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The Sonic Imagination of Children in Andalusia: A Musical Analysis of the TV Programme «The Band»

El imaginario sonoro de la población infantil andaluza:
análisis musical de «La Banda»

ABSTRACT

In this article we present a descriptive study of the soundtrack of children's television programmes on the Andalusian public television network. This study is part of an international research project based on Latin America which seeks to address the need to understand the sonic context in which children live and study the way in which this shapes their sonic imagination. The use of music on television may be a response to commercial needs and, therefore, it is necessary to understand its influence in an educational context. Through the analysis of the permanent sections, advertising and the cartoons included in the TV programme called «The Band» which is broadcast on the Andalusian public television network we can observe the televisual and sonic environment of Andalusian children. We use a descriptive methodology which, through the creation of a listening worksheet, highlights the most significant elements in the sample. After the analysis, we concluded that the predominant musical elements in the programme analyzed were from techno-pop and cinema soundtracks and this produced certain homogeneity in musical terms which in turn led to an impoverishment of listening habits which made it difficult to understand more complex musical elements. Therefore, we stress the need for schools to accept their responsibility in the task of educating children in critical listening skills.

RESUMEN

En este artículo se presenta un estudio descriptivo de la banda sonora de la programación infantil y juvenil de la televisión pública andaluza. Este trabajo se encuentra inmerso en un proyecto de investigación internacional de ámbito latinoamericano que atiende a la necesidad de comprender el contexto auditivo en el que vive la población infantil y estudiar el modo en el que se configura su imaginario sonoro. El uso de la música en la televisión puede responder a intereses comerciales por lo que es necesario comprender su alcance desde el punto de vista educativo. A través del análisis de las secciones fijas, la publicidad y las series de dibujos animados del programa «La Banda» de la televisión pública de Andalucía se muestra el entorno sonoro televisivo de los niños y niñas andaluces. Se utiliza una metodología descriptiva que, a través de la creación de una plantilla de escucha, pone de relieve los elementos más significativos de la muestra. Tras el análisis se concluye que los elementos predominantes en la programación analizada provienen de la música tecno-pop y de la música cinematográfica produciéndose una homogeneización del entorno sonoro que contribuye al empobrecimiento de los hábitos de escucha dificultando la comprensión de elementos musicales complejos. Por esta razón, se señala la necesidad de que la escuela adquiera la responsabilidad que le corresponde en el proceso de educación de la escucha crítica.

PALABRAS CLAVE / KEYWORDS

Soundtrack, television, advertising, cartoons, childhood, music.
Banda sonora, televisión, publicidad, dibujos animados, infancia, música.

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1. Introduction

Television is omnipresent in the modern world. Its influence on society is a fact and children are habitual viewers both of the contents designed specifically for them and other contents. Therefore, taking into account the fact that this sector of the population is particularly vulnerable to the messages they receive from television and that these messages influence their perceptions and behaviour (Gerbner, G.; Gross, L. & others, 1994 and Villani, 2001), it is necessary to conduct further research into this question.

Furthermore, regardless of whether this influence is positive or negative, we must take into account the fact that messages on television are not perceived consciously and, according to Ferrés (1994), as television does not require a rational effort to decipher its messages, it does not encourage a reflexive attitude.

All of the elements involved in audiovisual language contribute to the influence exerted by television, and these elements are characterized by their combination of the internal laws of image and sound. Nevertheless, there has been less attention paid to sound than to image since, according to Aguaded (2000: 54), «until now sound in television has been the poor relation, the weak point of programme makers who have concentrated especially on the magic of images».

According to Delalande (2004), adolescents have their own musical culture, and this is something that the music industry exploits as they see in this age group a particularly influential market segment. In this sense, television plays its part in this game of market forces by offering a selective and edited version of the world of music (Porta & Ferrández, 2009).

Nevertheless, we must not forget that the soundtrack of television is not merely a backdrop for narrative and image but also provides a significant additional strength to the televisual message. The fact that we are unable to understand its true scope does not mean that it does not exert a profound influence upon viewers in general, and children in particular. Indeed, as has been stated by Cebrián de la Serna (1992), many of the televisual codes such as imitation, icons and music are learnt prematurely, even before spoken language.

