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Charlotte Rørdam Larsen

Recycling sound in commercials

Interchanges between past and present in Danish margarine commercials 1936-2000

Charlotte Rørdam Larsen
Associate Professor
Musicology
Department of Aesthetics and Communication
Aarhus University
muscrl@hum.au.dk

www.soundeffects.dk

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Abstract

Commercials offer the opportunity for intergenerational memory and impinge on cultural memory. TV commercials for foodstuffs often make reference to past times as a way of authenticating products. This is frequently achieved using visual cues, but in this paper I would like to demonstrate how such references to the past and 'the good old days' can be achieved through sounds. In particular, I will look at commercials for Danish non-dairy spreads, especially for OMA margarine. These commercials are notable in that they contain a melody and a slogan – 'Say the name: OMA margarine' – that have basically remained the same for 70 years. Together these identifiers make OMA an interesting Danish case to study. With reference to Ann Rigney's memorial practices or mechanisms, the study aims to demonstrate how the auditory aspects of Danish margarine commercials for frying tend to be limited in variety: in general, the soundtracks of margarine commercials seem to merge into one, they are somewhat alike. The OMA commercials are no exception, but the OMA melody makes a distinction. In general the soundtracks of OMA margarine commercials (and the use of melody) seem to have shifted from using a predominantly semantic causal soundtrack to tracks using aesthetic and musicalised elements which are supposed to arouse more sensuous feelings in the consumers.

Introduction

This article examines the sound of TV commercials over time, focusing mainly on available Danish margarine cinema and TV commercials from the past 75 years (158 in total). Commercials are often presented and used as mediated memories, as they regularly appear in the media as examples of people's behaviour and expectations in the past. The study considers the soundtracks of the commercials as interesting examples of the circuit of cultural memories. Like images, the soundtrack can locate the film in the public psyche and continue the circulation of mediated memories. The commercials are absorbing the present and construct their presentation of the product as a mediator between their time-honoured brand and public common sense. In relation to memory commercials are products created for the purpose of making us remember a specific artefact, which is presented as being unique: on the one hand, the commercial is designed to distinguish the product in question from similar ones. On the other hand, with reference to Ann Rigney's memorial practices or mechanisms, this study aims to demonstrate how the commercials also seem to reduce their vehicles by using the same matrixes, by means of which they create recognisability. However, the commercials do change over time, and the soundtracks of OMA margarine commercials seem to have shifted from using a predominantly semantic causal soundtrack to tracks using aesthetic and musicalised elements, which are supposed to arouse more sensuous feelings in the consumers.

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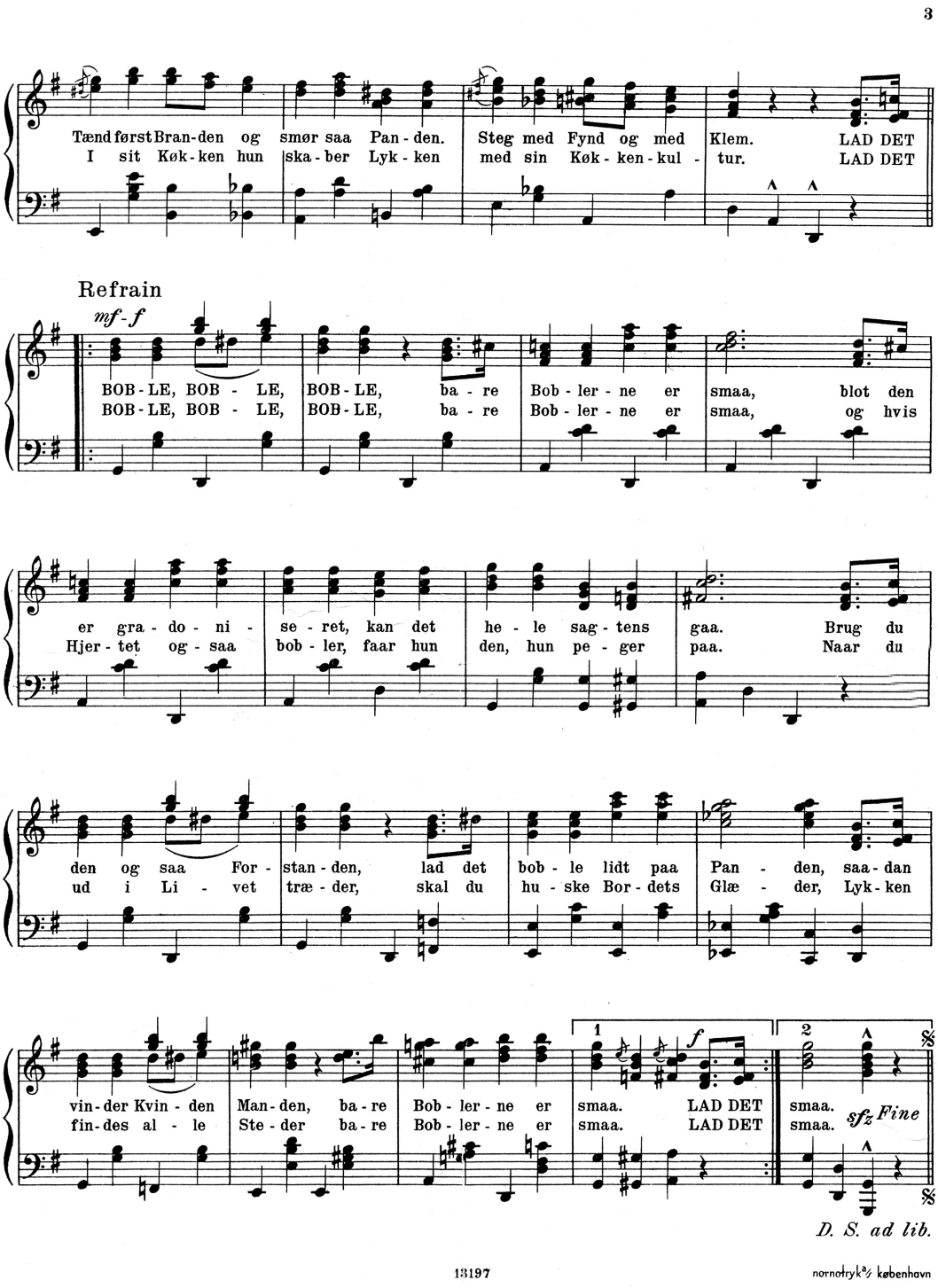

