

backbeat

and other chaotic rhythms



Rock Star: INXS — Must See TV

Okay, I have to admit it, I'm hooked. For me, this is one of the strangest television shows I've ever witnessed and I'm watching it with the avidness of witnessing a train wreck. I'm watching it, but I just don't get it.

Yes, I get the marketing idea behind it — if Bo Bice and Carrie Underwood can sell a million albums with some prime time exposure, what happens when you showcase a real band?

But, it's all a bit sad isn't it? I remember driving down the Queensway in 1997 when I heard that Michael Hutchence had killed himself. What a waste. Now eight years later you forget that INXS was only slightly behind U2 in popularity and were still cresting in their work. The "what might have beens?" hung in the air. Hutchence himself was mesmerizing — a kind hybrid Jim Morrison/Mick Jagger. He was the face and voice of the band. However, Hutchence was only one third of the creative genius behind the band. The Farriss brothers were the backbone of the group — the way that Keith supports Mick or the Edge provides the foundation for Bono.

The shock of losing Hutchence must have been difficult for the Farriss brothers. They had lost their voice. But, they hadn't lost their creativity.



So, after eight years of mourning and an impossibly odd (unless you're the Clash) four "Best of" albums, INXS is ready to release more materials. The problem? Who's going to sing?

Enter their Australian buddy, Mark Burnett, producer of *Survivor*. "Listen boys, I've got an idea.... And, I think that we can get Red Hot Chili Peppers cast-off...." Anyway, it's kind of like asking Phil Collins or Sir Elton John to find a new lead singer for Nirvana.

What I can't understand is why INXS has resorted to this. Of course it means lots of exposure and an extra million in sales right off the top, but where is the integrity? Surely they're connected to the scene and they've got a line up of would be singers trying to audition for them?

And, even if they been in a cave for eight years (apparently the traditional mourning period for a band), there is always the usual cast of Sammy Hagar, Robbie Williams or George Michael ready to step in if the phone rang. — RJH

Barbie: Still a Hottie at 46 branding



More than 40 years since she first saw the light of day, Barbie is still a great favourite and has entrenched itself as a lifestyle brand for little girls who are not only buying more clothes, accessories and other merchandise for their Barbie dolls than ever before, but the girls are also purchasing Barbie branded clothes for themselves.

Last year saw a 32.67% growth in Barbie licensed merchandise and figures just released by Blue Horizon Licensing show a 34.85% growth in the first quarter of 2005 over the corresponding period last year.

Michelle Reid, Managing Director of Blue Horizon Licensing, says: "In our market, that's phenomenal. Apparel and acces-

sories, in particular, are huge areas for us with a first quarter growth this year of 112%." Blue Horizon Licensing is an agent for Mattel Brands Consumer Products in South Africa, as distinct from the distribution of the doll and computer-based products such as videos and DVDs.

Reid ascribes the strong Barbie showing to the dynamic brand building by United States-based Mattel Brands over the past 46 years: "In close on five decades, Barbie has maintained her spotless image. Barbie is a clean value based brand. It's an aspirational brand."

Barbie apparel and accessories sold throughout are designed exclusively for each national market, with attention given to styles that conform to the image of a particular retail outlet.

As a result of age compression children up to the age of 12 who traditionally played with Barbie dolls now aspire to the technologically advanced toys and are moving away from traditional toys. The trend to a declining age group has, in turn, flowed into another trend as the major market for Barbie dolls has broadened.

Every year Mattel Brands introduces a new range of Dolls of the World that have included Hispanic, African American and Asian dolls. This, Reid emphasises, is done in a quiet, non-patronising way: "Barbie has never been patronising, and never will be."



Looking to the future, Reid predicts strong growth in the consumer product market for the Barbie brand worldwide.

No research has been done locally, but a recent United States, NPD Report indicated that Barbie holds numerous No 1 positions in the industry: Barbie is the No 1 property in the toy industry with the next largest competitor Crayola, which is about half of Barbie's size, lagging behind. The research also found that Barbie is the No. 1 doll property with a 22% market share compared to its closest competitor with a 15% share. It's also seen as the No. 1 learning property with a lead of a 12% market share and the No. 1 property at Wal-Mart and Toys R Us throughout 2004 and so far 2005.



Everything Bad is Good For You

book review

So, is pop culture making us a bunch of brain-dead zombies looking around for the nearest drool bucket, or is pop culture actually increasing our intelligence?

For years, social critics have been warning parents that they are raising a generation of walking dead. They argue that, while kids today have great thumb-eye coordination, there is little else to recommend the video game craze that now generates more money annually (\$10B) than movies.