Therefore, it is necessary to show how a soundtrack is a significant form of representation of the world (Porta, 2007) and as specialists in Music Education we are interested in learning about and understanding the elements that make up the sonic environment of our students. Following the line of study indicated by Arredondo and García (1998), we need to examine musical discourse in itself and refer to dimensions which until now have only been dealt with tan-

gentially or merely in relation to textual image, and we must also specifically analyze musical elements and their semiotic significance.

With this objective in mind, we began an international research project based on Latin America which seeks to address the need to understand the sonic context of children and to study its influence in the shaping of their personalities. The first part of the study consisted of a descriptive study of the soundtrack of children's TV programmes in Argentina, Chile, Brazil and Spain. In the case of Spain, we have analyzed the programmes made by public television companies in the autonomous regions of Catalonia (TV3), Valencia (Canal9) and Andalusia (Canal Sur), along with the programmes made by the national public television company (TVE).

The purpose of the study proposed in this article was to find out what Andalusian children listen to in the TV programme «The Band» broadcast on Canal Sur and then, based on our analysis of the sonic elements which appear in these programmes, to study the significance of these messages and determine their influence on the sonic imagination of children, as well as assessing their possible educational implications.

2. Material and methods

As a tool for information gathering, we created a worksheet that allowed us to include all of the musical elements that appear on TV programmes. The fact that music is a temporal art form meant that we had to carry out a series of time based analyses determined the selection of the sample. This worksheet was created and validated by the research group and the detailed description of the construction and contents of the worksheet can be found in Porta and Ferrández (2009).

For the selection of the sample we proposed the use of an intentional sample according to the following criteria: a) prime—time broadcasting; b) period of broadcasting which would avoid special times of year such as Christmas which might alter the usual format of the programme; c) complete programmes corresponding to a week of broadcasting.

Taking these criteria into account the sample selected in the case of Andalusia was the children's TV programme «The Band» shown on Canal Sur in the week from the 21st to the 25th of January 2008 from 7:30am to 9:30am.

For the application of the worksheet we selected:

- Permanent sections: beginning and end of the programme, spaces between sections and promotion of cultural activities.
- Three adverts.

- Two episodes from different cartoon series.

The temporal nature of the music meant that we had to establish, in each one of the elements selected, short sequences to be applied to the worksheet. We analyzed a total of 81 worksheets which were applied intentionally. We selected the beginning and the end of each one of the aforementioned elements of the programme and within each one of them intervals of 45 seconds. Furthermore, in order to have information about a complete day's programme, we analyzed ten periodical excerpts each five minutes. In order to check the authenticity of the information gathered in the worksheets we applied a triangulation process which consisted of three external experts listening to the same excerpts and analyzing them according to the worksheet.

3. Results

«The Band» is the most popular children's TV programme in Andalusia. Its structure corresponds to the model of a «container programme» and includes permanent sections, cartoons and adverts. In the programme, cartoons take up most of the broadcasting time (around 88%) followed by adverts (8%) and the permanent sections (4%). We now present a chart which shows the normal structure of the programme:

Permanent sections	Opening credits	13"
	Presentation	17"
	Promotion of cultural activities	2-3'
Cartoons	«Megaman» (1 episode)	20'
Permanent sections	Space between sections	5"
Adverts	2 – 4 adverts	2'
Permanent sections	Space between sections	5"
Cartoons	«Doraemon» (4 episodes)	40'
Permanent sections	Space between sections	5"
Adverts	2 – 4 adverts	2'
Cartoons	«Potatoes and Dragons» (1 episode)	10'
	Or «Crazy Things» (1 - 2 episodes)	10 – 20'
Adverts	2 – 4 adverts	2'
Permanent sections	Closing credits	23"

Table 1. Structure of the programme «The Band» in its morning time slot.

3.1. Analysis of the permanent sections of the programme

The music that appears with the opening credits is the same as the music that appears as background music at the beginning and end of the programme. It is a tune in a binary rhythm and with a thetic opening. The piece is in C major and the final cadence is conclusive. With a homophonic texture and original electronic sound it has a sound close to techno. As we have stated previously the dynamics of the music

depend on the moment when it is used and the role it plays. When it appears as the main tune (opening credits) the intensity is strong, yet when it is used as background music (presentation and closing) the intensity is piano. The tune is not particularly interesting since, in the case of the opening credits, it does not even have any lyrics that the children can learn, which shows the lack of importance given to this musical section.

