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Corporate entertainment breeds mindless stagnation

There seems to be a disturbing lack of care in the world of corporate entertainment — so much so that it's difficult to find the "art" in any of it these days. After all, art should be creative and uplifting; it should instill a desire to make the world a better place and make us feel kind and compassionate in our interactions with the world.

Shouldn't it?

Shouldn't it breathe beauty and peace? Move our bodies and expand our minds and perceptions? I'm not finding much of that around these days.

Maybe art shouldn't "do" anything in which case you're probably satisfied with the world of entertainment that exists now. But even "mindless" entertainment does something. I speak generally because I'm trying to trace a trend that a majority of entertainment on the marketplace contra-



Aaron Shakra

Notebooks of DJ Serpentine

nology — all of this for the sake of itself and a means to nothing else.

This may very well be satisfying, fulfilling our needs for contentment, meaning and connection among humans. The problem is, it's like eating a giant chocolate cake for dinner — it may be satisfying on the short term, but ultimately, it's an incredibly thoughtless act. Likewise, entertainment isn't about thinking ahead, it's about immediate gratification for the subject without any thought of the consequences.

For years, we have heard about the "desensitizing" effects of violence in the media. Along with the various statistics of atrocious acts shown on television and other mediums usually comes a slew of naysayers calling for v-chips and censorship. But censorship isn't the answer. The problem I'm sketching would only become amplified because there is

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From minivans to Miller beer: Indie rockers are selling out

Scottish rockers Mogwai played at the WOW Hall last Wednesday. The band is one of my favorites, and it was my first time seeing it perform. I'm happy to report that it lived up to my high expectations. The band members' atmospheric songs worked the audience into a post-rock frenzy. The next night at the bar, one of my friends confessed she had a "religious experience" during their set. I don't think she's alone in that sentiment. They're that good.

I do have one small complaint, however. During the last Super Bowl, Levi's premiered a commercial starring a herd of buffalo chasing two denim-clad models through a deserted urban landscape. Playing in the background was Mogwai's song "Summer."

When I first saw the ad, two words immediately came to mind: sell out. Selling out is the number one sin an artist can commit.

Mogwai is hardly alone, however. Modest Mouse has licensed its song "Gravity Rides Everything" to Nissan



Helen Schumacher

Notes from the underground

— for a MINIVAN commercial for CHRISTSAKES! — and Miller Genuine Draft. The band Smog also has a song in a Miller advertisement. McDonald's paid The Shins for the use of their song "New Slang." The Walkmen have a song in a Saturn ad. And which band hasn't been in a GAP commercial?

It's hard not to feel a bit betrayed when your indie band goes commercial. Kids usually get into the independent music scene for two reasons. First, the people that go to the shows are way hotter than the people that go to corporate shows. Have you ever been to a Dave Matthews Band con-

cert? It's not pretty. Second, you get to be an elite member of an underground community.

There is a camaraderie between the bands, the labels and the fans. Buy a T-shirt at the show and the band members are good sports when you ask them to shotgun beers with you at the after party. Send your 'zine to a record label and they'll send you a free album or two to review in the next issue. The audience is an integral part of the music and it's hard not to feel a sense of ownership in it. That's why it is so upsetting to hear musicians selling cars and clothes.

However, to quote producer Steve Albini: "Indie credibility doesn't buy groceries." Most indie musicians have day jobs to support themselves. Even those signed to bigger labels have trouble scraping by. The music business isn't run by people who genuinely love music; they genuinely love money. And they'll exploit who they have to in order to make it.

If a band decides they'd like to

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