

# From a garden shed to major hospitality venues: twenty years of Sunflower Music's unique tailored playlists

Submitted by: Sunflower Music

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In the 20th century, The Muzak Corporation had a monopoly on the 'background' music played in hotels, offices, restaurants, and shops. In the 21st century digitalisation has opened up the market to a very different generation of specialist music providers.

One of the most remarkable of these new companies is Sunflower Music which started life in a garden shed 20 years ago and now provides carefully curated music solutions for some of the biggest names in travel, retail and hospitality.

## Reopening and recovery

Founder and Managing Director of Sunflower Music, Paul Dimmock, comments: "Sadly this year didn't turn out to be the best time to celebrate our 20th anniversary, for obvious reasons."

"But as businesses reopen, more are realising that playing songs from The Top 40 Charts will not be enough to satisfy a new demand for quality. Guests, customers, and travellers will require more to bring them back, and that includes the music selection, which should not be underestimated regarding the overall experience."

Over its 20-year history, Sunflower Music has built up an impressive community of clients including British Airways, Virgin Atlantic, Lacoste, Corinthia Hotels, H10 Hotels, Exclusive Hotels, Hand Picked Hotels, and Luxury Family Hotels.

"Something worked. And the reason is that we can give an explanation for every single track we select for our clients," says Dimmock.

New post-lockdown projects include Grade II listed Pendley Manor House hotel and two very exciting independent concepts: The Burger Shop in Arundel and The Post House in Stafford.

## Human knowledge beats algorithms

Although increasingly widespread, Dimmock doesn't believe that using algorithms can replace experience and knowledge when it comes to selecting music.

Creating the initial playlist for a client is a careful and human process that takes about 20 hours of work.

Before launching Sunflower Music, Dimmock enjoyed a 15-year career as a professional DJ, spinning vinyl in some of Europe's most prestigious nightclubs including BCM, Sugareef, and The Limelight.

He also deejayed at after-show parties for Oasis, Take That, Rod Stewart, Amy Winehouse, Mark Ronson, Diana Ross, and Paul Weller, among others.

“I have very fond memories of those times,” he recalls, “Creating a night of 70’s disco classics for Take That; Amy Winehouse requesting a track by the brilliant Specials; Mark Ronson commenting that he never expected a DJ to play The Jam in a London hotel bar; and Diana Ross inviting me to her soundcheck and concert as she was so impressed by the Motown set I played at her after-show party.”

It’s a family affair

Becoming the owner of a bar and restaurant himself, Dimmock identified a clear opportunity for a company like Sunflower Music.

“As soon as I left my restaurant, staff would start playing their selection of music and, in all honesty, an artist like Eminem will never be well-received when the target audience is 50-year-old tourists,” he says.

With the help of his mum and dad, Dimmock started producing CDs from a garden shed which he then sold to restaurants and bars to be played during lunch and dinner service.

“Those were fantastic days. My business is founded on the pride and passion that a small family can achieve. For our sector, we felt like we were taking on the world,” he remembers.

The art of music curation

Today, Sunflower Music’s clients use specifically-designed hard-drive players that require no staff interaction. Playlists automatically change throughout the day, depending on the requirements of the venue and the target customer, giving busy managers one less thing to think about.

Several studies have shown that getting the music right in your venue leads to higher revenues and more repeat business. But what to choose from jazz, funk, soul, rock, pop, or classical? The list goes on. In an era when musical tastes are far less tribal than in the past, music curation becomes even more of an art best left to the professionals.

Dimmock comments: “One of our clients, a well-known global entrepreneur, asked me if I could describe the music that we compile for his brand as a genre. I said unfortunately not. You now have your own tailored music content that unmistakably represents your brand, but it includes the very best and most relevant tracks from a whole range of genres.”

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