



## AMERICAN BRANDSTAND 2003

American Brandstand began in January 2003, to track all the mentions of brands in the Billboard Top 20 singles chart. It was designed by Agenda ([www.AgendaInc.com](http://www.AgendaInc.com)) to demonstrate to our clients that pop culture relevance is a key dynamic in modern brand strategy.

When pop culture decides it loves your brand, as a brand manager you have to be ready.

Three mini-case studies...

When Cadillac's Escalade became the SUV of choice for rappers and NFL players, it embraced the idea, not by chasing sales, but by getting to understand better its customer base.

And when Polaroid heard the Outkast song 'Hey Ya' with the lyric "Shake it like a Polaroid picture", they formed a smart strategic partnership.

Whereas when Burberry became the fashion brand of choice for rappers, it was reported to have offered a tight-lipped response saying that it didn't deliberately target rappers.

There's a right way – and a wrong way – to manager pop culture brands. It's less scientific, and more intuitive than before. And it depends more than ever on knowing your audience.

American Brandstand was also designed because we thought it would be fun.

### Some findings from 2003

- Prestige, aspiration and luxury predominate throughout the chart. Bling bling is alive and well and living in Billboard lyrics.
- Over the course of 2003, it's become apparent that the Billboard chart represents a key barometer (albeit an unscientific one) of brand relevance in hip-hop and youth culture.
- As hip-hop culture continues to merge into youth culture at large, the brands in the Billboard chart are less distinguished by their hip-hop following, than their mainstream success.
- Hip-hop is extremely good at using brands as metaphors in the same way that contemporary society does.
- Hip-hop has always been about defining your status. Aligning yourself with brands in lyrics are the best short-cuts to do that – especially if you want to be understood



by a global audience; Gucci is the same whether you're in the USA, or anywhere else.

- Although hip-hop may be brand conscious, it's perhaps no more brand conscious than society at large. Brands are the way we communicate – and in a consumer culture they are what we most have in common globally.

- Product placement is less of an issue than many people think. By the time artists reach the kind of status where they can make big money from potential product placement, they are less likely to be interested. And they're not going to risk their credibility on that kind of promotion. Unless it's something they already use, own, like.

- Consumers are very sophisticated about the brands that feel appropriate for different artists. 50 Cent should be rapping about Mercedes and Gucci, however, if Missy Elliott starts rapping about Swiffers and AT&T, consumers are going to be suspicious...

- Many of the brands that appear in the American Brandstand are those that have a strong prestigious heritage, one that has recently been updated; such as Gucci and Burberry.

- Novelty is not enough – even though new brand Hpnotiq was massively marketed in the Summer of 2003, and showed up quickly in the American Brandstand chart, it entered the chart low, and remains near the bottom.

- Hip-hop is the perfect medium to register the relevance of contemporary brands. Hip-hop and rap have always been about the here-and-now, rather than rock or pop songs, which typically focus on eternal themes of love and loss.

- Some critics have argued in 2003 stronger than ever that hip-hop and rap music have become over commercialized. In truth, the commercial arm has become very visible this year, but it's not a new development.

- In terms of brands in lyrics, it didn't begin with hip-hop. It didn't even begin this century. We've discovered that it began at least 100 years ago... From 1903, the song 'Under the Anheuser-Busch...'

*Come, Come, Come and make eyes with me,  
Under the Anheuser Bush  
Come, Come, drink some Budwise with me  
Under the Anheuser Bush,  
Hear the old German band,  
Just let me hold your hand Yah!  
Do, Do, Come and have a stein or two,  
Under the Anheuser Bush. Bush.*

50 Cent would be proud...



### Other noteworthy things from 2003

- Rappers singing about their own brands – As more rappers and hip-hop stars launch brands of their own, they began showing up in the American Brandstand chart. The highest of these was Snoop Dogg's line of clothing which made it to #36 in the American Brandstand chart. Followed by Armadale vodka (owned by Jay-Z) which made it to #42. Lower down the chart, G-Unit sneakers (from 50 Cent) at #57, and Rocawear at #64 (from the Jay-Z / Damon Dash collective)
- Polaroid – We predict that Polaroid will continue to soar up the American Brandstand chart, and in pop culture to become the My Adidas of the new millennium... The Outkast reference is a triumph for brands in pop culture...
- Mini Cooper – which made a plucky appearance in Madonna's relatively doomed *American Life* single, "I drive my Mini Cooper / And I'm feeling super dooper"
- Most bizarre reference of the year – "Put anthrax on a Tampax / and slap you till you can't stand" (Eminem, Superman)
- The most Lil' Kim lyrics of the year - "Let me show you what I'm all about / How I make a Sprite can disappear in my mouth" (Lil' Kim - The Jump Off)
- Boldest use of a difficult rhyme – "But Louis Vuitton bras all over your breasts / Got me wanting to put hickies all over ya chest (ah!)" (Ludacris – Stand Up)

