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Rearranging an Ad Jingle So That It Now Jangles



David Maxwell for The New York Times

Jay Kennedy, whose album of audio art deconstructs and recasts TV and radio jingles.

By MATTHEW MIRAPPAUL

The commercial's banjo melody is instantly familiar, but the words are different. "Armour hot kids," a children's chorus chirps, "the kids dogs love to bite." The mangled jingle is one of 33 tracks on "Free Speech for Sale," an album of audio art that chews up actual television and radio commercials and spits out its creators' distaste for commercial advertising.

The album is not sold in stores. Its tracks and printable cover art can be downloaded from www.freespeechforsale.com, a Web site that opens today.

For the project, more than 30 audio artists captured speech and music samples from commercials, public service announcements, campaign ads and other promotional spots, then rearranged them into short sonic collages that often subvert the source material's original message. On one track, snippets excised from ads for over-the-counter drugs were reassembled into a horrifying litany of side effects, concluding "one daily dose provides 24 hours of headache, diarrhea and abdominal pain."

The album was organized by Every Man, the online alias of Jay Kennedy, a 30-year-old computer systems administrator in Lakewood, Ohio, and a host of a weekly experimental show on a community radio station. Rather than overtly parodying advertisements he found most irksome, Mr. Kennedy said he decided to use them as the raw ingredients for creations that would be "far more palatable than

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something that's shoving an ad message down your throat."

Mr. Kennedy used the Internet to issue a call for contributions in early 2000. Most tracks were completed soon after, but it took nearly three years to raise the \$2,000 it cost to manufacture 2,000 CD's, as well as to find a duplication factory that would press the discs without having the proper legal releases for the audio samples.

Half the discs, he says, will be surreptitiously dropped, unpriced, into CD retailers' bins; the rest will be given away. Mr. Kennedy says he expects most people to download the tracks from the Web site.

Mr. Kennedy picked the title — "Free Speech for Sale" — partly to suggest how words used for selling were being liberated.

An Armour spokeswoman declined to comment on the "hot kids" track because she had not yet heard it. But while many of the album's sources are as recognizable as the hot-dog jingle, in almost every case, the brand and product name have been omitted or altered to avoid promoting the companies whose ads are being used. David Dixon, a physics professor who records as Stark Effect, removed the sponsor's name and words from a soft-drink ad to transform a sales pitch into his critique of culture: "I'd like to buy the world and keep it."



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