

Creative

Matching Music to a Mission

Creative License
Licensing
New York, USA

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Speaking to key members of the Creative License team, LBB's April Summers learns how the company delivered the first usage of George Harrison's legendary 'Here Comes the Sun' for a life-changing brand campaign

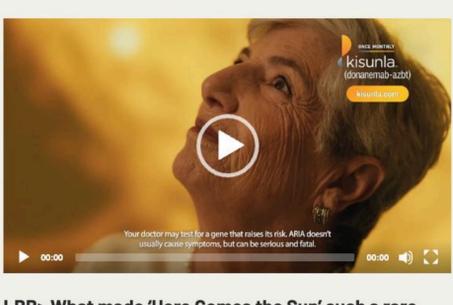


*Few songs carry the universal warmth of George Harrison's 'Here Comes the Sun'. It's a song that has been the soundtrack for generations, is associated with hope, and feels just as fresh today as when it was written in 1969. But for all its ubiquity in the public imagination, you would be right in thinking that the song has never been heard in a North American advertising campaign before. This, **Creative License** tells me, is because Harrison's estate has long been protective of his catalogue, and getting their approval is something no company has been able to secure until now.*

That's what makes Creative License's latest impact on the project so striking. The company that specialises in music supervision/licensing, celebrity talent procurement, and other intellectual property licensing for its brand and ad agency clients has managed to do what countless brands before them could not: secure the rights to 'Here Comes the Sun' for a campaign tied to a breakthrough Alzheimer's treatment.

More than just a win for the client, this project represents a marriage of message and music that feels both natural and profound, all the while honoring Harrison's own philanthropic legacy with support for the Material World Foundation, a charity established by Harrison in 1973.

For the Creative License team, led by founder and CEO Kevin McKiernan, the achievement reflects the company's DNA in action. Here, they chat with LBB's April Summers about why nothing lights Creative License up like getting an impossible 'yes,' and why the team particularly enjoys the opportunity to find creative solutions that deliver what their clients need.



LBB> What made 'Here Comes the Sun' such a rare and meaningful choice for this campaign?

Kevin> The song itself is a powerful message of optimism, and it really mirrors both the medicine and the creative way it's delivered by the team at Area 23. It's got that evergreen love with generations holding it close. "The ice is slowly melting" – man, how true a message, a promise, an aspiration!

LBB> Before you approached the Harrison family, what was your assessment of the chances of getting a 'yes'?

Graham Micone, SVP> The family had said no to everything so far. But we're wired to believe in the possibility of yes! Given our history with the estate, our understanding of the past reasons for "no", and the potential impact of this creative and medicine, we felt we held an unbeatable hand. Although, we usually feel that way – and it's born out of the legacy of many first-time yes's we've delivered for our clients. We knew that involving the Material World Foundation and inciting the passion of the publisher as an advocate would help tilt the stars in our favour. It was just a matter of turning over enough stones until we found the right combination for "yes".

LBB> You've described Creative License's approach as "knocking on the door with a cause." How do you determine which causes are authentic and worth pursuing?

David Jacob, head of business affairs> It's the very ethos of Creative License. We give every project and campaign the same level of attention, combining creativity with strategy. We know the type of passion that each of our clients and their creative teams devote to each campaign, and we believe it is our responsibility to bring that same level of passion to bring their creative vision to life.

Josh Barnes, SVP> At Creative License, we see ourselves as extensions of the brand and agency teams we represent. We share their vision, determination, and passion. And because we are not just a licensing company but a creative resource, we are able to present every offer as an opportunity rather than a payday. That manifests itself in always having creative backups and alternatives for the client to consider.

LBB> How did you manage the additional element of securing a donation to George Harrison's foundation as part of the deal?

Leah Kahan, senior director, music & talent> We knew how important philanthropy was to Harrison and that it remains important to his estate. A charitable component was considered as part of our strategic approach from the beginning. Caring about what artists care about was something the clients aligned with immediately.

LBB> How do you balance the commercial and creative aspects of a music license when the subject matter is deeply personal for so many people?

Jason Blaine, senior director, music & talent> The balance really comes from remembering that a music placement isn't just a license, it's personal history for so many people. We never forget that songs carry memories, grief, joy, and family stories with them. On the commercial side, we always make sure the business details are sound, but creatively it's about holding space for the emotion the song already evokes. When those two things come together, the outcome always feels right.

LBB> Where does this deal rank in Creative License's history of favourite challenges?

Aatish Patel, president> Oh boy, that's like asking us to pick our favorite child! Any time we can deliver a 'first time ever' it's absolutely thrilling. We have so many of those, from George Harrison to Bill Murray to Tupac and Dre, it's a long list..."



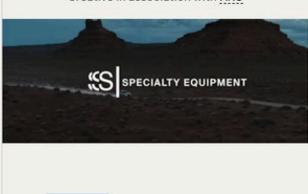
LBB> What's your advice for brands or agencies looking to license songs that feel "impossible" to get?

Kevin> Well, talk to your peers, ask your agency producers, creatives, CMOs, and heads of production. When do you pick up the Creative License 'bat phone'? In all humility, I think they'll tell you that Creative License delivers the smoothest, most hassle-free, economically sound experience time after time. And the proof is there in our massive body of work.

The smartest brands want relentless, successful experts doing the music supervision/licensing, talent and IP procurement work for their advertising. Having a specific in-depth expertise along with our understanding of the marketplace is part of what makes Creative License such an effective resource for brands and ad agencies. This is why we get to advocate for such great creative work and have had so many number one Super Bowl spots over the years!

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