

Targeting the Stoned Cyberpunk

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Marketing Report

From a report, prepared earlier this year by the Interval Research Corporation, about marketing possibilities at the fourth annual Lollapalooza, the "alternative rock" and cultural festival that tours the United States each summer. The report was intended to help organize and market the festival's Electric Carnival, an exhibit designed to allow festivalgoers to experiment with video and computer technology, including digitally altering their own voices and images. The exhibit was financed, at a reported \$2 million, by Interval founder Paul Allen, a computer entrepreneur. An excerpt from the report appeared in the third issue of *Might*, a San Francisco magazine.

Who are the 15,000 to 30,000 people per concert who are the audience for the Electric Carnival ?

They include "zippies", "cyberpunks", "head-bangers", "wannabees", the younger "Rave" audience (mostly youth from eleven to seventeen) and older "weekend warriors". The large majority are sixteen to twenty-four.

What do we know about the majority group (sixteen to twenty-four), and what does it imply for a successful exhibit ?

1. Their common preoccupation is the question of personal identity. They are largely self-absorbed and extremely focused on personal appearance. But they are vaguely aware that identity is primarily a construct of culture and family conditioning, variables over which they have little control. This leaves them feeling personally anxious and socially powerless (the Slacker angst). They are likely to be interested in exhibits that allow them to control the various elements of personal identity.
2. They feel marginal to mainstream society (although they are overwhelmingly white and close enough to the middle class to afford the \$30 festival-admission fee). Thus the Electric Carnival needs to look and feel very different from school- or office- based experiences. The tent and all the elements in it should reflect a countercultural aesthetic.
3. Shocking parents, family, friends and community is often part of this group's self-definition process. They will want a record of the most socially unacceptable image of themselves to freak out their parents. We need to provide at least one print out of their self-creation. Ideally, this would be tied to completion and return of a survey after leaving the tent.
4. They don't want to fail, especially in public. Thus we need to set them up for success. Exhibits must be designed and tested to limit the frustration factor.
5. The majority of them will be drunk, stoned, tripping, or otherwise chemically altered. They are likely to have :
 - o Short attention spans
 - o Poor hand-eye coordination
 - o Impaired judgement
 - o Uninhibited impulses
 - o An altered sense of time

Depending on the drug, they may be more aggressive (alcohol), more passive (marijuana), more impatient (speed), or more paranoid than under usual circumstances. Thus :

- They need the Electric Carnival to keep track of time for them
- They need brief, self-contained experiences
- Interface images need to be larger and clearer than normal
- They need clear signs
- They need help understanding and making choices - facilitators
- They need a constructive outlet for expression of emotion, especially rage and grief
- We need to avoid heavy-handedness in controlling crowd (sic). Humor ? Costumes ?