Orchestrating Public Opinion

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1. The Age of Innocence: 1952

In 1952, Elizabeth II acceded to the throne of the United Kingdom. The world learned from Prime Minister Winston Churchill that Great Britain had developed the atomic bomb (it was tested in October of the same year). Fulgencio Batista returned to power in Cuba. A peace treaty between Japan and the United States was ratified. Anne Frank’s diary was first published in English. Puerto Rico wrote and approved a Constitution, becoming a commonwealth of the United States with some autonomy. John Cage’s experimental piece 4’33” saw its premiere in Woodstock, New York. The first hydrogen bomb was detonated by the US at an atoll in the Pacific Ocean. Eisenhower traveled to Korea to try to bring the conflict to a conclusion. A front-page report in The New York Daily News detailed the successful sexual reassignment surgery of Christine Jorgensen.

Characteristic of the first decade of presidential television political ads is the naïve earnestness with which politicians, political entities, and ad agencies address the public. They had the same approach as product commercials. The “hard sell” approach was the style championed by ad creator Rosser Reeves; his most famous example might be a cartoon rendering of hammers pounding inside a man’s head in a 1950s spot for Anacin. The majority of ads treated voters as thoughtful beings and made appeals either to logos (focusing on a candidate’s issue stances or previous accomplishments) or to ethos (featuring respected authority figures endorsing the candidate). According to Aristotle in Ars Rhetorica, there are three modes of persuasion: logos (appeal to reason), ethos (appeal through the speaker’s character), and pathos (appeal to emotion). Product commercials of the time discussed products’ features, such as effectiveness, durability, and price, and compared them to those of the competition (logos); they also used celebrities to speak in favor of products (ethos). What they did not often do was to make an appeal to emotion (pathos). Political ads in this decade followed suit by discussing candidate stances on specific issues more often than is done these days.

In addition, in ads from the 1950s, candidates treat each other with respect, each accepting as axiomatic that an opponent is well-intentioned, albeit with a different worldview. There is no hint of the kind of ruthless ad hominem attacks, scandal seeking, and muckraking that would characterize campaigns in decades to follow—and, it must be noted, had characterized elections in early America—where at times it is implied that the country will devolve into a post-apocalyptic dystopia if the opposing candidate is
elected to serve for the next four years. Decorum and decency were the order of the day.

Finally, music appears rarely in political ads of the 1950s, more rarely than in commercials. When it is present, it is usually as a jingle or for general atmosphere. It won’t be used rhetorically—as an argument unto itself—until the end of the next decade, when the Nixon campaign will use it to great effect in both advocacy ads and attack ads against Hubert Humphrey. First we will examine one of the most iconic television ads in US history.

CASE STUDY
Ike for President
Citizens for Eisenhower
Producer: Roy (Oliver) Disney
01:00

Because the Eisenhower Library contains the extant original documents associated with his two presidential campaigns, we can learn something about how “I Like Ike” (“Ike for President”) was conceived and produced.1 Addressed to “Mr. Roy [O.] Disney, Plaza Hotel, New York City,” a Western Union telegram of September 30, 1952 written by campaign operative Jacqueline Cochran2 reads:

JUST TALKED TO MR. JOCK WHITNEY TO TRY TO GET ASSURANCE THAT YOUR WONDERFUL SHORT WOULD HAVE NATIONAL TELEVISION COVERAGE STOP I AM WIRING MR. WHITNEY TO PHONE YOU AT PLAZA STOP I PERSONALLY BELIEVE THE PROPOSED SHORT COULD BE THE GREATEST PIECE OF PROPAGANDA IN THIS WHOLE CAMPAIGN AND I CERTAINLY HOPE IT CAN GO ON A NATIONAL HOOKUP.3 THANKS AND REGARDS.

JACQUELINE COCHRAN

1 The Presidential Records Act of 1978 complicates public access to the records of Ronald Reagan and his successors.
2 Cochran had an exciting life in her own right as a military and commercial aviator, test pilot, cosmetics business owner, Republican congressional candidate, and friend and campaign worker of Eisenhower.
3 This and the following full stop after “regards” are in the original telegram.
A letter of October 2, 1952, by Cochran and addressed to Mr. George Carlson of the accounting firm Ernst & Ernst and with copies to Paul Helms and William Anderson, reads:

Dear Mr. Carlson:

A large group of artists, musicians, lyricists and producers of the Walt Disney organization have gotten together and, on a voluntary basis on their own time, are in the process of producing a most extraordinary one minute short which is an animated cartoon called “WE LIKE IKE”. They are also producing a 20 second animated cartoon in the same character.

The lyrics that accompany this one minute short and the plans for the short have been presented to several people, including Mr. Paul Hoffman and Mr. Paul Helms, and everyone is overwhelmingly impressed and enthusiastic over this piece of propaganda.

