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**2002 VIDEO GRAND PRIX
BALLOT INSIDE
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WHAT GIRLS WANT

**THE MARKETING OF 12-VOLT PRODUCTS TO THE FEMALE CONSUMER
BY MICAH SHEVELOFF**

Women in the 21st Century have found success at many of the roles traditionally occupied by men in the recent past. Women are in the U.S. military, they are police officers and they work on construction sites. There is little reason, then, why anyone should be surprised that women are also buying cars — and car stereo systems to go with them. The Business Women's Network reports that women account for 51% of automobile purchases, and have significant influence over a great deal more than that. Consumer electronics retailers are reporting that women are undoubtedly the new breed of car audio enthusiast.

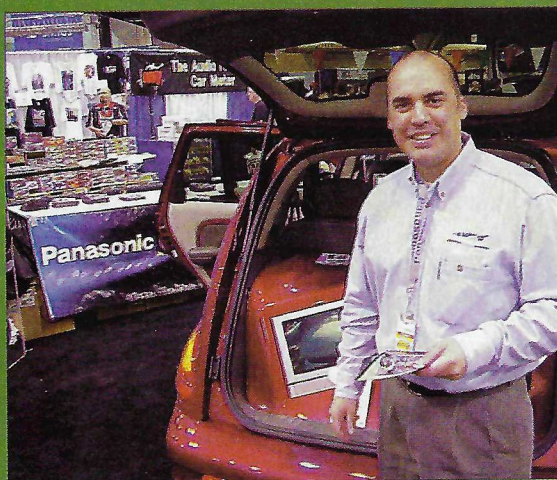
"It all started when we began to hear that young women were shopping for car stereo systems from our retailers in the field," reported Rob Lopez, national marketing manager for Panasonic's car audio division. "Interest in car stereo products has been traditionally male-dominated, and most car audio shops are owned and operated by men. We are seeing a new type of female consumer, empowered by

knowledge that they have gained while doing research on the Internet before they shop," added Lopez. "As the business climate changes, we need to change as a company. We need to react to these trends more quickly than ever before," he emphasized. Executing a forward-thinking marketing plan, Panasonic car audio has teamed up with five publications oriented toward the young woman — *Elle Girl*, *Self*, *Sports Illustrated for Women*, *Mademoiselle*, and *YM (Young Miss)* — in an effort to reach the female consumer. "Panasonic car audio contributed to a program this past summer with *Self* magazine called Workout in the Park. The magazine traveled to major metropolitan areas of the U.S., and

sponsored a day of fitness and health awareness. Our products were on display at each of these events," Lopez explained.

COSMETICS COUNT

Feedback from the retail sales floor indicates that the cosmetic design of technology items has a bigger impact on sales with both male and female customers than ever before. "It has become a fashion business," stated Marc Spatz, mobile electronics buyer at Massachusetts-based Tweeter Home Entertainment Group. "Although we do not have specific numbers, our salespeople have certainly seen an increase in how frequently women are shopping for



AT LEFT: ROB LOPEZ, PANASONIC, WITH A DEMO CAR. BELOW: A PANASONIC CQ-DF801U HEAD UNIT, CARRYING THE TYPE OF EYE-CATCHING DISPLAY GRAPHICS THAT THE COMPANY SAYS ARE ATTRACTING MORE FEMALE CUSTOMERS TO THE BRAND



mobile electronics, especially when mobile video is factored in as well," added Spatz. The staff at Tweeter is also aware that consumers are shopping on line, and there is much effort expended in keeping the Web site fresh and updated. Spatz also explained that he has received feedback indicating that female shoppers ask about, and purchase, Panasonic car audio products, although he admits to not having seen any scientific data pertaining to the subject as of yet.

Lopez suggests that innovative features such as the 3D dot-matrix display have a lot to do with Panasonic's success with female consumers. The display is designed for high visibility in day or nighttime driving conditions, and is distinguished by its multi-dimensional graphics and distinctive blue glow. The motorized front panel can be tilted to 15°, 25°, or 35° for optimum visibility, and the entire faceplate can be removed to deter theft.