### 2003

- There were 84 different brands mentioned in the Billboard Top 20 in 2003.
- Of the 111 songs in the Billboard Top 20, 43 had brands in the lyrics
- The most mentioned brand in 2003 – MERCEDES BENZ.
- The artist who mentioned most brands in 2003 – 50 CENT.
- Only one branded song was not hip-hop or R&B... Good Charlotte's *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous*, "Did you know if you were caught / And you were smoking crack / McDonalds wouldn't even wanna take you back / You could always just run for mayor of D.C"
- The most amount of brands in a single week of the Billboard top 20 in 2003 was 47, on April 12<sup>th</sup>.
- The most brands crammed into one song... 14, by Lil' Kim in *The Jump Off*.



## The Top 10 brands of 2003

### #1 Mercedes (112 mentions)

Mercedes wins by a massive margin, with more than twice its nearest competitor.

Mercedes has been a rap brand of choice for many years. At least as early as 1988's NWA album Straight Outta Compton - "Me and Lorenzo, rollin' in a Benz-o."

Mercedes has been a particular favorite with 50 Cent in 2003, mentioned in 4 of his 6 chart hits. And the brand has been in the #1 Billboard song for 13 weeks this year. On 12<sup>th</sup> April, Mercedes was mentioned in 4 separate songs.

### #2 Lexus (48 mentions)

Lexus jumped into the brand chart in February with R Kelly's Ignition, and shot up the charts to reach #2 by May where it was mentioned in three separate songs in one week. However, by August, when Busta Rhymes left the top 20, nobody else mentioned it. Although it is still at #2, it's under strong threat from other brands.

### #3 Gucci (47 mentions)

Gucci rapidly became the bling-bling fashion brand of choice. It got its first two references in March and never looked back. The brand was mentioned by everyone from Ginuwine to Busta Rhymes and Mariah Carey to Bow Wow to 50 Cent.

Now that Tom Ford has left, we'll see whether Gucci stays relevant in 2004.

### #4 Cadillac (46 mentions)

As Cadillac the brand found its footing in the real world, it also began to shoot up the American Brandstand chart. It joined the American Brandstand at #37 in April with Lil Kim's Escalade in 'The Jump Off', but with the help of Youngbloodz!, 50 Cent and Outkast, it's still moving higher at #3

Our favorite Cadillac reference in 2003...

"Don't want to meet your daddy / Just want you in my Caddie" Outkast - *Hey Ya*

### #5 Burberry (42 mentions)

Burberry the brand had a very volatile year. Its renewed vigor was reflected with a big boost in the Brandstand chart. Towards the end of the Summer, a story emerged that Burberry was less than happy with its hip-hop association. Then in October a new story that it was becoming associated as the brand of football hooligans in Europe.

### #6 Prada (39 mentions)

Prada got a name check in 50 Cent's *P.I.M.P* that set it up strongly, but was then supported in Ginuwine's *Hell Yeah*, and elsewhere.



The strength of the brand sets to boost it even further in 2004.

**#7 Cristal (37 mentions)**

Cristal has been the hip-hop drink of choice for a couple of years, partly based around its bling-bling packaging, but also its scarcity. It fought off increased competition this year – from Hennessy and Bacardi – to end up at #7.

Our favorite Cristal reference in 2003...

“You can’t even drink Crist-OWL / You gotta drink Crist-ALL” Jay-Z, *Excuse Me Miss*

**#8 Hennessy (35 mentions)**

The success of Hennessy this year has begun to suggest that passing the Courvoisier might have been short-term success at the expense of longer term overkill.

Hennessy, like Mercedes, has been a staple brand of hip-hop lyrics based on a long-term association with its target.

Set to move higher in 2004.

**#9 Lamborghini (34 mentions)**

Lamborghini managed to make it to #8 in the American Brandstand based on mentioned in two long-lasting chart songs, *Magic Stick* by Lil’ Kim & 50 Cent and *I Know What You Want* by Busta Rhymes & Mariah Carey – where it also scored a very prominent video appearance.

