

THE MEDIA EDUCATION FOUNDATION PRESENTS

# SHOP 'TIL YOU DROP

The Crisis of  
Consumerism

A film by Gene Brockhoff



## FILM SYNOPSIS

Are we too materialistic? Are we willfully trashing the planet in our pursuit of things? And what's the source of all this frenetic consumer energy and desire anyway? In a fast-paced tour of the ecological and psychological terrain of American consumer culture, *Shop 'Til You Drop* challenges us to confront these questions head-on. Taking aim at the high-stress, high-octane pace of fast-lane materialism, the film moves beneath the seductive surfaces of the commercial world to show how the flip side of accumulation is depletion -- the slow, steady erosion of both natural resources and basic human values. In the end, *Shop 'Til You Drop* helps us make sense of the economic turbulence of the moment, providing an unflinching, riveting look at the relationship between the limits of consumerism and our never-ending pursuit of happiness.

## PRAISE FOR THE FILM

"[*Shop 'Til You Drop*] takes viewers from the Industrial Revolution to the present, concentrating on the 1950s through the 1970s, when women moved into the workforce, celebrity culture saturated the media, and suburban dwellers worked harder than ever to keep up with the Joneses. Now, of course, they work even longer hours and rack up more debt, leading to a host of social problems. Recommended."

- ***Video Librarian***

"A fast-paced blend of expert interviews, photo and film montages, and background music ... the program sends a powerful message as interviewed writers, artists, professors, and others make well-reasoned arguments about consumerism and the steady erosion of natural resources and values."

- ***Booklist***

"Bringing together an impressive line-up of scholars and activists of late capitalism and contemporary consumption... and seasoned with entertaining and visually dazzling clips and images, the film makes a strong case for an essential problem deep in the heart of capitalism. *Shop 'Til You Drop* is a powerful and memorable bit of filmmaking. We have all heard the issues before, and perhaps we are overwhelmed by them, even exhausted by them. But the message of the film, together with its compelling visuals, makes it appealing even as it is disquieting. Suitable for high school and college courses in cultural anthropology, anthropology of globalization/capitalism, environmental anthropology, anthropology of popular culture, and American/modern studies, as well as general audiences."

- ***Anthropology Review Database***

## NOTABLE QUOTES FROM THE FILM

**JULIET SCHOR | Author of *The Overspent American***

“If you are a typical consumer you did not always have so much. There was probably a time in your adult life when you could fit everything you owned into your car and drive off into the sunset. Now you need professionals to transport your possessions.”

**CECILE ANDREWS | Author of *Slow is Beautiful***

“They’ve switched. It used to be: if buy this, then you’ll be popular, now it’s: buy this and you’ll be happy.”

**JOHN DeGRAAF | Co-author of *Take Back Your Time***

“Sweden doesn’t allow marketing to kids under twelve, neither does the Province of Quebec, and neither should we.”

**PETER WHYBROW | Author of *American Mania***

“We have to consciously say to ourselves: ‘How much of this do I need?’”

**PETER WHYBROW | Author of *American Mania***

“We are continuously looking for new things -- so everybody wants a new cell phone even though the old cell phone still works perfectly.”

**JULIET SCHOR | Author of *The Overspent American***

“Consumption is about social communication and social connection. The problem isn’t that consumption is social. That’s a good thing. The problem is that we’re socially communicating and connecting in very perverse and dysfunctional ways.”

**JAMES B. TWITCHELL | Professor of Advertising & Culture at the University of Florida**

“For the first time he really laid out the importance of consumption as a way of defining self, that you would ‘consume,’ as [Thorsten Veblin] said, ‘conspicuously’ because you wanted somebody else to see exactly who you were.”

**JULIAN DARLEY | Co-founder of the Post Carbon Institute**

“All of this basically comes down to the fact that if you concentrate resources in one place, and take them from another place, that increases polarization. And there you have at least one of the roots of a fairly profound form of economic injustice.”

**DUANE ELGIN | Author of *Voluntary Simplicity***

“The average person sees about 25,000 commercials on television a year. And every commercial is not simply a pitch for a product. It’s a pitch for a set of values and attitude towards life.”

