



**many times, of course, but I couldn't think what there would be to say about it: It seemed so low rent, so temporary. But the ads kept coming, and soon it was clear that Steven was a phenomenon. The *Wall Street Journal* ran a story on how the series had "made a**





**The message: I happen to think this ad is fantastic, but probably not**

# **The Ad-Friendly World of *Minority Report***

**By Rob Walker**

**Posted Monday, June 24, 2002, at 12:53 PM PT**

**One of the first things we see in the new film *Minority Report* is an ad—a fake political spot touting benefits of the futuristic new form of crime-fighting around which the plot revolves. (Read [the review](#) by *Slate's* David Edelstein for more on this and a spot-on assessment of the actual film.) But most of the marketing messages in this story, set in 2054, push things that aren't science fiction at all: the Gap, Aquafina, American Express. The movie is awash in advertising. And**













# **I Like Spike**

## **By Rob Walkere**



**what counts.**

## **Verizon's Vicious Ferret**

**Can a nasty varmint sell you phone services?**

**By Rob Walker**

**Posted Monday, Nov. 11, 2002, at 7:22 AM PT**

**Everybody knows that sex sells, but what about violence? It may sound counterintuitive to associate a product or service with physical pain in the course of a pitch, but in the ale of *Jackass: The Movie* and *Fear Factor*, getting a kick out of other people's physical discomfort is hardly a taboo. Particularly if there's something kinda funny about it. This theory has beaten its way into the marketing mainstream and is on display in a couple of recent TV spots: one for Verizon mobile messaging (see it [here](#), via Ads.com) and one for the Sony PlayStation (see it [here](#)).**

**The Verizon ad: So there's this guy sitting at home, taunting his**



# **Gramps in Space**

**Sony's new old strategy.**

**By Rob Walker**

**Posted Monday, Nov. 18, 2002, at 3:37 PM PT**



**zoomers aren't stealing that attitude—they invented it.**

## **The Lighter Side of Spam**

**Finding a funny bone in canned meat.**

**By Rob Walker**

**Posted Monday, Dec. 9, 2002, at 11:31 AM PT**





**split screens, we see him waking up at 7:30, picking out a shirt and tie from his variations-on-a-theme wardrobe, riding an escalator in a big, anonymous officelwak6r, pouring himself coffee, shuffling papers, loping through the cubicle jungle, staring out the window in an endless sea of nearly identical windows. Then the process starts**











**meant to represent the tender area under your toenail—"your**







**Now, just the fact that Quiznos has an ad that causes the viewer to think of the word "teat" is troubling enough. (I guess maybe you could tell yourself that he's "suckling," but I don't find that very pleasant, either.) But the puzzle of this ad is even more complex because Quiznos is, after all, selling food.**

**It's not unusual—in fact it's commonplace—for an advertiser to use a "shocking" image to slap viewers/consumers out of their stupor so they'll pay attention long enough to absorb a brand name. There was, for example, the case of the Verizon ferret (man is bitten on tongue by ferret and can summon help with text-messaging) ( name.227). Ac for(p amonablyButdelicious p oducts. Wheacaspunion al c thorirs, lkon**

**AdAge.com.)**

**The commercial begins with a stereotypical Lazy American Man slumped in the living room in front of The Giof 1i8ncommes t foslim**

**be misleading. (You may not know this, but in real life, there is no brand of chewing gum or hair gel that will instantly transform y0 1 into a pulsing object of sexual desire. For instance.) After all, pretty1**



**in the '60s. But there's an ancillary target: The tune's stripped-down, British Invasion sound would fit right in on the *Rushmore* soundtrack, giving it some resonance with a younger crowd. (*Rushmore* actually used a different Who song from the same album.)**

**For to ad entertainment value, this is a fantastic commercial. Visually arresting. Engrossing narrative. (And an unexpectedly wussy, un-**