Another question that should be highlighted are the elements of transition between sections in the programme. They are characterized by their mix of original acoustic and electronic sounds. The rhythm is binary and it has a thetic opening. The intensity remains strong at all times, the tonality is G major and the cadence is conclusive. It has a polyphonic texture which mixes elements of pop-rock and regional music such as flamenco guitar and percussion and, therefore, we can consider it a hybrid style. This is the only part of the programme with any flamenco references.

Among the cultural activities that are promoted on the programme we are going to analyze two of them, as they are the most frequently repeated throughout the week.

The first one is devoted to the Alcázar de los Reyes Católicos in Cordoba. It lasts 50 minutes and the instrumental music that accompanies the image

modulates its intensity depending on whether it is the background music for the voice-over or as the soundtrack for the image. In terms of rhythm, we can highlight the fact that it is written in ternary tempo with a thetic opening. The tonality is E minor and final cadence is conclusive. It uses real instruments and there-

fore the sound is acoustic. It is a piece in a medieval style with elements that specifically refer to the regional music form of Andalusian classical music.

The second clip promotes a nature theme park in Madrid called «Faunia». Once again, the music appears as a backdrop and changes its intensity depending whether we hear the voice-over or not. It is a mixed genre piece, both vocal and instrumental. In terms of rhythm, we can highlight its hemiola, the alternation between binary tempo and ternary tempo. The begin-

ning is *thetic*. The tonality is major and the cadence is conclusive. There is a relation between image and sound since it is a musical fragment with elements reminiscent of ethnic music, whilst trying to represent the exotic animals that we can find in the theme park.

The voice-over that appears in both sections is that of one of the presenters of «The Band» so that the listener can feel more familiar with the message and be more motivated to visit these places. The type of music used has some of the characteristics that Adorno and Eisler (1981) regard as «bad habits in cinema music». The music used is a kind of wardrobe or «*atrezzo*» and its intensity is at the service of the image and the message to be transmitted, which leads to a certain standardization in music. As the aforementioned authors pointed out, «this balance leads to a loss of dynamics as a means of stressing musical relationships: the lack of a triple *fortissimo* and *pianissimo* limits the *crescendo* or *decrescendo* to a scale which is too impoverished» (Adorno & Eisler, 1981:34).

3.2. Analysis of adverts

For this analysis, we selected three of the adverts that were most often shown throughout the week (for products aimed at children such as «Actimel», «Nesquik» and «Bollycao Dokyo»). The music used in the first two cases made a cinematic use of the music, and the third one used a much less narrative structure as it featured a song performed by a teenage group.

The first advert was for a yogurt drink called «Actimel» made by «Danone». Lasting 40 seconds, it appeared twice every day except Thursday when it was only shown once. The advert has a simple plot that shows how a child's natural defences (identified by three cartoon figures that make up the «Actimel» team) fight against the bacteria and viruses that attack children from the outside. The idea is to show how by consuming this product children can fight external aggression. This situation is exemplified through a «Star Wars» style fight between the «Actimel» team and the bacteria and viruses.

The soundtrack to this advert has a clearly cinematic nature in which we hear sounds that correspond to the noises made by the characters and the objects seen in the images. These sounds are created on electronic instruments. Another element in the soundtrack are the tunes that accompany the actions and that are identified with the moments of tension-fights (in E minor) or of calmness-victory (tune in C major). The rhythm of these tunes is binary and the beginning is *thetic*. The dynamics vary according to the action but, in general terms, we can state there is a *crescendo*

from the beginning to the end. There are no complete phrases but instead the predominant structure is the semi-phrase, since the music is completely at the service of the image.

In this case, we see how a cartoon story related to children's imaginative world is used to advertise a product that is not aimed exclusively at them. Indeed, it is interesting to note that this product uses different adverts depending on the type of public it is targeting, the length of the programme and the time it is broadcast. Once again, here we have an example of the use of an advertising pattern that works and which through its familiarity grabs viewers' attention. In consequence, this produces an impoverishment of the sonic environment of children as they listen to the same repetitive patterns over and over again in the cinema, on the radio and on television.

