

## **“Featuring Music From”: Song, Sound and Remix**

### **Kyle Barnett**

#### Chop Shop, Music Supervision and The Recording Industry’s Possible Futures

The current decline of the recording industry has led to a variety of attempts at reinvention. The new found importance of music supervision and the licensing of songs for film, television, radio, video games and ring tones has provided a bright spot in the recording industry’s fortunes with through its time-honored strategy of cross-promoting via other media platforms and companies. The music supervisor’s roles can include music selection, licensing clearances, configuring schedules and budgets for given projects.<sup>1</sup> While music’s use as raw material in other media is over a century old, music supervision has reached a new level of industry importance, marketing acumen and cultural value in its role across media forms.

Alexandra Patsavas’ Chop Shop (<http://www.chopshopmusic.com>) epitomizes music supervision’s new importance; the company has supervised the television shows *Chuck*, *Gossip Girl*, *Mad Men*, and *The O.C.*, as well as the *Twilight* motion picture franchise. Patsavas, who describes herself as being a member of “the first MTV generation,” has long had a feel for the relationship between recorded music and visual media. Patsavas worked as a show promoter while at the University of Illinois and then relocated to Los Angeles, where she began work at BMI’s West Coast Film & TV department. A few years later, Patsavas worked for Roger Corman’s Concorde Pictures, where she supervised music for fifty films in only three years.<sup>2</sup> From there, she launched Chop Shop Music.<sup>3</sup> It was then that Patsavas founded Chop Shop and became a spokesperson for everyone’s new favorite job – music supervisor – though those who dream of the job often lack understanding of the day-in day-out tasks related to the job. Much in the way the A&R scout of days gone by functioned as intermediaries between artists and a variety of media outlets, bridging differing cultures and institutional contexts, so must Patsavas’ Chop Shop negotiate differences between the recording, film, and television industries.

The need for new approaches is acute amidst the recording industry’s current economic and institutional difficulties. As Bethany Klein suggests, “The current state of the radio and music industries leaves much to be desired, and it is no surprise that many entertainment journalists and cultural commentators have expressed a need for new music gatekeepers, whether they be podcasters, music bloggers or music supervisors.<sup>4</sup> It makes increasing sense to look at those involved in music supervision as expanding the traditional function of artists and repertoire (or A&R) scouts in the recording industry towards an ever-larger multimedia configuration.

In some cases, the roles of A&R scout and music supervisor are not similar; they are one in the same. In 2007, Patsavas expanded Chop Shop’s role by launching Chop Shop Records, its in-house music label. In addition to supervising music for the *Twilight* series, they have also released the music for retail sales via its Chop Shop Records imprint. While their early releases represent an outgrowth of their compilation soundtrack projects, they have also signed their own acts (whose music, in turn, are being licensed for film, television, and other media). These acts include Marina and the

Diamonds, a heavily promoted band at this year's South by Southwest whose tour dates are prominently featured on Chop Shop's web site. In some ways this represents Patsavas' return to her earliest work as music promoter. Chop Shop's goal then is to not only "follow the money" from a faltering recording industry to the relative health of other media industries. It is also to rethink what a record label is and might be, much in the same way that Jack Kapp's Decca label debuted during the Great Depression, through his strategy of creating multimedia stars, such as Bing Crosby (and less successfully, Al Jolson).

At varying points, the recording industry has sought to emphasize its role as a stand-alone entity, but it has long been crucial to a variety of other media industries. It is in the recording industry's most difficult periods, its periods of reinvention, that it has turned to other media industries both for models of adaptation and for a viable means to continue its roles as tastemaker and distributor. Some still imagine the end of the recording industry, framed in either Utopian or Dystopian terms.<sup>5</sup> However, it is more likely that we will see what we have always seen in the recording industry: a period of reinvention amidst institutional, technological, legal and aesthetic changes, with an ever changing set of winners and losers along the way.

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<sup>1</sup> Wentz, Brooke. *Hey, That's My Music!: Music Supervision, Licensing, and Content Acquisition*. New York: Hal Leonard, 2007.

<sup>2</sup> "Chop Shop Records: History." <<http://www.chopshopmusic.com/>>

<sup>3</sup> "Chop Shop Records: Music Supervision." <<http://www.chopshopmusic.com/>>

<sup>4</sup> Klein, Bethany. "'The New Radio': Music Licensing as a Response to Industry Woe," *Media, Culture & Society*. 30:4, 473.

<sup>5</sup> Kyle Barnett, "The Recording Industry's Role in Media History, *Convergence Media History*. New York: Routledge, 2009. 87-88.