Technology writer Steven Johnson begs to differ. He develops a rather convincing argument that, in fact, the critics are judging today's pop culture by the wrong standards. He argues that pop culture is actually raising what he calls the "Sleeper Curve" — the overall intelligence level required to function within today's society.

Johnson examines everything from video games, television, reality shows to the internet. He feels that social critics are focusing on small isolated arguments because the critics don't understand the attraction. Johnson breaks down the attraction by

examining what is going on in our brains — a kind of dopamine thrill ride that can be as addictive as drugs. (Not that we in the older generation know anything about that either.)

Johnson points out that whether it is games, TV dramas or even reality shows, pop culture has become considerably more sophisticated than "TV's golden age." Today, pop culture requires us to use our brains. We are required to fill in the clues, probe, test, examine, build networks and determine ever more complicated goal/reward objectives than before just to "get it." Pop culture is no longer simply happening in front of us, it is involving us. Or, as Apple's Steve Jobs puts it, we are advancing from a "lean-back and enjoy society" to a "lean-in and participate society."

So, before yelling at the kids to finish up so you can watch re-runs of the *Love Boat*, maybe you should consider getting involved in exercising the grey matter with a few hours of some therapeutic *Grand Theft Auto*. — RJH



Ummmm, pi-zzzaah!

WASHINGTON, D.C. (Wireless Flash) — Pizza drivers all over Washington, D.C., owe shock jock Howard Stern a big thanks.

That's because the night that Stern appeared on "The Late Show With David Letterman" was the biggest tipping day of the year for Dominos Pizza delivery drivers, beating out the day after the Boston Red Sox won the World Series and when Phil Mickelson won the Masters.

Other days weren't as good for tips. For instance, tips were the lowest on the day Martha Stewart was sent to prison and the night the USA Olympic Basketball Team lost.

However, the biggest pizza ordering day of the year was the opening night of the Olympics, followed by the day the Vice Presidential Debate took place.

Other saucy stats from the pizza people...

- 69 percent of people with a hybrid vehicle in the driveway ordered meat-topped pizzas and were four times more likely to ask for extra cheese.
- The night of the final episode of "Sex And The City" was the biggest for veggie-only pies.
- Finally, Dominos reports a 38 percent increase in orders for pizzas with every topping possible during the "Survivor" season finale.



Not All Digital Artwork is Created Equal

The Good, the Bad & the Ugly

How many times have you sent off a logo file and been told, “This is the wrong file format”? EPS, TIFF, GIF, JPG and BMP — why does an image have to come with a monogram?

All digital files fall into one of two categories: vector or bitmap.

Vector Graphics

Vector Graphics, created in drawing programs like Adobe Illustrator and CorelDraw, use only lines and curves to create an image such as a logo or a typeface. Because they are generated mathematically, they can be scaled to any size without changing the reproduction quality.

Bitmap Graphics

Bitmap (or raster) graphics, created in programs such as Adobe Photoshop, are made from a fixed map of pixels. They are commonly used to reproduce photos. Generally, bitmap files cannot be scaled up beyond their original size without losing reproduction quality.

Here's the breakdown

EPS files can be either vector or bitmap based. Generally, photographs that are saved as EPS files are bitmap files. EPS files print well.

TIFFs are bitmap files, generally only used for photos and illustrations. The size of the file will usually determine the quality. TIFFs print and preview on screen well.

JPEGs are bitmap files that compress information well and are good for exchanging large image files across platforms. They can be re-saved in different formats for repurposing. Because of their compression,

they are ideal for Web graphics; however, JPEGs from the Web are usually low-resolution and do not print well.

GIFs are bitmap files used strictly for Web/screen graphics. They do not print well.

BMPs are bitmap graphic files used mainly for desktop publishing. They are not suitable for high-end printing.

When in doubt about file types and what you should provide your suppliers, you can use the following as a guideline:

Logos:

vector EPS files (Adobe Illustrator)

Photos for printing:

When printing photos, you require high resolution photos. That is, a high density of pixels. Printable images use CMYK (Cyan/Magenta/Yellow/Black) inks colours to create full colour. Generally, we prefer 300 dpi (dots or pixels per inch) sent in the following formats: EPS, TIFF, JPEG in either CMYK or RGB. We'll convert the file to CMYK if it comes as RGB.

Web:

Websites use low-resolution images (72 dpi) in RGB. RGB (Red/Green/Blue) is the mixture to create full colour using light generation. For photos, use JPEGs. For flat graphics like logos, use GIFs.

Desktop publishing:

Not to be confused with traditional professional printing, desktop publishing should be thought of as printing directly from your personal computer to your networked printer when high resolution images are not required. In this case, you can use any of the above formats. MSWord works very well with small file sized BMPs.

