MUSIC IN THE MOVIES: AN INVESTIGATION INTO CREATIVE MUSIC SEARCH

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Music has been used to accompany moving images since the days of silent movies, when a pianist or orchestra performed to enhance the action and emotions portrayed on-screen. Collections of music have been organised for this purpose by descriptive facets ('Chase, Impatience, Happiness') (Rapee 1924) since the early 20th century. Record companies and music publishers attempt to place music in films, TV and commercials to generate income and promote their artists. This process, known as music synchronisation, benefits both the music Owners and the film-making Users, who are frequently not looking for known items and search for unknown music using verbose and subjective queries. Although attempts have been made to disintermediate the process using bespoke B2B music search engines (MSE) (EMI Music Publishing, Sony-ATV, WarnerChappell, Universal, Chryalis, Ricall all 2009) these do not appear to be widely used by creative music searchers, who rely on relationships, in-depth product knowledge and 'gut feeling' to source music (Inskip et al 2008).

An in-depth analysis of these MSEs (Inskip et al 2009) found that a range of bibliographic (including Artist, Title, Writer, Lyrics) and descriptive facets (Genre, Tempo, Subject, Mood) were employed to organise the music being presented to the User. These fuzzy descriptors rely on Users and Owners sharing the same meanings if the catalogues of these digital music libraries are to be searched effectively. It was noted during this investigation that this subjective indexing needs to be consistent and reliable; catalogues have either not been fully digitized, not been fully indexed, or have been narrowed down; there are mis-applied keywords, mis-spellings, incomplete metadata, low precision and recall, poor stemming, inappropriate ranking; and difficulties in narrowing down or expanding results sets. Indeed, Users do not appear to widely use these resources, preferring to rely on their knowledge and direct contact with expert intermediaries within the Owners organisations.

A collection of 27 written queries, known as 'briefs' were analysed to gain some insight into the ways the film makers are describing music and determine the key facets used when searching for unknown items. While both bibliographic and descriptive metadata were found to be important, Artist and Title were rarely used, while Mood, Genre and Music Structure (such as crescendo) frequently appeared. This reflects the clichéd query, mentioned frequently in interviews: "We're looking for something upbeat and quirky, with a bit of a build". Issues of copyright and competition reduce the likelihood of collaboration between rights holders, although these are not insurmountable (Ricall, 2009).

It seems from these investigations that there is a mismatch of meanings between the User and the Owner. However, although the development of these tools would benefit from a more detailed domain analysis, there is a will to disintermediate, as evidenced by the very existence of these MSEs and their increasing sophistication. The development of creative music search is not restricted to professional use. General users would also benefit from improvements in this area, for finding music to accompany slideshows and home movies as well as unknown item search when faced with the difficult decision of what to listen to next from their digital music collections.

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