

MERCHANTS OF COOL

**What did you think of the documentary?
Did the portrayal of youth seem realistic?
Do you know anyone like the teens in the documentary?
Was there anything you think the film got wrong?**

Filmmakers: What was their point-of-view? What was their slant?

What was the filmmakers' main argument?

They are pointing out that youth culture is increasingly centered on consuming things.

40-50 years ago leisure-time revolved around school dances; bowling; playing in the street; cards; indoor party games; arts & crafts; church (or other religious) events

Today: What do you do for fun that does not involve consuming things made by large corporations? Things that do not involve Hollywood movies or video games or TV or shopping or eating/drinking....?

How much of youth culture is made by youth themselves, for themselves, and how much is marketed and sold to them by corporations?

Is that healthy to spend so much time with something that is created by corporations whose only concern is to get yr money.

Do you listen to any music that's not heard on the radio? That is not released by the major labels? Live music?

How might the show have been different if it was produced by MTV? ...by teens?

These criticisms would never have appeared on MTV:

* Mark Crispin Miller's comment ("MTV isn't trying to improve the lives of teens or make them happier, just trying to sell stuff to them")

* Bob McChesney said corporations colonizing teens in same way the West colonized Africa.

* Douglas Rushkoff frequently refers to "we"; the eyes are on "our" ki

Phil Knight, CEO of Nike, has said: "One of the effects of branding is to make you feel as if you are part of a community." What does he mean by that? Do you think it's true? Does wearing Nikes [or some other brand] make you feel part of a community of Nike users?

[Make the point that Nike, Hilfiger etc. don't manufacture anything themselves]

Is "under-the-radar" marketing ethical? What effect might this have over time? Knowing that companies do this sort of thing, how might that affect your own behavior?

[Christina Agulera....Sony cell phone/camera; models approach tourists at Empire State bldg.]

Do cool-hunters exploit teens or help them (or both)?

How important is it to know whether or not something is a commercial?

Does it make a difference whether a program (or artwork or a song) is designed to advertise a product or not?

Guilt money

Feedback loop. Remember when this came up in the film?

With girls dancing.

People said you aren't affected by advertising, but this film raises the question "what *isn't* advg"? Sprite: (pays people in audience?); Limp Bizkit paid an Oregon station to play them...

Why do companies want to reach young people in the first place? Why so much effort?

You don't have as much money as adults.

- a) Young people are less sophisticated and more easily influenced by advg; polls show young people more favorable to advg; more inclined to wear logo'd clothing
- b) Brand preferences aren't established
- c) High lifetime value: you've got a lot of buying ahead of you. If a company can convince someone who's 12 to use their product (soap)... at compare establishing brand-loyalty at 8 & 40 years
- d) Youth are culturally influential:
 - i. Early adopters / trend-setting
 - ii. Adults want to imitate young (Pepsi 1960s "new generation")
 - iii. Youth influence parent purchases (esp. divorce)
- e) Large demographic group (Baby Boomer's kids)

Britney Spears is a walking ad for Pepsi; are there other groups or celebrities that you associate with products?

If so, what do you think of them?

What are some other ways companies market to teens, other than MTV and pop music?

- Internet
- "Under the radar"; going through their friends
- Schools

IF TIME PERMITS:

***Merchants of Cool* argues that advertising has changed from SPONSORING culture to BECOMING culture (e.g., Sprite no longer merely sponsors a concert but makes itself integral to hip hop culture—like Addidas did when it sponsored Run DMC). What does this mean?**

There's no difference between culture and marketing; culture is the marketing

From what you saw in this film, are marketers (whether MTV, Sprite, Time/Warner, or whoever) concerned with the well-being of teenagers?

Mark Crispin Miller says: “The MTV machine doesn't listen to the young so it can make the young happier—The MTV machine tunes in so it can figure out how to pitch what Viacom has to sell.”

Cool hunters give certain teens money and prestige. How do you think this affects the teens they choose? And the other teens?