The refrain of the OMA-melody composed by Dan Falke 1936. You could acquire the sheet by mailing an envolope to the OMA company

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1936[1]

A good size lump of margarine is melting to the accompaniment of a cascade of bubbles bursting around a couple of chops in a silver-coloured aluminium pan. In this 1936 black and white commercial for Danish OMA margarine, it is the sight and the sound of the bubbles that is important, as the product branding emphasises its good frying qualities – signified by the lively, small bubbles. After we have listened to the sound of the frying pan, the well-known actress who is cooking the chops bursts into a song about frying in OMA margarine with the unforgettable refrain, 'Lad det boble, boble boble/ bare boblerne er smaa' ['Let it bubble, bubble, bubble/ if only the bubbles are small']. This margarine melody is notable, as the margarine company Otto Mønsted[2] uses the theme of the refrain for the next 70 years in their commercials for margarine.

Figure 1: The Danish actress Liva Weel points to her secret weapon, OMA, in a chop-frying competition (reward: a partner for life with marriage in mind)

1961[3]

A male voice is announcing, 'Hvad en sveske måtte hviske' ['What a prune had to whisper']. To the accompaniment of the bubble refrain, a packet of OMA margarine is placed on a kitchen table, and a prune jumps up and whispers the news to a cauliflower, which announces the event to the other foodstuffs, which shout with joy. An

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egg jumps up and demands, 'Sig navnet' ['Say the name'], and a butter/margarine storage box recites, 'OMA'. The foodstuff stop talking, as the key figure enters the scene: a lump of margarine is cut and put in a frying pan, and we hear the frying margarine accompanied by the last part of the theme, and at last a dish with a fried[4] rolled joint studded with prunes, sugar-boiled apples with redcurrant jelly and caramelised potatoes is presented.

Figure 2: The prune whispers to the cauliflower, the margarine box joins the conversation, and a hunk of the leading actor OMA is melted in a shiny pan (which reflects the image of the margarine packaging)

1967[5]

A Herb Albert-like arrangement (trumpets playing in thirds and in sixths – the sound of instrumental pop music in the 1960s) is playing the bubble theme, while the pictures show a packet of OMA. A male voice recites, 'It is new and even better', and the softness of margarine is demonstrated by a kitchen knife's fluting of the substance. The theme is paused on a suspense-making minor chord, as it is announced that the taste and the smell is better; meanwhile the viewer can see vapour rising, as the lump of margarine melts over the peas and diced carrots in a casserole. A fanfare is played on trumpets as a new lump of margarine is sliced, we hear the bubbling margarine, and a female voice repeats 'Say the name' three times, and then a male voice is heard, commending the frying qualities

Figure 3: The new and softened OMA: the princess on the peas

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of the margarine before saying that 'It is the new OMA margarine', as the familiar soundtrack draws to a close.

1988[6]

This time the company has chosen to be represented by a commercial that uses lots of close-ups and snapshots in rapid succession: a smaller lump of margarine is melting in an iron pan, as the bubble theme is played on saxophone accompanied by a jazzy comp underlined by the sound (and sight) of snapping fingers. There is also the sound of margarine sizzling in a pan along with a variety of accompanying visuals, including a red pepper lifting its top like a hat, and an aubergine opens in two, saying, 'Ahhh'; the snapping fingers are in the next shot, followed by a presentation of all kinds of raw foodstuffs. Again we hear and watch margarine melting in the frying pan, two red peppers are performing a pirouette, succeeded by some bobbing stems of watercress followed by a mushroom and onion leaning towards each other before they start to dance cheek to cheek. After this emphasis on raw vegetables our attention is drawn towards the margarine, which is seen to be bubbling in the pan. A red pepper is turning around, lifting its top, whistling (at the other ingredients), a breaded fish in the pan answers, 'Whoo', a slice of lemon is squeezed accompanied by a 'Shhh', onions are cut and the chopping of a knife is heard, an aubergine in the frying pan opens into slices saying, 'Aaahhh' accompanied by a rising 'Mickey Mouse' style scale. A mushroom is sliced; a beef steak is arching in a pan saying, 'Uuhm' ['Num']. This is followed by a panning shot of vegetables and fruits, of bubbling margarine and of all kinds of foodstuffs (meat, fish, vegetables, fruits), and while a lump of margarine is sliced up, a male voice demands, 'Say the name'. This is followed by a man shaping the name of OMA with his lips at which point a packet of OMA appears accompanied by three piano chords: transparent and jazzy a la the crispy chords in the end of a Count Basie piece.

