola, even when, in an early example of crossover success, it was remade as a pop song, "I'd Like to Teach the World to Sing."

Now some advertising agencies are going in the other direction. Kirstein, at Leap Music, set up his own digital record label that looks for music to use in advertising, often from unsigned bands or musicians, then seeks to acquire the rights and to make the songs available for sale through online music sites.

For one Bartle Bogle Hegarty client, the panty-liner brand Libresse, Leap found "Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around," an old spiritual hymn that was in the public domain. Leap recorded a new version in a London soundtrack studio, and used it in a new ad for Libresse. The song also is available for sale from iTunes and other Internet sites.

Songs that are made specifically for commercials tend to have a hard time selling as singles. But new artists can benefit enormously when their work is featured in an ad.

Take José González, a singer-songwriter from Sweden, born to Argentine parents. His first album, "Veneer," was released in 2003 and sold well at home. Elsewhere, however, the record failed to catch on - until last year, when one of the songs, "Heartbeats," was used in a European Sony ad for a new line of televisions.

Though the ad, which features tens of thousands of colorful rubber balls bouncing through the streets of San Francisco, did not name the singer, it appeared during soccer matches and other popular broadcasts and was widely discussed on the Internet.

González quickly attracted a following, and the album has gone platinum in Britain, for instance, with sales of more than 300,000 copies.

In the past, many young artists would have balked at gaining their first broad international exposure through an advertisement.

Was it hard to persuade González to go along?

"Of course we had questions about allowing them to use it," said Magnus Bohman, co-owner of González's record label in Sweden, Imperial Recordings. "But when we saw the film and the interaction with the music, it was an easy decision."