

## BUZZ || FROM JINGLE TO SINGLE

# When good hooks go ad

Songwriter expands ad tune into pop song

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POP MUSIC CRITIC

**P**lenty of pop tunes have been reduced to glorified jingles, from United Airlines' use of the Frank Sinatra hit "Come Fly with Me" to Ford Motor Company's adaptation of the Dandy Warhols' "Bohemian Like You."

Toronto singer/songwriter Jim Guthrie's "Hands in My Pocket" is the more novel case of a successful jingle being expanded into a fully formed pop song.

The three-minute track, intermittently available as a free download from Guthrie's website ([jimguthrie.org](http://jimguthrie.org)), was originally conceived as a 40-second ditty composed for a TV campaign by financial institution Capital One. The ads, which started running at the end of October, proved so popular that Guthrie was besieged by requests to turn the "hands in my pocket, hands in my pocket" refrain into an entire song.

"It got to the point where I was thinking, 'Well, I've got this hook. If I turned it into a song what would I sing about?'" he says. "So I just made it into this daydreaming song about walking around with my hands in my pockets. It's a stream-of-consciousness thing about watching the world go by. The song is about nothing, in a sense, because it came from nothing."

The circumstances may be unusual, but the process is one that Guthrie has successfully employed on three smartly realized solo albums, including 2003's critically lauded *Now More Than Ever*.

"Often when I write a song, I think of the hook first and then expand on that," he says. "I don't necessarily start by writing the first line of the song and go through until the end. Sometimes I write the chorus first and then try to come up with verses that go with it."

"So it was a natural progression. I took a hook and made it better."

The Capital One jingle is one of eight composed by Guthrie, who works with the music house Rosnick MacKinnon Webster. He first cut his teeth in the advertising medium writing music for a public service announcement for ALS,



Capital One's "Hands in My Pocket" commercial has spawned a sensation.

known as Lou Gehrig's disease.

"I haven't been asked to cross a line that I'm uncomfortable with," he says. "If someone asked me to sing about how I love hamburgers or how a plastic bag keeps my sandwich fresh, I probably wouldn't be too inclined to sing about something like that."

That doesn't account for unintended consequences, which include the playing of "Hands in My Pocket" at rallies by opponents of the Liberal Party — presumably in reference to the sponsorship scandal, the gun registry and other alleged misuses of public money.

"It's a far cry from a protest song," Guthrie says.

"I don't think Woody (Guthrie) would approve. You just do what you do and

then people take it and run far and fast."

Guthrie, who has performed as an accompanist with Royal City and the Hidden Cameras and will spend much of this year on the road with Montreal upstarts Islands, has no intention of including "Hands in My Pocket" on a future solo album. If anything, he's more concerned his infectious creation will become the next "Crazy Frog," a popular ringtone loathed for its ubiquity.

"Now it frightens me because people are chatting about it all over the Internet and they want to turn it into a ringtone. I'm completely baffled."

"If you have a puppy come up and lick you a couple of times, it's really cute. But when it licks you 660,000 times you want to hit it with a rake."