

AUTOMOTIVE

Lexus enlists music producers for amped-up IS effort

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In a new documentary series from Pitchfork and Lexus, viewers watch how the Lexus IS Wax edition is created and includes a turntable. Image credit: Pitchfork

By KATIE TAMOLA

Toyota Corp.'s Lexus and Cond Nast-owned music publication Pitchfork tapped two producers to collaborate on a new single promoting the new Lexus IS.

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In a two-part documentary series, producers MC Madlib and Kaytranada to debut a single in the Lexus IS Wax Edition to celebrate the launch of the new IS, a vehicle ideal for music lovers. The documentary explores and illustrates the melding of music and driving and the ways both entities thrive on creativity and thoughtful creation, while touching on how the sports sedan is the ultimate vehicle for the musically inclined.

"This campaign should appeal to consumers by giving the performance of the audio system some real-world validation from a pair of producers who would know good sound from bad," said David Undercoffler, editor in chief at [Autolist.com](https://www.autolist.com), San Francisco.

Making music together

In the first installment of the documentary entitled "[Driven by Sound](#)," Madlib and Kaytranada talk about their respective careers and the artistic respect they hold for each other. Madlib also talks about how for his creative process when constructing music, and he believes that playing music in his car and judging how it sounds is the ultimate test.

The pair then goes shopping at Rappcats, a record store in LA, and discusses their first memories of vinyl. Kaytranada explains why he thinks vinyl is the best way to listen to music.

"For me, music is life," Madlib says in the video. "It's medicine."

In the second episode of the series, the focus is shifted to the installation of a functional turntable in the Lexus IS wax edition. To bring the concept car to life, Lexus commissioned SCPS, a world-renowned creative technology and custom fabrication studio based in Los Angeles.

Madlib, Kaytranada and Don Wertz observe the vehicle and the quality of music-play

Don Wertz, who works in operations and business development at SCPS Unlimited, talks with the two producers about installing the turntable in the Lexus IS wax edition. Mr. Wertz says there are two issues the needle-skipping and the forces put on the motor that rotate the record itself.

The three men examine the interior design, then the producers inquire about the quality of the vehicle's speakers. Mr. Wertz talks about the work on the car and how many things must come together to bring forth the intended "beautiful outcome".

Two months later, Madlib returns to the finished Lexus IS Wax. Mr. Wertz explains that his team underwent several complex processes to craft the special musical vehicle.

His team decided that a horizontal turntable would be most effective, and Mr. Wertz describes how the thoughtful construction will allow for excellent music play in the car.

The record player, created with a 3D printer and modified with carbon fiber and machined aluminum, fits in the vehicle's glovebox and is large enough to play a full-size 12-inch record. Once the needle hits the grooves, a rotating motor helps stabilize the turntable to avoid skipping while the vehicle is in motion.

Madlib is impressed by how the team was able to install a turntable that would still function properly without skips while driving. The producer then holds the vinyl of the single that he and Kaytranada created, which he plans to play in the car.

Upon playing the single, Madlib is immediately impressed by the sound quality.

"Sounds like it's coming from everywhere," he says, while playing the vinyl inside the car.

Mr. Wertz goes on to discuss the clarity and the depth of the music heard in the car and then hands the keys over to Madlib, who decides to go on a test drive.



Madlib plays their creation for Kaytranada. Image credit: Pitchfork

Madlib drives down the road, utilizing the vehicle's turntable, and then pulls over to FaceTime with Kaytranada. Madlib conveys his excitement and the crucial point: there are no skips, and the quality of the music has not been compromised.

The two producers then listen to the single together while on Facetime. Madlib discusses how the Lexus IS is the kind of vehicle he would enjoy driving.

The modified Wax vehicle, designed to celebrate the launch of the 2021 Lexus IS sports sedan, will not be for sale but will be on display at future Lexus events. Madlib has meaningful advice for anyone driving the Lexus IS however, and that is to "put your favorite record on and just cruise."

Going the extra musical mile

Luxury brands continue to utilize creative forms of expression, including music, in campaigns designed to seize consumer attention.

In 2018, British automaker Land Rover blended together adventure and music with the help of a masterful ambassador, composer Hans Zimmer, who created a musical score inspired by a drive in a 2018 Range Rover along the Angeles Crest Highway. While adventure is central to Land Rover's brand messaging, this was a more upscale take for the automaker as it captures the emotion of riding in its vehicles ([see story](#)).

Also in 2018, German automaker Porsche turned to musical muses in an effort to draw younger affluents to its

compact sport utility vehicle. Disc jockeys Bakermat and Peggy Gou starred in a Macan campaign exploring, in their own words, how different identities find motivation and inspiration ([see story](#)).

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