Social Media, the Song of the Summer and a Sea of Maroon 5  
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I admit that I was becoming a little cynical about Maroon 5.

In the four years since “Moves Like Jagger” had returned them to center stage at mainstream top 40, Adam Levine and company have become the most reliable hitmakers at the format.

It took six years, but they managed to beat the jinx of being “the pop/rock act,” something from which other acts, from the Killers to the Spin Doctors to Kings of Leon, have yet to recover. Interscope’s tenacity on their behalf bodes well for label-mates Imagine Dragons, however anti-climactic that band’s second album might seem at this moment.

Maroon 5’s V Tour: Exclusive Tour Photos

Maroon 5 has also managed to follow hit music through its various phases, from the 110 b.p.m. “turbo-pop” of a few years ago (“Jagger”) into borderline EDM (“Love Somebody”) to retro-flavored R&B (“Sugar”) without ever reading as anything other than mainstream pop, which has made them the reliable balance to all of mainstream top 40’s other changes.

But I didn’t love the post-“Jagger” songs themselves. I didn’t dispute they were hits. I was glad to see Maroon 5 having overcome radio’s relative indifference of the mid-’00s. But the act was starting to seem a little too reliable. Most industry people have known better to refer to music as “product” since the days of Lionel Richie. But product (okay, hit product) is what it sometimes felt like.

Then on May 5, Interscope sent “impact date” info to the trades announcing a new Maroon 5 single, first identified as “This Summer,” then as “This Summer’s Gonna Hurt.” The impact date was initially May 26, then May 19. This wasn’t exactly a scoop, or a secret, but since there was nothing coming from the group through either means, tweeting it (along with the news that the song was being added to the band’s album, V) sent shock waves through Maroon’s fanbase.

Typically, my inside musings on radio programming and research get a few retweets and favorites. The handful of tweets updating the Maroon 5 release date got more than 450 retweets and favorites. The tweets were also picked up and reported as news on a series of pop blogs. And, in Italian.

Song of the Summer: Taylor Swift, Britney Spears & Iggy Azalea, Maroon 5 and Other Early Contenders

Because there had been no other announcement, there was also skepticism:

From @lumpyleocat: “I really hope this is real. I’m going to be upset if it isn’t.”
From @hshaw147: “Who even are you? Maroon 5 is NOT RELEASING ANYTHING or else they would have talked about it on Jimmy Kimmel on 5/6.”

And a few minutes later, also from @hshaw147: “You are literally so fake it hurts but okay.” This was mild by Twitter standards, but the last time I’d gotten a response like that was nearly a decade ago when I’d been misinterpreted as disparaging Clay Aiken. That prompted a comment that Clay’s radio career was going great and, besides, “You obviously know nothing about the music industry.”

The tweets came from people with handles like @maroon5damn, @karisflowers522, and @stereohearts09. The Twitter bios of those retweeting or responding to the news included more pictures of Adam Levine than the tweeters themselves, or so it felt. The bio of @wescreamforM5 commemorated “the night Adam Levine threw a sweat towel at me.”

**Maroon 5’s 10 Biggest Billboard Hits**

With this new wedge into the world of fandom, I began getting questions about other favorite acts. One person tweeted to ask if I knew whether Hilary Duff’s “Sparks” was going to be worked to top 40, or just adult top 40. Somebody else asked if I knew what the next Nick Jonas single was. Perhaps the person who asked me to help circulate her petition to induct David Cassidy into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame was a coincidence.

I’m sure that this moment of Twitter frenzy was relatively minor, and that those things associated with more obvious teen pop idols generate that level of activity all the time. But it was confirmation, beyond the scope of the hits themselves, that Maroon 5 was passion, not “product,” for many.

It was also a reminder of the potential power of radio. Radio tweets plenty of artist-related gossip and posts lots of new music. But this piece of information, which I’m sure many PDs had well before I did, wasn’t tweeted elsewhere in the industry that I saw, except by Billboard’s Gary Trust. A new superstar release represents a risk-free occasion for radio to be the undisputed new music leader, and radio could have had nearly two weeks’ worth of lead-up.

Meanwhile, “This Summer’s Gonna Hurt” is a nice entry into one of the better summer song fields in a while -- jaundiced in a way consistent with the group’s persona. Unleashing a song with “summer” in the title on May 15 is the kind of calculation we’re increasingly used to, but there’s something about the darker concept that keeps it cool. As the format’s leading act, Maroon 5 has had hits during the summer, but “Song of Summer 2015” is one of the few things they have left to prove, and proves they can still surprise as they did five years ago.