

Make some noise

Make some noise is a reality-documentary programme produced by CBC, Canada's national public radio and television broadcaster, and is targeted to 12- to 15-year-old teenagers. The title *Make some noise* reveals the aim of the programme: It shows teenagers who get socio-politically involved in a variety of ways, attracting public attention for social issues or even political scandals. The areas of involvement are as diverse as the teenagers themselves: Their activities include street working (cf. screenshot 1), establishing a music studio (cf. screenshot 2) in Canada, humanitarian campaigns for developing countries (cf. screenshot 3, 4, and 5), and dangerous research on child prostitution (cf. screenshot 6). The programme focusses on the teenagers and their activities, showing the obstacles they face as well as their achievements. The results are both authentic and heroic portraits of young people (cf. screenshot 7) that enable the audience to grasp the motivations of the presented individuals and to develop ideas for their own involvement. The aesthetic and dramaturgic concepts of *Make some noise* include a number of video clip aspects: fast cuts, inserted text elements, and hip-hop or rap music in the background (cf. screenshot 8).

Make some noise was one of the PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONAL 2008 finalists in the 12-15 category.

International experts' opinions

In the international panels at PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONAL 2008, the quality of *Make some noise* was judged controversially. Some experts emphasised that it was the right thing to present the teenagers' socio-political involvement as "cool" and slightly heroic. For others, the idea and intention of the programme were positive while the video clip aesthetics resulted in a superficial presentation. TV experts from developing countries criticised the aid mission of a Canadian teenager who collected shoes for rural children in Malawi, Africa (cf. screenshot 4 and 5). In their opinion, this reinforces the stereotype image of a needy Africa while lacking a deeper understanding of the situation. Others, however, emphasised that the focus was not on particular forms of involvement, but on motivating teenagers in the first place.

"It was very empowering. Sometimes we talk about not being too patronising but I think the programmes for children must bear a really strong message. And this was super-attractive, I was extremely impressed with it." (male expert, Ethiopia)

"It was like a commercial for a programme, too fast. You don't have to have MTV-style editing to reach young people. You need to know the protagonist more in order to get involved. I like the purpose, but I think it could be done much better." (male expert, Sweden)

"The message of sharing and caring is brilliant. But giving out shoes isn't the priority of the people of Malawi. Those from the developed countries tend to suggest what our needs should be. It need not be the priority of the people of Malawi. It is fine for the children to give out shoes, but what are the problems that the people in developing countries face?" (female expert, Ghana)

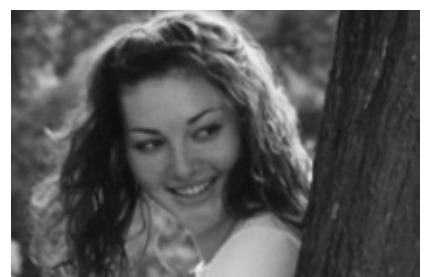
"This is not intended to be a journalistic documentation about the problems in Malawi. This show is to highlight young people and changes that they are trying to make. I think the point is to inspire young people to investigate more." (female expert, USA)



Ill. 1: Former drug addict Dawn (centre) runs a project for street children and criminal teenagers



Ill. 2: Gavin established a music studio for teenagers. It also serves as a youth centre



Ill. 3: Stephanie wants to help Malawi children



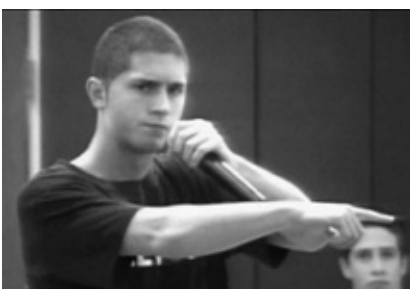
III. 4: Stephanie collects shoes for rural children in Malawi



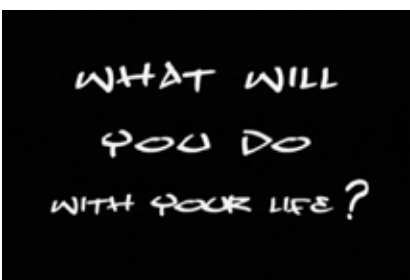
III. 5: The rural children in Malawi are curious about the visitor from Canada



III. 6: Cheryl fights against child labour and child prostitution in Sri Lanka



III. 7: Joe delivers a dramatic speech about child soldiers in Sierra Leone



III. 8: Text elements using video clip aesthetics

Teenagers' opinions

Students aged 14 to 16 and of various international origins of the European School in Munich watched and discussed the programme in several groups. Almost all agreed that it was a programme made by teenagers for teenagers, thus being able to reach its target group. They were interested in the different characters and their motivations.

"Yes, I think I would watch that because it isn't just a boring documentary, but gets across its message very well and is well made, too." (male teen)

"I thought it was quite good because there were so many people from very different groups, not just the ones who you really expect to get involved for others, those who sit at home all day and study for school and so on, but really a wide range of people." (male teen)

...does it motivate them?...

Most of the students emphasised they were impressed by the protagonists' involvement and thought their central role in the episodes was justified. At the same time they pointed out that they would not have the self-confidence to get involved in the same manner.

Some expressed the opinion that socio-political involvement could only be achieved by self-motivation, not through TV. Furthermore, they thought that taking over responsibility should not predominantly be the role of individual teenagers, but the role of the state or the whole society.

"That you want to be like them. You almost regard them as heroes." (female teen)

"Well, yes, I find that extremely cool, because I wouldn't do that. Maybe this is a motivation for other young people that not only grown-ups can do something, but you also see that young people can change something. Adults and foundations, they have money – but you can do things more easily. Those teenagers, they're actually more or less in the same position as we are." (male teen)

"Well, I think it is not enough to do this on TV because people see this and say 'Ok, they do good things but I'm not gonna do this any day.' What I think is that the money should be given to the government and not only to two guys who save children but another hundred are dying." (male teen)

...individual preferences...

When asked whether they particularly liked one of the examples shown, some preferred the relief operation for Malawi, which was perceived as a selfless action. Others emphasised the need for sustainable involvement in contrast to one-time aid operations. Being Western teenagers, they were unbothered by a too one-sided, Western picture of developing countries, as it only showed what they were used to.

"Well, I found the hip-hop thing (i.e. Gavin's project) not as relevant as the girl who went to Africa. He addresses Western people, whereas the others help poor people in Africa." (female teen) – "But the special thing about the guy (i.e. Gavin) was that he didn't just do one project, like the girl with the shoes. She went down to Africa, but only once. He, on the other hand, established a studio, which became kind of a small youth centre." (male teen)

"The perspective that African children are always shown as needy, well, that didn't really bother me, as this is what we are always told. So we aren't used to anything else." (male teen)