



## Guns and Advertising

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by Lesley Assadourian

In a world gone mad, it is a very sad fact of life that guns and violence are sometimes glamorised by the media, in all its many guises. Advertising ethics authorities in many countries are clamping down on the use of gun imagery, but many ads/posters are already out on the streets and in our homes via television/radio/cinema and magazines before they can be “pulled.” Some examples of the gross misuse of the advertising power of lyrics and ad campaigns are highlighted below and, as a postscript, the unsettling but very common outcome that we read and hear about on a daily basis.

**H**ow disturbing is this? Making it into the top 10 brands of products advertised/mentioned in popular song lyrics in 2005 was the AK-47. Weapons are the fastest growing category with Beretta pistols “the hottest new entry.”

A Brandstand report also notes that, in 2006, branded lyrics have moved into more pop-orientated songs. Such references were once almost exclusively the domain of Hip Hop, but gradually began

to filter down to R&B tracks – and now mainstream Pop music.

In August 2006, Jeffrey-West Shoes had an advertising campaign banned by the Advertising Standards Agency in the UK for irresponsibly glamorising the use of guns. The firm ran an ad in a fashion magazine depicting a woman dressed in a fur coat at the wheel of a car with a gun and a pair of men’s boots on the seat next to her. The ASA said the image went beyond being surreal and implied a fashionable lifestyle. The gun was not

related to the product and appeared solely as a glamorous fashion accessory, it added, suggesting the ad promoted a lifestyle that condoned violence.

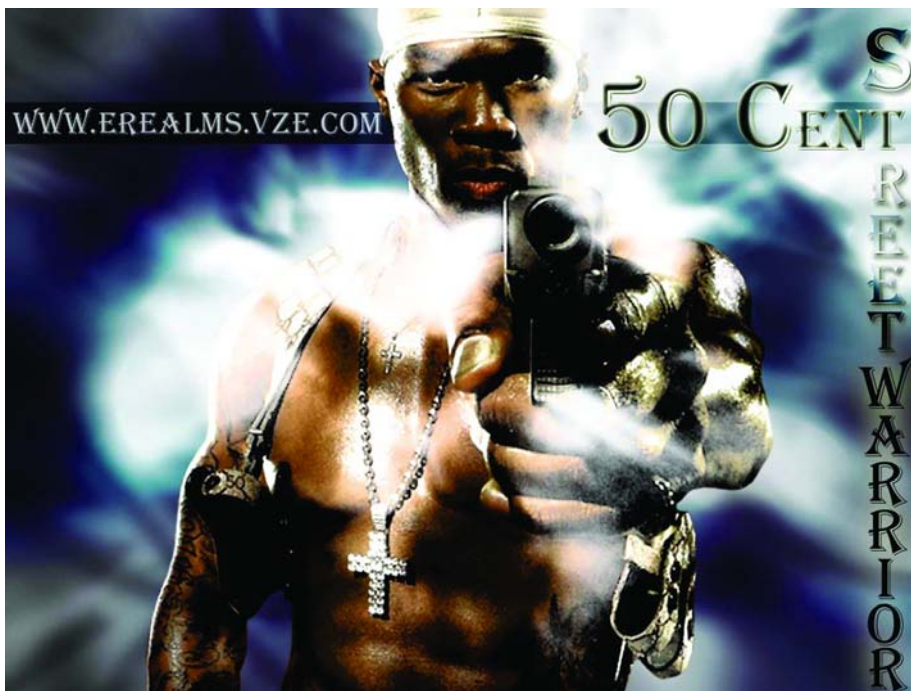
Earlier this year there was uproar in the United States and UK when advertising posters for rapper 50 Cent's new movie *Get Rich or Die Tryin* were perceived to glorify gun violence. The poster showed 50 Cent holding a gun and a baby. The Advertising Standards Authority in the UK criticised the visuals, once more, saying that 50 Cent's association with gang culture and criminal behaviour was likely to be seen as glamorising and condoning the possession and use of guns. It also said that the combination of the title and the rapper's image with a gun could give the impression that success could be achieved through violence.

And who of us can forget the adver-

tising campaign that was highlighted in Michael Moore's documentary film "Bowling for Columbine," where an American bank had a promotion whereby if you opened a bank account they would give you a FREE GUN! Has the world gone completely insane?

#### Post Script

Yet another tragic shooting at a school occurred on September 13, 2006 at Dawson College, in downtown Montreal, Canada. The perpetrator, Kimveer Gill, began shooting outside the de Maisonneuve Boulevard entrance to the school, and moved toward the Atrium cafeteria on the main floor. One victim died at the scene, while another 19 were wounded, eight of whom were listed in critical condition with six requiring surgery. The gunman later committed suicide after being shot in the arm by police. 🍀



#### The top 10 brands in song lyrics in 2005

1. Mercedes Benz
2. Nike
3. Cadillac
4. Bentley
5. Rolls Royce
6. Hennessy
7. Chevrolet
8. Louis Vuitton
9. Cristal
10. AK-47