The advert for the chocolate drink called «Nesquik» made by «Nestlé» was shown once every day of the week, it last 24 seconds and the music is also cinematic in nature. It shows a scene in which a group of boys and girls realize that they have no more «Nesquik» left and they have to find some before the supermarket closes. Furthermore, there is a cartoon figure – a rabbit – that represents the product.

The soundtrack of the advert is always at the service of the images. There are noises in the case of the diegetic music and electronic sounds in the case of the non-diegetic music. We do not hear complete phrases but rather the structure of the music is at the service of the images. The rhythm is binary and with an *anacrusis* opening. The dynamics increase as the action progresses. At the beginning, when the problem arises – the children realize that they have no more «Nesquik» left – the music is in E minor. Later, when they achieve their objective and obtain the product, the tension disappears and there is a modulation to C major closing the phrase with a conclusive cadence.

Once again, we find the type of advert that appeals to other TV references that are familiar to children. In this case, we can observe a close relationship with adventure movies such as «Indiana Jones», and a use of musical resources to those used in the soundtrack of that movie. We can see once more how advertising uses stereotypes from cinema soundtracks.

The last advert last 20 seconds and is for a chocolate snack called «Bollycao Dokyo» made by «Panrico». It is aimed at a teenage audience and shows the corridor of a high school where some students are surprised when a friend shows them a different type of «Bollycao». At that moment, the boy who has the new «Bollycao» says that it is the most popular product in

Japan and a flashback takes us to a Japanese high school where a group of students wearing uniforms sing and dance to a song. The lyrics to this song appear as karaoke subtitles on the bottom of the screen.

In this case the format of the advert is completely different to the previous one, the music is not of a cinematic nature and the most important element is the catchy song performed by the students. This song is sung by male and female voices accompanied by electronic sounds. The binary rhythm with a thetic opening has dynamics that are maintained throughout the song in forte. The piece is in C major with a conclusive cadence and the predominant structure is a phrase that is repeated constantly. The lyrics try to imitate Japanese phonetics and are very repetitive. Nevertheless, there are no local elements since it is techno style music.

In this case we see some new musical references which are very accessible for teenagers since the advert tries to imitate, at least on an aesthetic level, the TV show «High School Musical» which is currently very fashionable among boys and girls in this age group.

In the adverts analyzed, we can observe some of the key elements that Porta (2007) identified in the creation of advertising soundtracks: a) combinations; b) music and noise; c) music and silence and d) placing the slogan in the music itself.

3.3. Analysis of the cartoons

Regarding the cartoons, we selected two of the four series that were shown during the week studied. This selection was made following two criteria: percentage of broadcast and musical characteristics. «Doraemon» was chosen as it took up the most broadcasting time in the programme and «Potatoes and Dragons» due its significant differences with the other series in terms of its aesthetics and its soundtrack.

The cartoon series called «Doraemon», which is Japanese and has been produced «Luk International» since 1978, is the most frequently broadcast in the time slot we have analyzed. Every day four episodes lasting 10-12' are shown. «Doraemon» is a cosmic cat from the 22nd Century who has magic pocket from which he takes out incredible inventions. «Nobita» is «Doraemon's» best friend and his mother keeps a close eye on the two of them to see if they are misbehaving.

The cartoon series «Potatoes and Dragons», which is French and has been produced by «Alphanim» since 2004, is only shown once a week. The episode analyzed lasted 7 – 8'. It explains who life is in the kingdom of «Potatoes», where King Hugo III is trying to slay the dragon that is terrorizing his subjects.

In the soundtrack of the cartoons, we should highlight the importance of the opening song as it is a recurring element with a dual function, recognition of the programme and the incorporation of the tune and its lyrics into the sonic imagination of young viewers.

The formal structure of the opening song of «Doraemon» is as follows: Introduction (Instrumental) – A – A' (Voice and instrumental accompaniment) – Coda (Instrumental).

The music contains electronic sounds and a female voice. In terms of rhythm, we can highlight its binary

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rhythm and a ternary subdivision with a thetic opening. The tonality is F major and the cadence is conclusive. There are strong dynamics throughout the song and the texture is accompanied monody. In general terms, we could classify this music as techno-pop.

