



---

*You love your indie music. You love discovering new artists through different outlets. You have a love hate relationship with commercials with catchy songs.*

---

Okay, maybe I can't speak for everyone but I am completely behind those statements I just made. There is no question about the power that pop culture has on music today. Increasingly, producers are spending more time on music placement in commercials, movie trailers, and TV shows. There have even been websites created specifically to document what songs were played in what medium. Today, a strategically placed song can turn an artist into the next big thing.

There are huge numbers of people who are passionate about finding music (I assume you are since you are reading this lovely music magazine). These are the people who hear a song in a commercial or a TV show and power up their laptop to search the reaches of the internet for the title and artist of that song. When they find it, they obtain the full CD and, just like that, they have a new band to love.

But what happens to everyone else? What about the person who hears the song and loves it, but doesn't take the time to find it online? What about the girl who finds she is singing along to that Kindle commercial for the twentieth time but still hasn't thought to look up the song? For these people, these songs have become one-hit indie wonders.

What constitutes a one-hit indie wonder then? A one-hit indie wonder is a song that came from some form of media from our world today, and it's a song from the 'indie' genre that an ordinary media absorber would know if they heard it, but wouldn't know the song name or even who it was by. Here are some examples from different media forms:

---

## ★ COMMERCIALS

---

This is obviously the biggest medium for one hit indie wonders. Commercials have 15 or 30 seconds to get across a message and sell you an item, so they enlist the use of catchy music to help nail home that point. The most famous example of this lately is the song "1901" by Phoenix in Cadillac commercials. Not only is it a catchy song, but there are also a lot of Cadillac commercials on television. It's quite overwhelming. This repetition has made "1901" a household song, yet many people wouldn't know Phoenix has four studio albums or that they have been around for ten years.

**Other examples:** *Matt and Kim* – "Daylight" (Bacardi Mojito commercial), *Shins* – "Sleeping Lessons" (Zune commercial), *The Fratellis* – *Chelsea Dagger* (Amstel Light)

---

## ★ APPLE PRODUCTS

---

Yes, I know these are also commercials, but Apple commercials have developed a personality of their own so much so that when the Droid phone came out, the first half of their commercial was a catchy indie song that made everyone know who they were poking fun at. It seems that each new Apple commercial leads to the next big indie sensation. The two most famous examples of Apple's one hit indie wonders are Jet's "Are You Gonna Be My Girl" and Feist's "1,2,3,4." Apple over-advertised both songs in commercials and they became quintessential examples of indie one-hit wonders.

**Other examples:** *The Ting Tings* – "Shut Up And Let Me Go" (iPod), *Coldplay* – "Viva La Vida" (iPod and iTunes)

---

## ★ MOVIE TRAILERS

---

Like commercials, movie trailers have a small amount of time to get a certain story idea across to its audience so they go out and see the movie. Indie movies love using indie music in their trailers (Babies used Sufjan Steven's "Perpetual Self" and It's Kind of a Funny Story used Ida Marie's "Oh My God"), but big hits have also looked to capitalize on indie music fame. The most notable example in the past year has been *Where The Wild Things Are* using "Wake Up" by Arcade Fire for both their teaser and theatrical trailer, making it a staple for someone watching the trailers to any movie during that release time.

---

## ★ TV SHOWS

---

While music in TV shows tends to take a back seat to actual dialogue and story, certain shows have put a lot of effort into crafting montages with well-placed songs for added effects. "The OC" did this so much that "SNL" even spoofed the scene where they used Imogen Heap's "Hide and Seek" during the season 2 finale. "Grey's Anatomy," "Scrubs," and "Chuck" have also all put a lot of effort into music selection for their episodes. Both "Grey's Anatomy" and "Scrubs" have websites telling you what songs are featured in episodes, and Josh Schwartz, who created "The OC," also created "Chuck".

While many of these artists may have made it in the traditional sense without a strategically placed commercial, looking to break out through commercials is actually becoming the norm. Who cares if your song doesn't make it to a million people? If it makes a big enough impact that 1,000 people are scouring the Internet for the song, it's only a matter of time before they tell their friends, it branches out, and your band becomes an underground sensation.

Jared Gutstadt is the CEO and co-founder of Jingle Punks, which is one of many companies that has turned the idea of success through commercials and trailers into a business. Jingle Punks is the Match.com for music and commercials. They allow any user to upload a song onto a database. Once this happens, networks and production companies looking for catchy music to back up their ads can go into

the database library and search thousands of songs, looking to find the perfect song to fit their commercial.

I interviewed Jared in order to get a better idea of his thought process behind Jingle Punks and matching music with commercials: "We realized there are so many musicians out there in a world of a shrinking music industry where labels and publishing companies aren't signing people. You can count on one hand the number of relevant names coming out of a record company in one year." Instead of a band spending all their time trying to get a record deal, they can upload an entire album's worth of songs to the Jingle Punk's database, and wait for someone to sync their song in their commercial or trailer.

While it may seem like an incredibly unconventional way of breaking into the business, it's quickly becoming the norm. These bands are banking on the fact that their music will get caught in viewers' heads just enough so that they'll download the song and become a fan. It's even the case for bands to become relevant again. Train was all but forgotten, and then along came "Soul Sister" in every Blackberry commercial and they were a huge hit again. As Jared puts it, "it just makes people think about their music career differently; don't think about it in terms of the tour, don't think about it in terms of selling a million records. Just think about it as building a fan base by getting it in front of as many people as humanly possible."

The formula actually is successful. A Jingle Punk band, I Love Monsters, got a placement in an episode of *Entourage*, and is building success off of that. Mike Del Rio ended up rebranding the History Channel with his cover of Buddy Holly's "Everyday." Mac Demy's placement in a Disney video has given him what Jared believes is potential to be the next Justin Timberlake.

Sure, these indie one-hit wonders may just be a catchy tune for someone to whistle on the train ride home. But with the power music placement has in the media today, it would be stupid to write off this outlet as a way of artists gaining recognition. It may just be the next big judge of stardom: 'Forget Platinum, I've been in six Apple commercials!'