The only expense involved in connection with these two shorts is certain laboratory costs which it is impossible for the group at Disney’s to contribute.

Mr. Paul Helms contributed $1000, which has been deposited in the special account you are handling, and he gave me permission to use his contribution for this purpose.

Mr. William Anderson of the Walt Disney Studio will submit to you in the next ten days an invoice, covering the laboratory costs incurred in making these cartoons and the cost of making several prints. These costs will not exceed $1000. Will you kindly send Mr. Anderson a check to cover the invoice.

Sincerely,
Jacqueline Cochran

Dated October 9, 1952, a music cue sheet for what was called “We’ll Take Ike” reads:

Sponsored by “Citizens for Eisenhower Committee”
I. —1 minute spot:
   “We’ll Take Ike”
   Words and Music: Gil George and Paul Smith
   Publisher Assigned: Walt Disney Music Company

4 This presentation preserves the original orthography of the letter, including errors.
Total Footage: 90 feet  
Total Time: 60 seconds

Usage: Visual Vocal—Complete

II. —20 second spot:
“We’ll Take Ike”
Words and Music: Gil George and Paul Smith
Publisher Assigned: Walt Disney Music Company

Total Footage: 30 feet  
Total Time: 20 seconds

Usage: Visual Vocal—Partial

In a letter written to Jacqueline Cochran on November 14, ten days after the election, Roy O. Disney writes:

Dear Miss Cochran:
As requested in your letter of November 6th I am enclosing a list of the Disney employees who contributed their time and efforts to the production of the Eisenhower cartoon.

The boys and girls all enjoyed working on the project and, of course, we are all very happy at the outcome of the election.

Kindest regards.

Sincerely,
[signature]
ROD: MW
Roy O. Disney
Enc.5

The enclosed list contained the names of 53 people who contributed to the ad. At the top were Gil George and Paul Smith. Smith was correctly listed as “Composer,” but George was listed as “Nurse,” which was crossed out and “Song Lyrics” written in by hand. (Her day-to-day job was a nurse for Walt Disney.)

5 Again, this transcription follows the orthography of the letter.
“Ike for President” is a catchy tune that burrows its way into viewers’ minds upon the first hearing. Part of its contagious character can be attributed to the ostinato in the bass, “Ike for President.” The ostinato is a repetitive tonal motive (Ike—5for—6Pre-si—7dent—Ike), which occurs fifteen times in the ad in exactly this guise (see Figure 1.1), and another four times with the same words and different melodies. With “Ike” as the word on the resolution of the tonal and rhythmic tension, the ad situates Eisenhower positively. The general character of the cartoon ad is jauntily militaristic, with parades of citizens following an Uncle Sam drum major.

![Fig. 1.1: Bass line of Eisenhower’s “I Like Ike”](image)

Eisenhower’s nickname receives metrical, rhythmic, and tonal emphasis: “Ike” is heard at the beginning of every measure, it is accented, and it is on the tonic. “President,” on the other hand, is unstressed, and is on the submediant and leading tone. In fact, the word “Ike” is given so much prominence, one might almost get the impression that Eisenhower’s personality is more important in this ad than the Presidency itself.

At first we see “Eisenhower for President” across the screen with a bouncing IKE campaign button underneath while music plays. The ad starts in D major, later changing keys to the remote key of F major. The tempo is 120 beats per minute, the most common tempo for marching. After the bouncing button, we see a drum major, an elephant with caricature of Eisenhower around his body, an IKE banner proudly unfurled from his trunk, and beating a rolling bass drum with his tail in time to the music. Subsequently we see a parade of men and women whose professions are clearly identifiable by their clothing: businessman, cook, nurse, cowboy, banker, pipefitter, teacher.

Here is the transcript of “Ike for President”:
[TEXT: A PAID POLITICAL ANNOUNCEMENT. PAID FOR BY Citizens for Eisenhower.]

[TEXT: EISENHOWER FOR PRESIDENT]

GROUP (singing): Ike for president, Ike for president, Ike for president, Ike for president.

You like Ike, I like Ike,
Everybody likes Ike—for president.
Hang out the banners, beat the drums,
We'll take Ike to Washington.

We don't want John or Dean or Harry.
Let's do that big job right.
Let's get in step with the guy that's hep.
Get in step with Ike.

You like Ike, I like Ike,
Everybody likes Ike—for president.
Hang out the banners, beat the drums,
We'll take Ike to Washington.

We've got to get where we are going,
Travel day and night—for president.
But Adlai goes the other way.
We'll all go with Ike.

You like Ike, I like Ike,
Everybody likes Ike—for president.
Hang out the banner, beat the drums,
We'll take Ike to Washington.

We'll take Ike to Washington!