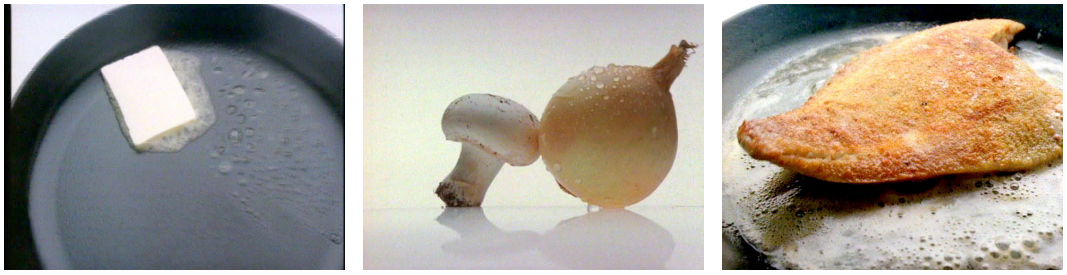

Figure 4: The three screenshots show a smaller blob of margarine and animated vegetables dancing together in a pan. This commercial was a great technical challenge and was the result of 12 days of animating vegetables and adapting culinary items, not to mention the skill and time needed to get a plaice to swish its tail

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1994[7]

A church bell is ringing, a vicar hems, and a child is crying. The camera has a bird's eye view of the church and zooms in on a christening ceremony. The vicar opens his arms and whispers, 'Sig navnet!' ['Say the name!'] [The name of the child.] The mother then takes a deep breath, closes her eyes and imagines: tomatoes being rinsed under pouring water accompanied by the sound of a slow jazzy waltz version of the OMA melody played on alto saxophone supplemented by a jazz whistled melody (a la Toots Thielmans). Meanwhile a lump of OMA sizzles in the pan, carrots are being cut, brussels sprouts are tipped into a pan, a fish is prepared with herbs and a lump of margarine, shrimps are fried lightly in a pan, roasted potatoes are taken from an oven, a joint is arranged on a plate and a slice of the meat is served on a plate. The mother's daydream is interrupted by the vicar's voice urging her to, 'Sig navnet' ['Say the name']. Then there is a moment of silence, as the mother forms the shape of OMA with her lips. A packet of OMA then appears on the screen, as the melody is introduced and the sequence is ended by a cadenza.[8]

Figure 5: As the vicar prompts the mother to 'Say the name!' the slogan of OMA makes her recall OMA-prepared meals

Sound never appears alone in TV-commercials. It is always combined with pictures. While the visual element presents, the sonic suggests through a collage of different sonic elements (Voegelin, 2006). Studying sound offers a way of understanding social processes and communication that is different to studying vision or textuality alone (Kelman, 2010, p. 215). With this in mind, using the soundtrack as the common thread, this article attempts to describe how interchanges between past and present find expression in a specific media (a film and TV commercial for margarine).

Personal memory, collective memory and cultural memory

According to Germanist and literary scholar Andreas Huyssen, a surprising 'culture of memory' has pervaded the North Atlantic societies since the late 1970s (Huyssen,

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2000, p. 25). Looking around it is obvious how innumerable interchanges between present and past are presented in many variants and connections as narratives of cultural memory. Such interchanges seem to be present in phenomena as varied as the restoration of old, decayed city centres (cf. Boym, 2001), multiple publications of memoirs and confessional literature, documentaries on television, and in the still accelerating boom of retro fashions based on fads of relatively recent times. Huyssen emphasises that the turn towards memory 'is subliminally energised by the desire to anchor ourselves in a world characterised by an increasing instability of time and the fracturing of lived space' (Huyssen, 2000, p. 28). And he singles out older sociological approaches such as Maurice Halbwach's 'collective memory' as being inadequate for grasping the 'current dynamics of media and temporality, memory, lived time and forgetting' (ibid.). Huyssen makes it clear, that we can no longer discuss memory, whether personal, generational or public, without considering the influence of new media.[9]

Media researcher José van Dijck (2007) has developed the concept of mediated memories, '*which are the activities and objects we produce by means of media technologies, for creating and recreating a sense of past, present and future of ourselves in relation to others*' (Dijck, 2007, p. 21; original italics). These types of memories not only facilitate remembrance of times past, they also mediate relationships of many kinds and thereby shape mutual experiences of memory and media. Facebook and smart phones are examples of platforms where personal and mediated memories interchange: for instance, the mobile phone has the characteristics of a 'memory stick', as we not only use it as a phone, but also for recalling details and for sorting out and arranging our own history (cf. Bassett, 2005). In the present context it is assumed that film and TV commercials are early examples of such mediated memories. Though we do not produce them ourselves, they function as mutual experiences of (generational) memories, and today viral marketing makes it difficult to distinguish personal reminiscences from commercials.

Personal memory is often defined as being built on recalling, or in psychologist Susan Bluck's words, 'Autobiographical memory implicitly involved thinking about the past in the present' (Bluck, 2003, p. 113). Autobiographical memories are important, if we are to build a notion of personhood and identity (Dijck, 2007, p. 2), and according to Bluck the functions of autobiographical memory can be recapitulated in three main themes: 'having a self', that is, to feel self-continuity and personal integrity in order to maintain one's sense of being a coherent person over time; 'providing social competences', that is, they enable one to be communicative and emphatic by offering a basis for social bonding, which strengthens the ability to share personal memories; and finally 'endowing directive functions', that is, the ability to use one's earlier experiences as a means and resource for present and future behaviour (Bluck, 2003, pp. 113-115; Dijck, 2007, p. 3). When we are address-

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ing individual memory, it is connected to the area of psychology, while collective memory is the domain of sociologists, historians and cultural theorists. This division emphasises how collective memory comprehends variable groups' shared orientations of common resources such as communal events, objects and environment (Dijck, 2007, pp. 9-10).