In the case of the opening song of «Potatoes and Dragons», the structure is as follows: Introduction (solo voice+instruments) – A (solo voice+instruments) – B (choir+instruments). Unlike in the case of «Doraemon», the instruments used for the opening tune are original which gives a greater musical quality to the song. The male voices perform the solo (section A) and the choral part (section B). The rhythm is binary with a thetic opening. It has strong dynamics and a monadic texture. The tonality is C minor and the final cadence is conclusive. This cartoon series is set in medieval times and, therefore, the soundtrack tries to recreate the music from this period.

The background music in «Doraemon» is characterized by the occasional use of acoustic sounds, although most of the time electronic sounds are used.

The voices that appear are either those of children or women depending on the characters. In the same episode there are different musical pieces with differing lengths depending on the action or the images that they accompany. In general terms, we find simple tunes with a binary tempo and a thetic opening.

The major or minor tonality depends on the image, like the dynamics which are also determined by this question. We can see a predominance of tunes with a conclusive cadence although on some occasions we find inconclusive or suspensive phrases, particularly in the case of musical fragments that accompany a very short action. The predominant texture is homophonic and this type of music is thoroughly cinematic.

The background music in «Potatoes and Dragons» is instrumental and changes depending on the images

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it accompanies. The texture is monodic and, occasionally, homophonic and the sounds are acoustic. We hear some examples of diegetic music i.e. we can see how image is the origin of sound (e.g. the moment in which the trumpeters announce the arrival of a knight at the court). On other occasions, well known tunes are used (e.g. the tune from the «Pink Panther» to accompany moments of suspense). Here we can see a clear example of what Adorno and Eisner (1981) called the use of «musical stocks».

Both examples clearly conform to a cinematic style using phonic sound, music and noise (Zunzunegui, 1995). On both soundtracks, there is music of a diegetic and non-diegetic nature from the three positions established by Porta (2007): the sound appears next to the sonic source i.e. in the field; it also appears in the same space but hidden, i.e. outside of the field and, finally, it appears outside of the space and time framework of the story i.e. as a voice-over.

4. Discussion

As can be deduced from the descriptions of the music analyzed, the predominant elements are from techno-pop and cinema. The type of music used in the permanent sections, adverts and cartoons that are shown in this programme leads us to conclude that, for most of the broadcasting time, Andalusian children are immersed in a globalized musical context which is dominated by the commercial tendencies of the market place. This idea coincides with Lorenzo and Herrera (2000) who state that on all channels in Spain there is clearly a predominant use of modern, Anglo-American music which is easily identified by the audience. Therefore, there is a risk of both creative and perceptible approaches to music becoming progressively simplified, which may in turn lead to a lack of understanding and a lack of interest in relation to more complex musical forms.

Nevertheless, in the permanent sections of the programme we have found a series of musical elements with a strongly regional nature: the inclusion of flamenco percussion, some moments in which we hear the classical Spanish guitar played in a flamenco, the use of the minor mode which evokes the sounds of Andalusian classical music; the inclusion of some hemiola, a little use of castanets, etc... It seems that those responsible for children's

TV take into account the culture that the music transmits and how this consolidates our cultural identity, but in the end they succumb to commercial pressures and allow a kind of musical globalization to take place. The binary beat, the thetic opening, the major mode, the use of electronic sounds, eight bar beats which is typical of pop-rock, all of these elements are predominant and Andalusian children are repeatedly exposed to them.

We do not believe that these programmes should create a kind of sonic isolation and only include local music. Nevertheless, we feel that it is necessary to reflect seriously upon the educational implications for young children of a continuous musical immersion through TV programmes. There are many musical elements which have been developed throughout the history of human civilization. These elements have achieved differing social recognition according to the culture in which they have evolved and they have

acquired diverse musical and social significance. We cannot restrict the musical «menu» of children to a series of parameters from a single culture and set in the last century. Only listening to commercial pop-rock and cinematic music is tantamount to reducing their musical «food» to just hamburgers, pizzas and «Coke». No matter how carefully the music is chosen in specific situations such as those we have described, they may end up having little significance in the day-to-day life of those who listen to it.