**ROD GORNEY | Ashley Montagu Institute**

“I think the biggest threat we face as a species is the gap between how urgent it is that we learn to change our values and predominantly take care of each other and the enormous rage and revenge that people around the world are seeking for the fact that they are mostly exploited.”

## BIOGRAPHIES

**Cecile Andrews** is the author of *Slow Is Beautiful: New Visions of Community, Leisure and Joie de Vivre* and *The Circle of Simplicity: Return to the Good Life*. A former community college administrator, Andrews has been a visiting scholar at Stanford University and affiliated scholar at Seattle University. She is founder of the Phinney Ecovillage in Seattle. Her work has been featured in the PBS video *Escape from Affluenza* and the TBS video *Consumed by Consumption*, CBS News *Eye on America*, *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Esquire*, and various PBS and NPR programs. Andrews has written a column for the *Seattle Times* and she has co-hosted a local NPR program. She received her doctorate in education at Stanford University and gives workshops and presentations.

**Julian Darley** is the co-founder, with Celine Rich, of Global Public Media and its parent organization Post Carbon Institute. He was Global Public Media's chief correspondent, and President of Post Carbon Institute from 2003 to 2008. In 2008 Julian received an M. King Hubbert award from the Association for the Study of Peak Oil & Gas - USA for his work in making Global Public Media a leading international resource on peak oil analysis and discussion. Julian is the author of *High Noon for Natural Gas: the New Energy Crisis*. He has an MSc in Environment and Social Research from University of Surrey in the UK, an MA in Journalism and Communications from the University of Texas at Austin, and a BA in Music & Russian. Julian lives in London, England.

**John de Graaf** is the national coordinator of Take Back Your Time, an organization challenging time poverty and overwork in the U.S. and Canada, and a frequent speaker on issues of overwork and over-consumption in America. John is the co-author of the best-selling *Affluenza: The All-Consuming Epidemic*. John has worked with KCTS-TV, the Seattle PBS affiliate, for 24 years, as an independent producer of television documentaries. He is also the recipient of more than 100 regional, national and international awards for filmmaking, including three Emmy awards. He produced the popular PBS specials, *Running out Of Time*, an examination of overwork and time pressure in America, and *Affluenza*, a humorous critique of American consumerism.

**Duane Elgin** is an author, speaker, educator, consultant, and media activist. He pioneered the "Voluntary Simplicity" movement with his now classic first book, titled by the same name, published in the 1980s. The book provided an exploration of the practical and philosophical meaning of simplicity, as well as a comprehensive overview of the precarious ecological predicament of our planet. His current activist agenda is to transform the media, particularly television, which he sees as our greatest environmental risk factor because violent and materialistic programming has a devastating effect on human consciousness and behavior. Elgin has cofounded three nonprofit organizations concerned with media accountability.

**Rod Gorney** is a psychiatrist and media activist, and an adjunct faculty professor UCLA School of Medicine. He is the founder and director of the Ashley Montagu Institute, director of the Program on Psychosocial Adaptation and the Future and pioneering media research project "Mass Entertainment and Human Survival." He is also the author of *The Human Agenda: How to Be At Home in the Universe Without Magic*.

**Eli Jaxon-Bear's** 18-year spiritual path started in 1971, when he was a federal fugitive during the Vietnam War. In 1978, Kalu Rinpoche appointed him the president of the first Kagyu dharma center in Marin County. Eli currently meets people and teaches through the Leela Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to world peace and freedom through universal self-realization. He is the author

of *Sudden Awakening into Direct Realization, The Enneagram of Liberation: From Fixation to Freedom*, and he is the editor of *Wake Up and Roar: Satsang with H.W.L. Poonja*.

**Chris Jordan**, photographer, trains his eye on American consumption. His 2003-05 series "Intolerable Beauty" examines the hypnotic allure of the sheer amount of stuff we make and consume every day: cliffs of baled scrap; small cities of shipping containers; endless grids of mass-produced goods; and more. His 2005 book *In Katrina's Wake: Portraits of Loss from an Unnatural Disaster* is a chilling, unflinching look at the toll of the Hurricane Katrina. And his latest series of photographs, "Running the Numbers," gives dramatic life to statistics of US consumption.