José van Dijck considers this juxtaposing of individual and cultural memory in her work *Mediated Memories*. Like many others she understands both memory and culture as something we construct and through which we shape our personal and collective selves (Dijck, 2007, p. 12). Cultural historians such as Jan and Aleida Assmann also view memory as an interchange (Assmann & Czaplicka, 1995). For these researchers cultural memory is 'the extent to which shared memories of the past are the product of mediation, textualisation and acts of communication' (Rigney, 2005, p. 14). Jan Assmann contrasts cultural memory with 'communicative memory' (Assmann & Czaplicka, 1995, p. 126), which is memory circulating among the living – an early phase of memory. Thus, cultural memory always relates to the memories of others, as it involves media, communication and representations and does not require first-hand experiences. Additionally, cultural memory is always evolving; it is a 'working memory' as defined by Aleida Assmann (in Rigney, 2005, p. 17). For Assmann the attributes of working memory include the continuous collation and recollection of data and facts that give priority to some aspects, while others are let go. And Dijck again develops this line of thinking by underlining cultural memory as a negotiation between private and public: in the course of our lifetime we reset the boundaries for what we keep as public or private memory (Dijck, 2007, p. 13). This is of course an ongoing process, especially as the media will continue circulating memories, and then new media technologies recirculate these memories in new formats and to new groups and generations, so that they become the next generation's 'own' mediated lived experiences. 'Experience is neither completely lived nor entirely mediated, as the encounter between the two is a continuously evolving life-project to define the self in a larger cultural context' (ibid., p. 19).

The communication, circulation and exchange of cultural memory

Ann Rigney underlines the media dimension by defining cultural memory as 'the ongoing result of public communication and of the circulation of memories in mediated form' (Rigney, 2005, pp. 15-16). She states that various media permit cultural memories to circulate among people, who may not have any physical connections with the events in question. But even so, they learn to identify with these vicarious recollections. Rigney also identifies the need to examine memorial practices and technologies and especially the cultural processes behind how memory is shared (ibid., p. 16). Inspired by Foucault's 'law of rarity' (Foucault, 1972, p. 118),[10] developed

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by Foucault in his *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972),[11] she analyses the role of the media in this process. The law of rarification is Foucault's idea of how 'utterances are transmitted and preserved; repeated, reproduced, transformed and replicated, not just through copying and translation but also through interpretation, commentary and an internal proliferation of meaning' (Foucault in Rigney, 2005, p. 17).[12] Also French sociologist Henri Lefèbvre has addressed this inclination to repetition. As early as 1961 he anticipated how the media would facilitate a perpetual rewriting of history and an ever accelerating cyclic appearance of fads. According to Lefèbvre, this meant that differences between the generations would become smaller and smaller, as the media repetition increased.

Lefèbvre, by acknowledging redundancy in repetition, thus supports the mechanisms behind Foucault's law of rarity. Focusing on repetition, Rigney suggests and discusses five ways or mechanisms by which cultural memory is communicated, circulated and exchanged: the 'selectivity' of recall, the 'convergence' of memories, the 'recursivity' in remembrance, the 'recycling' of models of remembrance and memory 'transfers'.

There are, however, very few considerations of sound or music in literature on cultural memory.[13] But it is not difficult to comprehend how Lefèbvre's description of cyclic appearances or Foucault's law of rarity could be related to music: the recycling of musical works, the practise of sampling, the circulation of cover versions and the many tribute bands are just a few examples of interesting subjects of working cultural memory within the field of music and sound. The current study of the role of the soundtrack in a food commercial discusses the repetition of a distinct melody and slogan as cultural memory.

The soundtracks of food commercials as cultural memories

Cultural memory is built on a kind of vicarious memory. Through cultural memories, unlike private memories, we are able to recall and experience what people we do not know in person might experience, and the cultural influences that affected people living in other eras (brought forward by Dijck) can become amalgamated with lived and mediated approaches. Cultural memories' mediated representations of the past facilitate identification with others: we share public memories that we were not capable of recalling beforehand, as they were not part of our private sphere. In the case of the TV commercials that form the basis of this study, the past is used in the visual and auditive framing, in the product promotion and also in the references to previous commercials for the product. The study will draw upon Ann Rigney's five ways of communicating cultural memory in its exploration of the margarine commercials' soundtracks.

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Food commercials often refer to the past and depict it as something a priori good. According to commercials, it seems as if food simply tasted better and was handled with much more care in the past, which in itself makes the commercials an interesting example of cultural memory, as the 'memory' of food tasting better before is often presented as a personal memory. This is particularly noticeable in commercials for candy; a sweet memory is passed from one generation to another.[14] Food commercials frequently use phrases such as 'Do you recall?' (cf. Larsen, 2012). Such attempts to invoke personal ('autobiographical') memory seem to make the experience more 'real', which is important, since on-screen commercials for food always lack the vital physical ingredients of taste and smell. While the visual aspect of a food commercial can underpin our cultural notion of what food should *look* like – big, shiny and without any imperfections – sound is also important for helping us 'feel' the food. The tactile feeling is mediated and underlined by the soundtrack: the sounds of the commercials are supposed to assure us that what the visual part says is actually true and not just fantasy. For commercial film makers it is simply the combination of the visuals and the sounds that facilitates the remembering process. The memory is transferred to us, not as something we actually remember, but as a memory of feeling good, which our brains might relate to a special taste.

In addition to this sensuous appeal to memory, the commercials often become part of cultural memory, as they take part in constructing a shared national 'past'. For instance, melodies from commercials can become part of our shared memories. Advertising researcher Linda Scott expresses this by stating, 'Music in advertising is commonplace. [...] Advertising music is shared experience we can parrot and parody together' (Scott, 1990, p. 223). Scott addresses the social part of music in advertising. But TV commercials can also induce an individual's memory and make room for a kind of 'personal' memory. In this respect, Bluck's three notions of what memories can provide are worth considering. For Bluck memories provide you with: a feeling of 'self', (self-continuity), a 'social' dimension (social bonding) and a 'directive' for course of action (using past experiences as a source for facing new challenges) (Bluck, 2003, pp. 113-115; Dijck, 2007, p. 3). In relation to the soundtrack of a commercial, by communicating directly with the viewer the advertisement creates a recognisable identity (self-continuity). Melodies are often memorable and instantly recognisable, while catchlines can be adapted and parodied in various social and media situations (social bonding), and some tunes even have the power to affect individuals' behaviours (self-continuity).[15]