"Women are particularly astute when it comes to design, and the large, animated LCD display appeals to a woman's sense of style," Lopez surmised. "Panasonic didn't intentionally design the players to appeal to one sex over the other. Men like the 3D dot-matrix display for the same reason that women do — because it's cool," stated Lopez. For 2002, Panasonic has introduced a theft-deterrent technology called Ghost (on the CQ-DF802U CD receiver), which is a radio face that looks completely black when the power is turned off. Additionally, a select few head units this year will feature a new slim-line cosmetic design that will result in a flush, less-obtrusive appearance once installed in an automotive dashboard. Lopez

**WENDE ZOMNIR,
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COSMETICS, A
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WHICH JVC MOBILE
HAS PARTNERED IN
ITS QUEST TO
APPEAL TO THE
YOUNGER FEMALE
DEMOGRAPHIC**



anticipates that these new designs will also appeal to the growing number of female consumers.

According to numbers compiled by INTELECT, a market research firm, JVC brought three of the top-ten best-selling car head units to the marketplace in 2001. "We do our marketing plan based on a gut feeling and feedback from our retailers, in addition to studying sales figures," explained Chad Vogelsong,

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marketing manager for JVC's mobile electronics division. "If we are selling 50,000 to 60,000 units per month of a particular model of car stereo, it cannot be all men making those purchases," he explained. "We want to reach everyone who is shopping for a CD, or going to a concert. They are our customers," he added.

STRATEGIC ALLIANCES

In order to broaden their exposure to the female consumer, JVC mobile electronics has decided to create a working relationship with Urban Decay cosmetics, an edgy, modern company that also markets its line to young and savvy women. "It's a perfect tie-in," stated Wende Zomnir, executive creative director at Urban Decay. "It's about self expression. Music and makeup help define who you are," she explained. Zomnir pointed out that in 1996, 80% of those people using the Internet were men. Today, that number is split at an even 50%. "The Internet has empowered women, who are much different than they were five years ago," said Zomnir. "Car stereo and other technology items are no longer intimidating to women. If the female consumer can shop for a computer and decide what proces-

■■ 'WOMEN ARE PARTICULARLY ASTUTE WHEN IT COMES TO DESIGN, AND A LARGE, ANIMATED LCD DISPLAY APPEALS TO A WOMAN'S SENSE OF STYLE.' ■■

sor it should have, what screen they want, and be able to burn their own MP3s, they can certainly pick out their own car audio system," she added. One of the first joint promotional efforts between Urban Decay and JVC will be the "Urban Girl on the Go" Sweepstakes, which will offer consumers the chance to win a car outfitted with JVC and Urban Decay products.

JVC's relationship with Urban Decay will enable the electronics manufacturer to gain exposure in shopping malls — not necessarily an easy task. The Urban Decay areas within the Sephora retail stores will be likely to include in-store promotional materials from JVC. "We will tie effectively into the kiosks, using our national advertising campaign featuring model Donna D'Errico, the wife of Motley Crue member Nikki Sixx. We will have exposure in the malls, where all of these women are spending money," explained Vogel song, who cautions retailers to never ignore anyone in their stores. "You have to be aware of who your customers are today, and that there is a genuine opportunity here for us to all make some money," said Vogel song.

There are currently two models of CD receiver that JVC is marketing to the female consumer. The KDS-700 BU (blue display) and the KDS-700 GN (green display) both carry a \$199 suggested retail, and are loaded with popular features. "We took an already successful CD receiver and gave them two unique colors, selected because a lot of the cars popular with female motorists today come in similar shades," explained Vogel song.

Conveniently, Urban Decay cosmetics also offers makeup in like colors, with names like Asphyxia Blue and Shattered Green. JVC made sure that many of the desired features were standard on these CD players, such as detachable face, a rotary control, CD-R/CD-RW compatibility, pre-amp outputs, and 45 watts per channel of

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internal amplifier power. "Many of the buyers for the retail outlets are finding all of this to be such a new concept. We have tried to give them a product, supported by a powerful marketing campaign, that will have a high closed-sale ratio," Vogel song reported. "Our new marketing slant, sponsoring concerts and aligning with celebrities, reaches out to these female consumers who no longer need their boyfriend along in order to make a purchasing decision. These women feel secure and confident shopping on their own," he added.

CROSSING GENDER LINES

Tweeter's Marc Spatz agrees that cool technology will always find a way to cross gender lines. "With today's new pop culture and movies like *The Fast and the Furious*, these young consumers are a demographic that we can no longer ignore," he explained. In parts of the country, feedback from retail sales floors has indicated that the woman is a consumer for items in categories that were once predominantly oriented to a male market. Whether such trends can be attributed to a cultural change in our society, or an improvement in the design of modern technology products, major electronics manufacturers like Panasonic and JVC have acknowledged the winds of change. They have created the necessary marketing strategies in order to be the first to capture the attention of the female car audio consumer, in an effort to be known in the years ahead as those brands that know what girls want.