You like Ike, I like Ike,
Everybody likes Ike—for president.
Hang out the banner, beat the drums,
We'll take Ike to Washington.

Ike for president, Ike for president, Ike for president, Ike for president ...

[TEXT: VOTE FOR EISENHOWER]

MALE NARRATOR: Now is the time for all good Americans to come to the aid of their country. Vote for Eisenhower.
As we hear, “We don’t want John or Dean or Harry,” we see Democratic donkeys behind a fence: curly-haired John Sparkman (Senator from Alabama and Stevenson’s running mate), mustachioed Dean Stockwell (Secretary of State under Harry Truman), and bespectacled Harry Truman. Then the parade continues, and we see a businessman, firefighter, painter, milkmaid, architect/draftsman, and police officer. After that, a farmer appears alone driving a tractor, followed by a couple with a dog and baby. At “But Ad-uh-lay goes the other way” we are treated to a caricature of Stevenson in shadow on donkey, riding in the opposite direction of Ike and everybody else in the parade; Stevenson is of course riding to the left (as we might expect a left-winger to do).

Subsequently, with an abrupt key change to F, we get the drum major again, followed by the bass drum beating elephant; these repeated elements neatly frame the ad as it comes to a close. Then we see a plane flying over the US Capitol Building with—what else?—an “IKE” banner. After that, a close-up on the Capitol dome, and a pan up with the sun rising behind it as the music reaches its climax with a high F. The sun has an IKE label, making the choice of Eisenhower for President a solar system-wide choice. A striking modulation from D to F—a key three accidentals removed—lends energy and momentum to the ad just as viewer attention might begin to flag.

Finally, we see the Eisenhower for President with the “IKE” campaign button tableau, though this time the button has settled down and remains still even as the “Ike for President” ostinato resumes. The narrator intones: “Now is the time for all good Americans to come to the aid of their country. Vote for Eisenhower.” The famous “Now is the time for all good Americans to come to the aid of their party” typing test becomes a party-transcending appeal to voters to be there for their country, because (it is implied) a vote for someone beside Eisenhower must be an antipatriotic betrayal. It is a call for all good Americans to come to the aid of “their” party, after all. Good Americans belong to the Republican Party, it would seem. Voting for Eisenhower is presented here as a patriotic act that is for the good of the nation, leaving the converse proposition unspoken: are those voting for Stevenson unpatriotic?

This ad has a communal aspect, inherent in the choral nature of the music. One gets the impression of crowds of supporters expressing their intention to vote the Republican ticket. This stands in stark contrast to the Stevenson ad of the same year featuring a solo jazz singer who sings “I Love the Gov’,” which we will examine subsequently. Whereas the woman in “I Love the Gov’” seems to be singing directly to each voter in an intimate setting, “I Like Ike” has all manner of people singing together in harmony.
about their choice. Ironically, jazz, the medium of the Stevenson ad, is the milieu from which the term “hip” came, but “I Like Ike” presents the former five-star general as the hip cat: “Get in step with the guy that’s hip” [pronounced “hep”].

As a curious aside, we might note that the text of “I Like Ike” is strikingly similar to a Negro spiritual, “All God’s Chillun.” The similarity between the two songs does not end with the parallelism of the lyrics; it also extends to the melody and rhythm, which are so close that one has to wonder whether the composer of the song was subconsciously mimicking the spiritual or even intentionally doing so.

You like Ike, I like Ike, everybody likes Ike (for President)
I got wings, you got wings, all God’s chillun got wings.

I Love the Gov’
Stevenson
01:20

The contrast between “I Like Ike” and its counterpart for the Stevenson campaign could hardly be more apparent. Stevenson was finding it difficult to present himself as a man of the people in relation to Eisenhower. Visual and aural elements in “I Love the Gov’” imply elite status. Music here is too clever by half, a bit too sophisticated for a political ad. In contrast, the simple music and lyrics for “I Like Ike” as well as the march genre seem much more suited for a mid-century political advertisement.

Music here is intimate—a piano accompanying a female singer. In essence, lounge music in F major. Standing in front of a camelback sofa, we see a woman in an elegant black sleeveless evening gown with a prominent belt, brooch, necklace, and earrings. She is well-coiffed, relaxed, and she smiles at the camera as she sings. The ad is fairly cringe-worthy for contemporary viewers.

Lyrics in “I Love the Gov’” are too complex to be completely grasped after just a couple of viewings. “A man with a hole in his shoe” is of course

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6 I am grateful to one of the anonymous reviewers of this manuscript for this valuable insight.
Stevenson, who was the subject of a Pulitzer Prize-winning photo taken by Bill Gallagher during the candidate’s 1952 campaign.