Soundtracks between everyday and musical listening

Commercial soundtracks, of course, do not only have to consist of a memorable melody. Most also include everyday sounds and noises, such as sizzling or clattering

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dishes, as well as speech. Leaving speech for a moment, the classification of sound into music, noise and everyday sounds has been part of not only western musicological tradition, but also compositional practise. It is interesting that these concepts are not based on the sounds, but rather their context. What we think of as music might turn into noise, if it occurs in an inappropriate setting; what others think of as music can simply be considered as noise by us, just as pleasant everyday sounds can easily turn into noise, if we meet them in unexpected connections. One could say that the concepts can be confusing, since they are reliant on the relationship between producer and listener or rather between the sounds themselves and their functions. Professor of design William Gaver (Gaver, 1993) has defined two ways of experiencing sounds, 'musical listening' and 'everyday listening', in an attempt to develop a framework for listening to this confusion. Using an ecological (psychological) approach,[16] he describes the two listening modes in this way: musical listening is listening to the sounds themselves, that is when we are 'concerned with the patterns of sensation the sound evoke', and everyday listening is when 'we might listen to the sources of sound – the size of an approaching car, how close it is and how quickly it is approaching' (ibid., p. 1). By everyday listening a listener extracts information from what is heard: it is the source of the sound that is key. Musical listening is not restricted to listening to music. It is a kind of sensory listening, focusing on the sound itself. Composer and audio-visual researcher Michel Chion also addresses different listening modes (1994) and describes three categories for experiencing sound: causal listening (which correlates to Gaver's everyday listening), reduced listening (similar to Gaver's musical listening) and, finally, semantic listening, which refers to interpreting a message (Chion, 1994, pp. 24-30), either the decoding of a musical message or listening to words. Chion emphasises that the three modes overlap in the various contexts of the soundtrack. While the eye sees what it is given to see, the aural field is much less bounded as it is difficult for us to select and cut things out: 'sound more than image has the ability to saturate and short-circuit our perception' (ibid., p. 33). In relation to TV commercials, this explains how sound is able both to evoke a tactile dimension of an advertised product (everyday/casual listening), add value to the perception (musical listening/reduced listening) and pass on a message (semantic listening). This implies that sound at least complements pictures on a physiological, interpretive and communicative level.

In the relatively short life of the TV/motion picture commercial it is also noticeable that soundtracks, in general, have changed. There has been a shift from using realistic sounds that refer to the physicality of the product (requiring casual/everyday listening) to more interpretive sounds (eliciting reduced/musical listening), which suggests a more sensuous approach. The semantic dimensions have changed too. In general recitation, poetry or songs presented by an actor seem to have given way to a more peer to peer-like address. When comparing the characteristic sounds

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of commercials from the 1960s to those of the early 21st century, it is apparent that today's sounds are more ambiguous and offer the audience a wide frame for interpretation. The nebulous boundaries between sound and meaning open up a multitude of interpretations, as they can evoke different memories for different individuals.

Aestheticised soundtracks

Although to date no mainstream TV commercials come with smell or taste, commercials still have the power to transform an embedded product experience by transferring emotions or memories from our memory bank and releasing them in relation to other products (Andersen, 2007, p. 233). By providing a commodity with an image and certain notions of something special, the gap between a shown and a sensed commodity is overcome: 'The commodity is moved from the physical world to a fantasy world and from the profane market to a domain of emotions' (Jantzen, 2007, p. 91; my translation). Through this aestheticisation a commodity is provided with both an expressive quality – by using the commodity the consumer communicates (e.g. a lifestyle) – and an impressive quality – the sensuality of the product arouses bodily reactions in the consumer (ibid.).

More and more commercials refer to what a specific product can do for us and do to us, instead of presenting the product's own qualities.[17] It is legitimate to listen to inner voices and feelings, when we are assessing an article: self-realisation is an important strategy in modern life, and consuming is an essential part to this. The development towards aestheticisation of commercials and the trend to follow one's desires when it comes to consumption can be summarised in the concept of the 'experience economy', as it is formulated by the sociologist Gerhard Schulze. These tendencies can be read in the soundtracks of the commercials. It is characteristic that the early food commercials show the product, mention the name of it and follow up with some reference to its tastiness.[18] On the other hand, more aesthetic commercials involve synaesthetic traits, which illustrate the sensuous delights of the article – that is, what the article can do for you.[19] Cultural analyst Christian Jantzen points out, however, that sensuous consumption not only calls for lust, but also for fantasy: above appetite and a well-prepared meal the consumer must *expect*. One must have expectations, ideas, knowledge and readiness for something to become a culinary experience (Jantzen, 2007, p. 85). You have to be willing, initiated and an active co-creator to have an aesthetic experience.

Danish margarine commercials: the OMA case

Margarine was a product of 19th-century modernisation (Holst-Jensen, 1946, p. 1). The growth of populations and cities meant that the demand for butter grew and

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prices began to rise. In the 1860s a French inventor, Mège-Mouriès, developed a fatty alternative to butter for domestic use. It was introduced to the market in 1871 as margarine and later as beurre économique (Strandskov et al., 1998, p. 50). The OMA Company was founded in Denmark in 1883 by Otto Mønsted. It was originally called the Aarhus Butterine Company (but soon became OMA), and it swiftly became an international firm with factories and laboratories in London and Manchester, Finland and Poland (Bergmann, 2009, p. 23; Strandskov et al., 1998, pp. 151-167, 309-327). Otto Mønsted's margarine was different from the earlier beurre économique, in that it was based on raw vegetable materials, whereas the existing products used animal fat mixed with skimmed milk, a residue from churning. Margarine was a cheap alternative to butter, but it was not welcomed in an agricultural country like Denmark.[20] OMA was presented as ordinary people's butter, which was made clear by the look and taste. Even so, the Danish agricultural societies were not pleased to see a competitor to butter, even if the production of margarine only accounted for one percent of the overall sale of butter (Cohn, 1933) in the 1880s, and the societies successfully persuaded the national parliament of Denmark to introduce a law designed to slow the growth of the margarine market in 1885. This required margarine to be labelled in such a way that it could not be mistaken for butter. In 1888 a tightening of the law banned the colouring of margarine (but not of butter), which was an important export article. As a consequence, Danish margarine could not be exported, but the entrepreneurial Mønsted built margarine factories in England, Poland and Finland. In Denmark, Otto Mønsted, aware of the importance of the butter-like look, sold his margarine with a colour ampoule, so that housewives could add the colour themselves (Bergmann, 2009).