Just as in the case of other sociocultural questions we can observe a tendency towards homogenization that leads to unconscious consumption of products. Television could make a greater contribution towards equality in social terms by offering cultural items that allow children to listen to a wide variety of music and not only the most commercial sounds. However, it seems that market demands prevail over educational and cultural needs.

Music in adverts is considered to consolidate or complement the visual message, providing viewers with something that will remain in their memory and allow them to assimilate the message better. Adverts, whose only real objective is to encourage irrational consumption uses music close to the sonic environment of children in order to achieve this effect.

The adverts which we have analyzed undoubtedly show «expressive paraphernalia, a strong presence of special effects, dazzling visual and sonic resources and an abundance of rhetorical, visual and verbal elements that conceal an enormous void in terms of actual content» (Ferrés, 1994: 47). Television as an element of consumption here appears disguised as mere entertainment since the adverts that are shown at this time spot use these devices to convert reality into a show, in line with the new ethics and aesthetics of fun and consumption.

The music used in cartoons is characterized by two extremes. In the first of them, the music is not used carefully and is redundant, repetitive and obvious, with an extraordinary simplicity that makes listening a banal activity. The relationship between sound and image is rather meaningless and leads to a lack of attention on the part of children who do not perceive anything of interest. The series that corresponds to these sonic characteristics is broadcast during most time.

In the case of the other extreme, we find an example that offers children sonic elements of greater quality and more elaborate construction. This is the case of «Potatoes and Dragons» which is shown for considerably less time than the other series analyzed. The

music performed on acoustic instruments with attention to rhythmic detail, the styles and sounds typical of the historic period in which the series is set and the allusions to other tunes which are well known by children – all of these elements make this series musically interesting for children as it motivates them to listening more carefully and their imaginations are influenced subliminally by these sounds.

In the light of this situation, we could ask why the programmes that we consider to be most appropriate from an educational point of view are those which are given least time on television. Is this due to their high cost in comparison to other programmes of less quality? Are these programmes less popular with young viewers? Do those responsible for children's television consider that their viewers are not «suitable» to «consume» this kind of programme? This situation leads us to pose the following question: would higher quality TV programmes be more or less successful in terms of viewing figures?

On television, «music is promoted massively. Nevertheless, it is received through listening in a private and fragile way. Always through loudspeakers and often linked to images, music creates an affective support for the store that is being told through this music or thanks to this music» (Porta, 2006: 105). Therefore, the role played by education in this process is undoubtedly vital since children are alone in the face of sonic stimuli and must have the necessary strategies to decode these stimuli properly. We must not leave in the hands of television the musical education of children since, as stated by McGuire (2002: 230), «the real educational potential of television is limited since it does not have an interactive nature». Nevertheless, we should not forget what Cardús (2000) has pointed out i.e. that television should not be conceived as a competitor for education but rather as a link between parents, schools and the media. Television undoubtedly offers the possibility of such a connection and can play an educational role by allowing the risk of manipulation through subconscious message to fade away, «since stimuli cease to be dangerous when they cease to be subconscious» (Ferrés, 1994: 102)

According to Maceda (1994) it is through formal education that everybody can construct their own discourse which will allow them to give meaning to the images and the conclusive fragments with which we are inundated by the media. Nevertheless, schools do not seem to have updated their traditional paradigms and still need to advance in their treatment of a phenomenon that shapes the education of our children: media culture. In the opinion of Porta (2001), the

media deeply influence contemporary society and through music and images and breaks down the traditional barriers creating a discourse with a definite purpose to shape opinions and encourage action, whilst revealing a clear ideological and pragmatic bias. Therefore, according to Reyes (2005) it is of paramount importance that schools accept their responsibility in the process of learning to listen critically.

In this context, families will also have an important role to play as they tend to initiate children's musical taste. Nevertheless, in a country such as Spain with little musical tradition, families play a secondary role due to a lack of formal musical education on the one hand, and the general fragmentation of music belonging to an oral tradition. Taking into account the growing presence of the mass media in our daily life, people will become the most important agents in the construction of the sonic world of new generations. Thus, there would be a link between the public and private spaces where television can act as an element of cohesion.

An important step in this sense must be taken in the field of educational research, carrying out studies that allow us to understand the sonic context in which children are immersed through the media and to recognize how the sonic and visual language of television exert their influence upon childhood.

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