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Members of the Slash/Slash generation are the stars of tomorrow. They are the new generation of do-it-allers and excel in a multitude of disciplines woven together by their instinctive adoption of the 'brand-me' phenomenon.

Rise of the Me-Brand

Inspired by self-made entrepreneurs such as hip hop artist Jay-Z who have built up multi-faceted empires, Slash/Slashers create empires founded on the cult of their personality.

Doing it all

Slash/Slash kids have moved the do-it-yourself philosophy up a gear into do-it-all. Why just be a DJ when you can be a DJ with your own fashion line, DJ school, agency and styling career? Slash/Slashers' various 'careers' overlap and cross-promote each other. When they are starting up, they design their own flyers, build their own websites and manage their own stock, rather than employing other people. If this means trying their hand at something new, such as learning a new software package or business principle, so be it.

For many Slash/Slashers, the concept of doing only one thing is anathema. Aberdeen's Sarah J Tingle is a musician, artist, poet and gallery owner. She founded Project Slogan, a community art initiative, and is chief executive of design business Anolog. Asked which she would choose to focus on if she had to, she replies that it would be like choosing between being deaf or blind. 'I'd end up stretching the boundaries of that one thing to fit what I wanted to do,' she says.

Graphic designer, writer, photographer and t-shirt designer Lottie Roue believes there are 'tons' of Slash/Slashers. 'It's part and parcel of being exposed to so much and being able to try so many different things,' she says. 'I know from looking around me that my peers are similar in their broad talents and interests. I guess what it comes down to is: if you can do so many things, why the hell not?'

Paul Griffiths has more than 62,000 friends and the number is growing. He designs his own t-shirt line, Babycakes, and runs the Secret Party Ltd promotions company, which manifests on MySpace as the Clubkids. He models the t-shirts himself ('I tried using proper models but it didn't feel right') and the 15,000 sales he has made since March are fuelled by people buying into his personality by reading his blog, viewing his pictures and watching video uploads of his drunken rants. He is so popular that people have made pseudo-profiles about him and his profile headline is 'Internet Stars Are The New Rockstars'.

New rules

Unlike their creative predecessors, Slash/Slashers don't worry about accessing and integrating with the systems and hierarchies already in place in the entertainment and creative industries: they create their own.

'Getting a booking agent, a good PR, a reliable distributor – all that sounds like a headache,' says street and club magician Liam Walsh. 'I get good press, loads of bookings and things are moving well with my dvd series so why not do it all myself?'

ENABLER BRANDS RULE :

SLASH/SLASHERS DON'T WANT TO BE SPOON-FED THE LATEST PRODUCTS, DESIGNS AND CREATIONS. THEY FAVOUR 'ENABLER' BRANDS THAT ALLOW USERS TO BE CREATIVE ON THEIR OWN TERMS. INTERNET FUNCTIONS, SERVICES AND RETAIL SITES SUCH AS : YOUSENDIT, PAYPAL, FLICKR, YOUTUBE, BIG CARTEL, ALLDIGDOWN, MYSPACE, BEBO AND FACEBOOK ARE VITAL, ALONG WITH MEDIA GIANTS AND BRANDS SUCH AS CHANNEL 4, STELLA ARTOIS (FILMS), CARLING (MUSIC), APPLE, NOKIA, TECHNICS, ADOBE, SONY, MONTANA (SPRAY PAINT) AND VANS (SKATE)

TECH TO GO :

THE CONVERGENCE OF MOBILE PHONES WITH DIGITAL CAMERAS, FILM RECORDERS AND CREATIVE SOFTWARE HAS FUELLED THE PRODUCTIVITY OF SLASH/SLASH KIDS AS THEY CONTINUE THEIR ON-THE-GO LIFESTYLES WHILE CONSTANTLY WORKING. FAVOURITE MODELS ARE :

- SONY ERICSSON K800I
- NOKIA N5SERIES
- IPHONE
- BLACKBERRY
- SONY CYBER-SHOT CAMERA
- CUSTOMISED 4GB MEMORY STICKS
- APPLE MAC LAPTOPS
- MINI DV CAMERAS
- OFFICE/STUDIO/BEDROOM WEBCAM

The opportunities that social networks have given Slash/Slash kids for promotion, networking, building a fan base, distribution and sales are a major contributing factor to this can-do attitude. 'Without MySpace and sites like eBay and Big Cartel there's no way I could have reached as far as I have,' says Kesh, a fashion designer, dj, stylist and model.

Networked generation

For the majority of Slash/Slash kids, social networks are the nucleus of their operations, and being always-on is hard-wired into their lifestyle.



Social networking is the new medium of choice for a generation of 18-24-year-olds. According to a recent survey The Future Laboratory carried out for MySpace, this group would rather spend 15 minutes of free time checking their favourite social networking sites (45%) than watching tv (9%), reading (6%), playing video games (5%), or talking on their mobiles (4%).

OPENING IMAGE : ZEZI IFORE

OPPOSITE PAGE : JAMMER

THIS PAGE : PAUL GRIFFITHS

PHOTOGRAPHY : GILES PRICE



Revenue line

Slash/Slashers are effective moneymakers and were the first to start selling niche creative wares online via PayPal, eBay and Itsy and to launch their own retail spaces on hosting sites such as Big Cartel. Among 18-24-year-olds, 14% have already earned money through social networking and 12% think a good social networking site allows you to make money as well as collect friends.

Digital democracy

The process of producing and displaying creative work has been democratised thanks to the availability of cheaper, broadcast-quality equipment (hand-held digi-cams and camera phones), software (music and film editing home computer programs) and photo and video sharing sites such as MySpace, Flickr and YouTube. Films such as Cloverfield, this season's runaway success from the makers of Lost, are direct products of this 'shot on the fly', cut-and-paste process.

'The opportunity for young people to be part of the creative community has soared,' notes Matthew Taylor, director of the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts. 'The number of young people involved in grime [UK underground music scene] is an indicator we're moving away from the era with a small number of artists and a majority of spectators, to an era where every young person has scope for and feels they can be creative.'

Indie mass appeal

The desire to be 'down' with underground creative collectives has seen 'indie' product lines soar in popularity, as niche products and designers capture even mainstream consumers' interest. Women's fashion behemoth Topshop recently hired underground illustrator Kate Moross to create an exclusive line of t-shirts, while Nike commissioned Canadian painter Alist to produce a limited run of hand-painted Air Force 1 trainers.

System meltdown

Slash/Slash kids are increasingly having an impact on the way people consume and connect with brands, culture and media. Their efforts make it twice as hard for mainstream behemoths to impress consumers in these categories. Raoul Shah of Exposure, a PR and marketing specialist, says: 'The brand is alive and kicking – it's just no longer only controlled by big corporations and traditional media outlets.'

The Slash/Slash generation has separated itself from the traditional brand structure. It has replaced the traditional top-down commerce model, where brands dictated what consumers should buy into, with a new system based on peer networks, peer recommendations and peer approval. Instead of trying to guess what the market wants, Slash/Slash kids think about what they and their friends like and develop a brand around that. This way of thinking makes Slash/Slashers and their followers immune to conventional marketing and advertising.

By Sarah Bentley