The branding of OMA margarine was innovative and systematic. Mønsted labelled the margarine according to the law – using the orange marking – but he made the marking a selling point.

Figure 6: According to regulations introduced on 11 April 1885 margarine had to be packed (and sold from) an oval-shaped cask, which had margarine stamped on the sides, the lids and the bottom, so that no one could mistake it for butter. This legislation remained in place until 1923, when rolls of paper and cardboard boxes were also allowed. The eclipse was later used as branding of margarine

Mønsted made a name for his company via a combination of advertisements, posters and trucks bearing the logo alongside a simple graphic in complementary colours.

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Figure 7: Advertising signs. Notice how the regulatory markings are made into a brand. The text on the blue signs say, 'There must be two orange-coloured lines on the packing paper', while the white sign declares, 'Buy your OMA margarine here'. Merchandise (a plate from Otto Mønsted) is also used in the branding of the product

Figure 8: There was an impressive fleet of cars in Mønsted's factory. Notice the shadows of the telephone lines and the rush indicated by the raised clouds of dust. And compare this with the real Mønsted car park.

Figure 9: The four different OMA commercials (year unknown) show aspects of margarine branding. The housewife, who persuades you that 'You won't taste the difference'; the Bedouin and the South American, who suggest that using margarine is exotic; and the swan that signifies purity

Mønsted also understood the meaning of differentiation. In some commercials the margarine would be portrayed as exotic by showing it loaded onto a camel led by a Bedouin; other commercials used swans, a native South American carrying coconuts, and there was a blond, slender housewife carrying balls of butter – made of margarine, assuring, 'You won't taste the difference'.

The company also had a distinctive slogan for its product: 'OMA – say the name ... Always ask for Otto Mønsted's margarine' (Bergmann, 1994, p. 28), which was

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repeated in different variations. Though Otto Mønsted died in 1916, the company carried on in the same spirit,[21] and perhaps, not surprisingly, for an early adopter of branding, Otto Mønsted's company began to make filmed advertisements soon after the medium became commercially viable.

Publicity films were produced in Denmark as early as 1903. They were usually shown in the cinemas in connection with film presentations, but the duration of the promotional film would vary a lot until the 1950s. In general, an advertising film would last about five minutes, but in the 1930s there were companies that produced publicity films that would last as long as a feature film (Nielsen, 2007). The publicity films were distributed as programmes of seven to ten advertising items. Such productions were often shown in the afternoon and targeted at housewives. One of the most famous films of this kind is the one and a half hour long OMA matinee. In this programme the famous Danish actress Liva Weel acted in a 15 minute long commercial, 'Chops and Love', about a lottery winner seeking 'a partner for life with marriage in mind'. The advertisement's applicants were supposed to demonstrate to the lottery winner how you fry a chop. Liva Weel was the winning candidate, as she used a brilliant, bubbling margarine (OMA). Her cooking was accompanied by her singing, 'Let it bubble, bubble, bubble/ as long as the bubbles are small'. The orchestra of Erik Tuxen, a Danish jazz pioneer, accompanied the song, and if you liked the tune, you could acquire the sheet music, if you mailed an envelope to the OMA Company. It is this melody that has been part of the OMA commercials for the past 70 years.[22] Using melodies, actors and scenes was common. This can also be seen in a Norwegian commercial for Melange Margarine (1938) with the repeated lyrics, 'Say the name of the margarine you desire'.[23]

Figure 10: Liva Weel
http://ottomoensted.dk/omf75/lad_det_bobble.html

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Discussion

Returning to the OMA commercials, what is interesting about these films is that there is a lot of recycling and repetition: the logo, the slogan, the melody and the sound of frying. Commercials are part of cultural memories, and in OMA's case it is possible to examine how a commercial recycles earlier matrices and creates a kind of Chinese nest of boxes of sound memories for the past 70 years. In order to carry out such an examination, the study refers to Rigney's recirculation mechanisms, selection, convergence, recursivity, modelling, translation and transferring, when analysing the OMA commercials.[24]

According to Rigney, we 'select those things, from the totality of everything, which might have been said, that are somehow relevant to the present' (Rigney, 2005, pp. 17-18). In the OMA commercials it is the melody that keeps coming back. In the original song the text of the refrain does not mention the name of the product. By using the well-known melody from the 1930s in 1960s commercials and arranging it in contemporary styles, the melody is brought up to date, but still points back, assuring continuity and authenticity. This prompts the argument that in the OMA commercial it is the soundtrack that constitutes and becomes a cultural memory, as it is the refrain that remains the same – not the pictures or the words.

The prune commercial mentioned in the beginning of the article uses a prolonged refrain of the bubble melody.[25] The first repeated lines of the refrain almost function as the basic semantic slogan 'Say the name – OMA margarine'. The melody is syncopated, arranged in swing style. It is played on a vibraphone with a jazzy backing group (a walking bass and a drummer playing whiskers). The sound of the commercial evokes both reduced/musical listening – when we hear the melody, we refer to the product – as well as everyday/casual listening to the real sound. The bubbling of margarine in the frying pan is central, as it speaks to the senses, and finally the semantic level underlines the name of the margarine, as the old slogan, 'Say the name: OMA margarine', is spoken as in previous OMA commercials.