**#10 Chevrolet (33 mentions)**

Chevrolet got mentions in two songs this year, *I Know What You want* by Busta Rhymes & Mariah Carey, and *Damn!* by Youngbloodz





## The Top 5 brand-dropping artists of 2003

#1	50 Cent	<p><b>31 brands (in 6 song)</b></p> <p>AK (gun), AR15 (gun), Bacardi, BCBG, Bentley (x2), Berreta, BMW, Burberry, Burger King, Cadillac, D&amp;G, Fendi, Ferrari, Giovanni (rims), Gucci, G-Unit, K-Mart, Lamborghini, Maybach, Mercedes Benz (x4), Nike, Payless Shoe Source, Prada, Ramada Inn, Range Rover, Reebok, Sprewell</p>
#2	Lil'Kim	<p><b>15 brands (in 2 songs)</b></p> <p>Bacardi, Barbie, Bentley, Brooklyn Mint, Bulgari, Cadillac Escalade, Ferrari, Hummer, Jaguar, Lamborghini, Mercedes Benz, Playboy, Range Rover, Sprite, Timberland</p>
#3	Jay-Z	<p><b>14 brands (in 3 songs)</b></p> <p>Armada, Burberry, Cristal, Hermes, Manolo Blahnik, Maybach, Mercedes Benz, Purple Label (Ralph Lauren), Rolls Royce Phantom, Three Dots, Timberland, U-Haul, Vera Wang</p>
#4	Ginuwine	<p><b>13 brands (in 2 songs)</b></p> <p>Baby Phat, Belvedere, Calvin Klein, Cristal, Crown, Gucci, Iceberg, Levis, Lexus, Nike Air Force Ones, Prada (x2), Sergio Valente</p>
#5	Ludacris	<p><b>9 brands (in 3 songs)</b></p> <p>Baby Gap, BET, Burberry, Corona, Hennessy, Holiday Inn, Louis Vuitton, Payless Shoes, Puma</p>
		<p>Also in the top 10 artists; R Kelly, Nelly, Missy Elliott, and Beyonce...</p>



### The Top 3 Categories

<b>#1</b>	<b>Car / Auto</b>	1 - Mercedes, 2 - Lexus 3 - Cadillac, 4 - Lamborghini 5 - Chevrolet
<b>#2</b>	<b>Fashion</b>	1 - Gucci 2 - Burberry 3 - Prada 4 - Payless Shoes 5 - Dolce & Gabbana
<b>#3</b>	<b>Beverage</b>	1 - Cristal 2 - Hennessy 3 - Bacardi 4 - Belvedere 5 - Corona



## The Full Brand Chart

#	Brand	Mentions
1	Mercedes Benz	112
2	Lexus	48
3	Gucci	47
4	Cadillac	46
5	Burberry	42
6	Prada	39
7	Cristal	37
8	Hennessy	35
9	Lamborghini	34
10	Chevrolet	33
11	Range Rover	29
11	Payless Shoe Source	29
11	Dolce & Gabbana	29
14	Bentley	28
15	Manolo Blahnik	27
16	Nike	26
16	Bacardi	26
18	Jeep	23
19	Timberland	22
19	Rover	22
19	Fendi	22
19	Louis Vuitton	22
19	K-Mart	22
24	Buick Regal	21
24	Sports Illustrated	21
24	Belvedere	21
27	Puma	20
27	Maybach	20
29	Honda	18
29	BCBG	18
29	Ramada Inn	18
29	Cartier	18
33	Burger King	16
33	Magnum	16
35	G2 (jet)	14
35	GMC Yukon	14
37	Snoop Dogg Clothing	12
38	Baby Gap	11
38	Ferrari	11
38	Holiday Inn	11





38	Corona	11
38	BET	11
43	Armada	10
43	Baby Phat	10
43	Calvin Klein	10
43	Iceberg	10
43	Levi Strauss	10
43	Sergio Valente	10
49	Footlocker	9
49	Hermes	9
49	Kawasaki	9
49	Hummer	9
53	Polaroid	8
54	AK	7
54	AR-15	7
54	Berreta	7
54	Crown	7
58	Cinnabun	6
58	Tampax	6
60	BMW	5
60	Giovanni (rims)	5
60	Rolls Royce Phantom	5
60	Reebok	5
60	G-Unit	5
60	Sprewell	5
60	Rocawear	5
60	Remy Martin	5
60	Jacob / Jeweller	5
60	Three Dots	5
60	U-Haul	5
60	Purple Label	5
60	Vera Wang	5
73	Barbie	4
73	Brooklyn Mint	4
73	Bulgari	4
73	Jaguar	4
73	Playboy	4
73	Sprite	4
73	Glock	4
73	Teflon	4
81	Hpnotiq	3
82	Energizer	2
83	McDonalds	1
83	Cool Whip	1