The first line attempts to turn the weakness into a strength. Here is the transcript:

WOMAN (singing): I'd rather have a man with a hole in his shoe
    Than a hole in everything he says.
    I'd rather have a man who knows what to do
    When he gets to be the Prez.
    I love the Gov’, the Governor of Illinois.
    He is the guy that brings the dove of peace and joy.
    When Illinois the GOP double-crossed,
    He is the one who told all the crooks, “Get lost.”
    Adlai, love you madly,
    And what you did for your own great state,
    You're gonna do for the rest of the 48.
    Didn't know much about him before he came,
    But now my heart’s a ballot that bears his name.
    'Cause listen to what he has to say,
    I know that on election day,
    We're gonna choose the Gov' that we love.
    He is the Gov' nobody can shove.
    We'll make the Gov' the president of the you, the me, and the USA!

The whole raison d'être of this ad is as a response to “I Like Ike.” Naming an ad in a way that evokes one’s opponent’s ad (one which is better produced to boot) is not a winning strategy. Certain feminized aspects of Stevenson's onscreen demeanor appear magnified somehow by this woman. The singer conveys an open sexuality; as she sings, she flirts with the camera. She doesn’t just “like Ike,” she “loves the Gov’” American voters rarely express love for a candidate, as it seems too extreme an emotion for a constituent to have for his or her government representative.

In contrast to the join-the-parade-be-one-of-the-crowd welcoming nature of “I Like Ike,” “I Love the Gov’” is an intimate appeal. This is no movement, no sense of commonality—only a woman singing seductively to the camera. Instead of an orchestra and chorus, there is a pianist and a singer. It’s the type of ad that might have turned off some female viewers and made some male viewers uncomfortable.

By its very nature, seduction is a private act. A winking eye can suggest a secret shared between two lovers (or potential lovers). It certainly does not
invite others into the closed circle of trust. So a voter might subconsciously accept the idea that voting for Stevenson is a private act—not to be shared with others. The genre of the lounge jazz song supports this idea. Although performing in front of a group, a singer in a lounge setting intends to make each man imagine that she is singing to him and only him.

But even if we reject the lounge singer trope as too on the nose, this singer in this setting would otherwise be singing to a select group of individuals at a private party, the type of establishment where a Schubert song is played and sung by family members of the host or hostess. So in any reading this is music for a small number of people, and it doesn’t come across as music for the masses.

This type of jazz music does not invite, it excludes. It might seem as though viewers are intruding on an intimate moment. In contrast, Eisenhower’s chorus and parade of “just folks” from all walks of life in “I Like Ike” is plainly inclusive. All are invited to join in. The march’s military aspect also comports with the normative masculine viewer’s expectations for a presidential candidate. Ike’s ad is comfortable and reassuring, in a way that Stevenson’s is not. The contrast between these ads vividly illustrates the different ways the two candidates were perceived by the American public.

Music is able to reinforce or countervail such stereotypes, and not only in broad strokes such as female/male, intimate/public, or jazz/march, but it can also highlight dichotomies such as urban/rural, rich/poor, sophisticated/simple, and so on. A march-like “I Like Ike” conveys a masculine sensibility; it avoids subtlety and nuance like that in “I Love the Gov”.

Adlai to You
Stevenson
00:15

One ad introducing Stevenson to voters outside of Illinois made a point of his unusual and unfamiliar given name. Stevenson had holes in his shoes and was a Princeton intellectual and an American blueblood. The Stevenson family was prominent in Illinois politics. Many Americans had trouble identifying with the man given his social and intellectual capital. He came across as earnest but stiff and somewhat aloof. Whenever a candidate feels the need to give voters a tutorial on how to pronounce his name, he is already at a disadvantage. Eisenhower (and many men in his family) had

8 Richard Nixon called him an "egghead."
had the nickname “Ike” since childhood, so it was natural for him to use it during his campaigns. Easy to remember and conveniently rhyming with “like,” “Ike” was a winner’s name.

The animated figure in “Adlai to You” begins as a mortar-boarded, gowned professor with a baton pointing to “ADLAI,” written twice on the blackboard. Two-thirds of the way through, the “prof” jumps up and turns around, at the same time transforming into Uncle Sam. He then marks an X under one of the Adlais and the name “Stevenson” appears.

As in “I Like Ike,” there is choral singing, but here, curiously, there are only male vocalists. Accompanying the male chorus is a piano with a simple I—vi—ii—V chord progression in C (C—Am—Dm—G). “Adlai” is only mentioned four times in the fifteen-second spot, and his surname only once. But the first name is pronounced two different ways, each sung twice. In the end, viewers never learn what the correct pronunciation might be. The final cadence in piano is answered a cappella by the chorus “Stevenson!” This highlights his surname prominently. Nevertheless, “Adlai to You” is a relatively ineffective ad in general, not least because of the music.

In the next chapter, we will find less music in the ads, but again it will be the Republican candidate who used music to make an ad stand out from the rest.