Ann Rigney mentions how places, texts and artefacts have a tendency to coalesce and converge and become a kind of framework for remembrance (Rigney, 2005, p. 19). The same tendency can be seen in relation to the margarine commercials: the sound of bubbling fat in a frying pan manages to encompass the effectiveness of the product for this kind of cooking.[26] In comparison, the butter commercials from the 1960s tended to emphasise taste. The most widely distributed examples include two professional cooks[27] recommending the butter. The sounds of frying are not that central; instead, the films focus on the music and speech.[28] In the case of the OMA commercials, it is clear from observing the commercials over time that the sound of the frying pan gets toned down, as awareness of fat's health implications grows. In the 2000s the commercials cease to use margarine for frying; margarine

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is now used for baking, and oil it used for frying. The concept of sound branding has been brought to the fore in recent years by branding advisors such as Martin Lindstrøm. Lindstrøm has predicted that within the next five years large companies will begin to copyright sounds.[29] He envisages, for example, that in the future either McDonald's or Burger King will register and copyright their own sound of frying meat. However, as exemplified by this study of OMA commercials, sound branding, if not referred to by name, has been a significant aspect of commercial film production for many years.

Figure 11: Sound examples: frying meat in different OMA commercials
1: 1936 2: 1967 3: 1988

We see how repetition and what Ann Rigney named recursivity are central mechanisms in the commercials, as images and texts are recycled. By transcending eras, they become known to people, who again become connected by their shared memories. This argument is reinforced by Lefèbvre's prediction about how changing media formats reinforce redundant recirculation, which can be seen on YouTube, where many old commercials are shared. By looking at the OMA margarine commercials, it is obvious that the message is told almost in the same way over the years. And in the 1994 commercial the slogan 'say the name', which is accompanied by the OMA melody, even invokes memories about food and frying.

The musical theme is kept with the odd nod to different musical genres; the slogan is kept, as are the sounds of frying. The most noticeable difference between the older films and more contemporary commercials is the sensuous style of the newer material – real life sounds are more effect full, and they are clearly created to arouse our sensory expectations by toning down the semantic element, as the OMA commercials show.

Considering margarine commercials in general, it is evident that the soundtrack examples from the 1960s are characterised by information; that is, they depend on semantic listening. The name of the product is the most important issue, and the sounds seem to reflect reality and court causal listening.[30] In comparison, the commercials from the 1990s and 2000s have become aestheticised: generally music creates a mood, which the sounds supplement. The appeal to causal/everyday listening is almost absent. The commercials set the scene for musical/reduced listening, creating expectations for the viewer, and so the commercial becomes a fantasy for the viewer to follow.

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According to Rigney, media are mobile, not mobile in the usual way, but by offering frameworks and hooks by which we can appropriate new situations, as they model our memory by adapting old forms. In the OMA case you can understand the use of the bubble theme as a kind of hook transgressing the different ages. The same phenomenon can be seen in a commercial for another margarine company, AMA, which uses an imitation of a melody that has been used for the past 25 years by the cookery programme *TV-køkkenet* [The TV kitchen] on DR [the Danish Broadcasting Cooperation].[31] In fact, by watching commercials for different margarine brands it is noticeable that there is a particular format for margarine commercials: the sound ingredients are circling around known concepts; the pictures show us the same frying pan; and so the format is recurrent from margarine to margarine. Around these fixed ingredients the commercials vary in how the music is arranged, the scenes differ, as do the connotations connected to fat changes.

The observations about margarine commercials in general touch upon translation and transfer: Rigney's last mechanisms in relation to cultural memory. With respect to the soundtrack, this means an identifiable melody, a frying sound and the enunciation of the brand. Between 1973 and 1988 there were no OMA commercials, but when they returned in 1988, the sensuous dimensions were underlined. This is clearly expressed in the pictures and in the soundtracks. Where the soundtracks used to be identifiable, appealing to either casual/everyday listening, to reduced/musical listening or to semantic listening, the soundtracks seem to be sensualised by merging the levels: the snapping fingers are a part of the musical backing; the Ahhhs, Shhhs and Yums are musicalised, as they function as sensualised percussion; and the sound of frying margarine is an introduction to the jazzified version of the bubble theme played on alto sax. The director Ebbe Nyvold says that the intention with the film was to speak not only to sight and hearing, but also to the taste buds, and that it was a must that 'Say the name' as well as the OMA melody appeared in these TV commercials that were OMA's first in the TV arena – an arena that was chosen, because the OMA segment were thought to be elderly women, who no longer went to the cinema.[32]

Conclusion

Over the years the OMA commercials have changed, while managing to retain certain core ingredients – including sounds. Though we think of commercials as advocating something new, many, as exemplified by the OMA films, seem to be doing this by using something well-known. There is a transfer of cultural memory, as the commercials circulate around memories. A. Assmann and Dijck see (cultural) memory as an ongoing process – this is certainly also the case with commercials,[33] as they are a continuum in which different memory templates and patterns are recycled. The templates are evident for the margarine commercials considered in this paper,

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but there is also evidence that the commercials themselves had transformed into something more sensuous and aesthetic. Foucault's law of rarification is traceable, but this is not the only rule reigning: also the aestheticisation going on through the ages is present in the case of the soundtracks, and so the commercials develop in new directions too.