**Who said what where**

<b>Song title</b>	<b>Artist</b>	<b>Brands</b>
03 Bonnie and Clyde	Jay-Z Ft. Beyonce	Burberry, Hermes, Manolo Blahnik, Mercedes Benz, Timberland
21 Questions	50 Cent	Bentley, Burger King, Mercedes
Air Force Ones	Nelly	Footlocker, Kawasaki, Louis Vuitton, Nike Air Force Ones, Puma, Timberland
Baby Boy	Beyonce Ft. Sean Paul	Cartier
Beautiful	Snoop Dogg	Snoop Dogg Clothing
Can't Let You Go	Fabolous Ft. Lil Mo	Magnum
Can't Stop Won't Stop	Young Gunz	Rocawear
Change Clothes	Jay-Z	Maybach, Purple Label (Ralph Lauren), Rolls Royce Phantom, U-Haul, Vera Wang
Crazy in Love	Beyonce Ft. Jay-Z	Range Rover
Damn!	Youngbloodz Ft. Lil Jon	Cadillac, Chevrolet, Cristal
Slow Jamz	Twista Ft. Kanye West & Jamie	Cadillac Broughman, Cool Whip, Hennessy



Excuse Me Miss	Jay-Z	Armada, Cristal, Maybach, Mercedes
Get Low	Lil Jon & The East Side Boyz	Hennessy
Gossip Folks	Missy Elliott Ft. Ludacris	Baby Gap, Burberry, Payless, Puma
Hell Yeah	Ginuwine	Belvedere, Cristal, Crown, Gucci, Lexus, Nike Air Force Ones, Prada
Hey Ya!	Outkast	Cadillac, Polaroid
Holiday In	Chingy Ft. Ludacris & Snoop Dogg	BET, Corona, Hennessy, Holiday Inn
I Know What You Want	Busta Rhymes & Mariah Carey	Chevrolet Nova, Gucci, Honda, Lamborghini, Lexus, Rover
Ignition	R Kelly	Jeep, Lexus
In Da Club	50 Cent	Bacardi, K-Mart, Mercedes Benz
In Those Jeans	Ginuwine	Baby Phat, Calvin Klein, Iceberg, Levi Strauss, Prada, Sergio Valente
Into You	Fabolous	Mercedes Benz
Jenny From the Block	Jennifer Lopez	Nike Air Force Ones



Jump Off, The	Lil' Kim	Bacardi, Barbie, Bentley, Brooklyn Mint, Bulgari, Cadillac Escalade, Ferrari, Hummer, Jaguar, Mercedes Benz, Playboy, Range Rover, Sprite, Timberland
Let's Get Down	Bow Wow Ft. Baby Jazze Pha	Burberry, Fendi, Gucci, Mercedes Benz, Prada, Rover
Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous	Good Charlotte	McDonalds
Magic Stick	Lil' Kim Ft. 50 Cent	Lamborghini
Mesmerize	Ja Rule Ft. Ashanti	G2, GMC Yukon
My Love Is Like... Wo	Mya Ft. Missy Elliott	Belvedere
P.I.M.P	50 Cent	BCBG, Burberry, Cadillac, D&G, Fendi, Gucci, Mercedes, Payless, Prada, Ramada Inn
Right Thurr	Chingy	Buick Royal, Sports Illustrated
Runnin' (Dying to Live)	Tupac Ft. The Notorious B.I.G	Glock (gun), Teflon
Shake Your Tailfeather	Nelly, P Diddy & Murphy Lee	Manolo Blahnik
Sick of Being Lonely	Field Mob	Energizer Bunny
Snake	R Kelly	Bentley, Hpnotiq



Stand Up	Ludacris Ft. Shawnna	Louis Vuitton
Stunt 101	G-Unit	Bentley, BMW, Giovanni (rims), G-Unit, Maybach, , Mercedes, Nike, Range Rover, Reebok, Sprewell
Suga Suga	Baby Bash Ft. Frankie J	D&G
Superman	Eminem	Tampax
Thoia Thoing	R Kelly	Cristal, Hummer, Jacob the Jeweler, Remy Martin
Wanksta	50 Cent	AK AR15 Berreta Ferrari
Wat Da Hook Gon Be	Murphy Lee Ft. Jermaine Dupri	Mercedes
Work It	Missy Elliott	Belvedere, Cinnabun



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