# British brands embrace UK garage and grime to redefine musical nostalgia in advertising



There was a time when musical nostalgia in British advertising relied heavily on a predictable repertoire of classics, defined by the enduring melodies of The Beatles, the grooves of Fleetwood Mac, and the emotive ballads of Elton John. This nostalgic pattern is beginning to shift, giving way to a new wave that draws inspiration from genres once considered underground. The sounds now resonating in contemporary advertisements tap into the raw energy of UK garage, grime, and early road rap, reflecting not only changing musical tastes but a profound generational shift in cultural memory.

As brands increasingly integrate the potent sounds of the past, they are not just recycling familiar beats. The emotional resonance of tracks by artists such as So Solid Crew, DJ Luck & MC Neat, and Skepta is being harnessed to evoke memories for those who once curated mixtapes on LimeWire or exchanged ringtones over Bluetooth. This recontextualisation of music serves as a powerful reminder of a vibrant cultural tapestry that has shaped the soundtracks of many youths in the UK. The evolution of UK garage and grime over the past three decades, celebrated recently for its 30th anniversary, highlights its significant role in shaping not just music, but also fashion and identity within British youth culture.

Recent campaigns reflect this embrace of a broader musical lexicon. In Jacamo's "I get the nod," the spirited energy of Roots Manuva’s “Witness the Fitness” is repurposed to promote fashion positivity and confidence among men. Meanwhile, Pizza GoGo took a bold step by crafting a modern diss track that responded to a lyric from Skepta, effectively bridging past and present in a playful yet meaningful exchange. Brands are finding that leveraging nostalgia—a shortcut to engagement—requires both creativity and an understanding of cultural significance. Advertisements like Luton Airport Express’s clever take on So Solid Crew’s iconic “21 Seconds” and Andrex’s unexpected nod to DJ Pied Piper’s “Do You Really Like It” exemplify successful attempts to resonate with audiences while respecting the roots of the music involved.

These shifts in advertising not only denote changing strategies but signal a deeper cultural understanding. Music from these genres embodies identity and community, with histories rooted in DIY ethos and communal experiences. As brands attempt to capture this rich tapestry, it becomes imperative they do so with care and genuine respect. Successfully integrating these sounds means honouring the grassroots origins and the artists who crafted them. Failing to do so risks appropriation rather than appreciation, turning what could be a moment of shared nostalgia into a missed chance for authentic connection.

When executed thoughtfully, this brand nostalgia transcends mere marketing; it becomes an honest invitation for connection. It acknowledges shared memories, creating an experience that resonates deeply in an age marked by fragmented attention spans. In a marketplace where standing out is increasingly challenging, tapping into the emotional weight of these cultural artefacts can forge lasting and meaningful engagements. It’s a reminder that these sounds echo with history—they belong to a collective experience that, when shared authentically, speaks volumes.

As brands navigate this shifting landscape, they must remember that the music not only carries the memories of the time but also reflects the vibrancy of the cultures that birthed it. Engaging with these sonic legacies thoughtfully can foster genuine connections, creating advertisements that not only resonate but also respect the rich cultural narratives behind them. In doing so, brands are not merely utilising nostalgia; they are weaving themselves into the very fabric of a culture that speaks to the heart of its audience.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/new-sounds-nostalgia/1919372), [[2]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cz9wnqnqq3no)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/new-sounds-nostalgia/1919372), [[4]](https://www.lbbonline.com/news/radio-lbb-uk-hip-hop-and-new-rap-and-grime-frontrunners), [[5]](https://www.promomarketing.info/brand-wiping-clean-uk-grime-scene/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.theguardian.com/music/2017/apr/20/attack-the-block-how-grimes-visuals-went-pop), [[6]](https://www.fifteendesign.co.uk/blog/how-grime-artists-are-doing-some-of-the-cleverest-marketing-in-2017/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/new-sounds-nostalgia/1919372), [[5]](https://www.promomarketing.info/brand-wiping-clean-uk-grime-scene/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/new-sounds-nostalgia/1919372), [[7]](https://www.lbbonline.com/news/radio-lbb-the-evolution-of-music-in-advertising)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/new-sounds-nostalgia/1919372> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cz9wnqnqq3no> - This article discusses the 30th anniversary of UK garage music, highlighting its evolution from the 1990s to the present. It features insights from artists like MC Bushkin of Heartless Crew and Neutrino of So Solid Crew, who reflect on the genre's impact on fashion, identity, and its enduring influence on contemporary music. The piece underscores UK garage's significance as a cultural movement that has shaped British music and youth culture over three decades.
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2017/apr/20/attack-the-block-how-grimes-visuals-went-pop> - This article examines how grime's distinctive visual style has permeated mainstream pop culture. It explores the use of urban imagery, such as tower blocks and council estates, in music videos by artists like Charli XCX and Dua Lipa. The piece delves into the implications of this trend, discussing whether it constitutes cultural appropriation or a genuine appreciation of grime aesthetics, and considers the perspectives of original grime artists on this development.
4. <https://www.lbbonline.com/news/radio-lbb-uk-hip-hop-and-new-rap-and-grime-frontrunners> - This article highlights the influence of UK hip-hop, new rap, and grime artists in contemporary music. It features a curated playlist of UK legends who have paved the way for current talent, emphasizing the genre's evolution and its impact on the music scene. The piece also discusses the role of grime in advertising, noting how brands like Barclaycard, IKEA, and Zoopla have collaborated with artists such as Nadia Rose, D Double E, and Lethal Bizzle to connect with younger audiences.
5. <https://www.promomarketing.info/brand-wiping-clean-uk-grime-scene/> - This article explores how brands are engaging with the UK grime scene, focusing on collaborations that maintain the genre's authenticity. It discusses partnerships between grime artists and companies like Adidas, Nike, and IKEA, highlighting campaigns that resonate with urban youth culture. The piece emphasizes the importance of brands understanding and respecting the cultural significance of grime to avoid appropriation and ensure genuine connections with the target audience.
6. <https://www.fifteendesign.co.uk/blog/how-grime-artists-are-doing-some-of-the-cleverest-marketing-in-2017/> - This article examines innovative marketing strategies employed by grime artists in 2017. It highlights collaborations with brands such as Red Bull, Mercedes, and Alize, showcasing how artists like Kano, Stormzy, and Big Narstie have leveraged their influence to create authentic and engaging campaigns. The piece underscores the synergy between grime's anti-authoritarian ethos and brand marketing, illustrating how brands can connect with young audiences through genuine partnerships.
7. <https://www.lbbonline.com/news/radio-lbb-the-evolution-of-music-in-advertising> - This article traces the evolution of music in advertising, highlighting how brands have utilized various genres to enhance their campaigns. It discusses the use of tracks like Peter Bjorn and John's 'Young Folks' in Homebase's 2008 campaign and Lou Reed's 'Perfect Day' in Sony's 2013 PlayStation 4 launch. The piece also notes the incorporation of grime music, such as Skepta's 'Shutdown' in Nike's 2018 Air Max campaign, reflecting the genre's growing influence in mainstream media.