Notes

1. The commercial is accessible at [visited on 3 January 2012]: http://ottomoensted.dk/omf75/lad_det_bobble.html
2. The name OMA derives from the initial letters for Otto Mønsted, Aarhus.
3. For licensed users of The State and University Library the commercial can be reached here [visited on 3 January 2012]: http://www.statsbiblioteket.dk/search/showrecord.jsp?record_id=urn:dk:statsbiblioteket:commercials:movie-2281
4. After all, it is a margarine commercial and, therefore, the joint is not roasted, but fried.
5. For licensed users of The State and University Library the commercial can be reached here [visited on 3 January 2012]: http://www.statsbiblioteket.dk/search/showrecord.jsp?record_id=urn:dk:statsbiblioteket:commercials:movie-2284
6. For licensed users of The State and University Library the commercial can be reached here [visited on 3 January 2012]: http://www.statsbiblioteket.dk/search/showrecord.jsp?record_id=urn:dk:statsbiblioteket:commercials:movie-24537
7. For licensed users of The State and University Library the commercial can be reached here [visited on 3 January 2012]: https://bitproxy2.statsbiblioteket.dk/reklamefilm/download.jsp?proto=urn&req=urn:dk:statsbiblioteket:commercials:movie-29588
8. This commercial exists in two other versions: an enquiry and at the naming of a ship. Each have different soundscapes in the background.
9. Huyssen mentions that e.g. the Holocaust is transmitted in films, museums, docudramas, Internet sites, photography books, comics, fiction, fairy tales and pop songs (Huyssen, 2000, p. 29).
10. In Rigney's text she has translated this as 'the principle of scarcity', which might be a more precise translation of Foucault's 'loi de rareté', but I use the more prevalent concept 'law of rarity' from the English translation, *The Archeology of Knowledge*, from 1972.
11. Original title: *L'archéologie de Savoir* (1969).
12. In the English translation the quotation sounds, 'This rarity of statements, the incomplete, fragmented form of the enunciative field, the fact that few things, in all, can be said, explain that statements are not, like the air we breathe, an infinite transparency; but things that are transmitted and preserved, that have value, and which one tries to appropriate: that are repeated, reproduced, and transformed; to which pre-established networks are adapted, and to which a status is given in the institution; things that are duplicated not only by copy or translation, but by exegesis, commentary, and the internal proliferation of meaning' (Foucault, 1972, pp. 119-120).
13. Voegelin (2006) is an interesting exception, though the article is not about music, but sound as a whole.
14. For example, Werthers Echte: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CFYpuClbQvgat, Storck Riesen Chokolade: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kn9ixoXJhuw, Den gamle Fabrik (marmalade): http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cw_n5RiQsdU [all visited on 3 January 2012].

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15. At the Danish site Videnskab.dk people's assimilation of advertisement music has been a subject of discussion: http://videnskab.dk/blog/fotex-er-lidt-sej and http://videnskab.dk/kultur-samfund/derfor-er-fotex-sang-og-blog-svar-effektfulde
16. This stresses the environmental (in situ) dimensions (affordances) of perception.
17. This problem is discussed in a qualified manner in Jantzen & Østergaard, 2007.
18. Examples include a number of egg commercials from the late 1960s, in which a female voice provides instructions on how an egg can be cooked in different ways, followed by a male voice that says 'Aahhh'.
19. An illustrative example is the Anton Berg chocolate commercial *Sense It*. Accessed on [visited on 3 January 2012]: http://www.anthonberg.dk/Default.aspx?ID=4335
20. The so-called 'Butter War' [Smørkrigen] 1885-1888 meant that many restrictions were placed on margarine production. You were no longer allowed to colour the margarine and the term 'artificial butter' [kunstsmør] was no longer permitted. Margarine was also marked with an unmistakable oval stamp-like tick and had to be sold in special elliptic containers (to make them instantly recognisable) (Strandskov et al., 1998, pp. 66-84).
21. In 1981 the margarine production was sold to Unilever, Van den Berg Foods.
22. Unfortunately, the State and University Library's media archive of commercials only contains margarine commercials from the 1960s up until today, which means that there is a great gap between the first OMA commercial to the next available film.
23. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qmbhh4vWkq0
24. The commercials used for this purpose are all accessible for researchers through the State and University Library's collection, which will contain almost 50.000 digitalised commercials from the years 1903-2005, when it is completed.
25. The original refrain consists of 4+4 bars. In the prune commercial the first four bars are repeated and the next four are prolonged with two bars (from the first two bars), which means that the beginning of the refrain is repeated and, therefore, becomes the most significant part – almost slogan-like.
26. This is also the case with AMA, Dragsbæk and Alfa commercials.
27. Aksel Larsen and Conrad Bjerre-Christensen.
28. For example: http://www.statsbiblioteket.dk/search/showrecord.jsp?record_id=urn:dk:statsbiblioteket:commercials:movie-2308 [visited on 3 January 2012].
29. http://www.martinlindstrom.com/index.php/cmsid__sound_survey [visited on 3 January 2012].
30. This is the case in a commercial for Guldtaffel Margarine from the 1960s. A housewife is sitting at the kitchen table, eating an open sandwich. The speaker asks, 'Please tell me what is on your bread?' 'Egg and tomato'. 'Yes, but what have you used for buttering?' 'Guldtaffel margarine, always Guldtaffel margarine'. Subsequently, the speaker informs us that Guldtaffel Margarine is the best and has the greatest taste. Accessed on [visited on 3 January 2012]: http://www.statsbiblioteket.dk/search/showrecord.jsp?record_id=urn:dk:statsbiblioteket:commercials:movie-2266
31. http://www.statsbiblioteket.dk/search/showrecord.jsp?record_id=urn:dk:statsbiblioteket:commercials:movie-25570 [visited on 3 January 2012].
32. According to the Head of Marketing for OMA Philip Ulrich (in Andersen, 1988).
33. I have pointed out in an earlier article (Larsen, 2012) how the concept of nostalgia changes in relation to marmalade commercials.

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