**Dave Room** co-founded Bay Localize to raise awareness of and build the capacity for localization in the Bay Area. He founded Energy Preparedness as a response to the lack of planning in the municipal and commercial realm to our energy predicament and The Hubbert Tribute to decipher U.S. energy policy history over the past five decades. Previously, he played a key role in many aspects of Post Carbon Institute's emergence including conceptual frameworks, web design and development, policy, outreach, and fundraising. He is a frequent lecturer and author of the forthcoming *The Green Pill*. He has a B.S. in Electrical Engineering and an M.S. in Engineering Economic Systems, both from Stanford University.

**Juliet Schor** is Professor of Sociology at Boston College. Before joining Boston College, she taught at Harvard University for seventeen years, in the Department of Economics and the Committee on Degrees in Women's Studies. Schor's latest book is *Born to Buy: The Commercialized Child and the New Consumer Culture*. *Born to Buy* is both an account of marketing to children from inside the agencies and firms and an assessment of how these activities are affecting children. Schor is author of the national bestseller, *The Overworked American: The Unexpected Decline of Leisure* and *The Overspent American: Why We Want What We Don't Need*. *The Overworked American* appeared on the bestseller lists of *The New York Times*, *Publisher's Weekly*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *The Village Voice*, *The Boston Globe* as well as the annual best books list for *The New York Times*, *Business Week* and other publications. The book is widely credited for influencing the national debate on work and family. *The Overspent American* was also made into a video of the same name by the Media Education Foundation.

**James Twitchell** is Professor of English and Advertising. He received his Ph.D. from UNC-Chapel Hill and has been at Florida since 1972. He has written many books, including *Adcult USA: The Triumph of Advertising in America*; *For Shame: The Loss of Common Decency in American Culture*; *Lead Us Into Temptation: The Triumph of American Materialism*; *Twenty Ads That Shook The World: The Century's Most Groundbreaking Advertising*; *Living It Up: America's Love Affair With Luxury*; *Branded Nation: The Marketing of Megachurch, College Inc., and Museumworld*; and *Shopping for God: How Christianity Went from In Your Heart to In Your Face*.

**Peter C. Whybrow, M.D.** is Director of the Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior at the University of California in Los Angeles. He is also the Judson Braun Distinguished Professor and Executive Chair of the Department of Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences at the David Geffen School of Medicine and CEO of the Resnick Neuropsychiatric Hospital at UCLA. Born in England, Dr. Whybrow received his training in endocrinology and psychiatry in London and North Carolina and was a member of the scientific staff of the British Medical Research Council before migrating to America to join the faculty of Dartmouth Medical School where he served as Chairman of Psychiatry and later as Executive Dean. He was subsequently the Ruth Meltzer Professor and Chairman of Psychiatry at the University of Pennsylvania before being recruited to UCLA in 1997.

## CREDITS

A "Well Crafted Films" Production  
Produced, directed & edited by Gene Brockhoff  
Cinematography & Sound Recoding Jeff Deveraux  
Post Audio & Sound Design B.Z. Lewis  
Animation & Motion Graphics Kiko Taganashi  
Narrated by Alex Peterson  
Original Music Jonah Sharp

Music William Tell Overture  
G. Rossini

Dibbuk's Dirge Rosin Coven  
©2003 Pagan Lounge Music/BMI

Apocalypse In Progress  
Beth Vanderveneet & B.Z. Lewis

101 South of Heaven Spacetime Continuum  
(Space Monkey Music/BMI) Written & Produced by Jonah Sharp

Nordform Spacetime Continuum  
(Space Monkey Music/BMI) Written & Produced by Jonah Sharp

Voice of the Earth Version Spacetime Continuum  
(Space Monkey Music/BMI) Written & Produced by Jonah Sharp

Subway Remix  
Written & Produced by Jonah Sharp

Falmmable Slotmachine  
(Space Monkey Music/BMI)

Another Story Spacetime Continuum  
(Space Monkey Music/BMI) Written & Produced by Jonah Sharp

Reconcile Spacetime Continuum  
(Space Monkey Music/BMI) Written & Produced by Jonah Sharp

Armageddon (Come N' Get It)  
Justin Katz ©2000 Pagan Lounge Music/BMI

UNITED STATES • 2010 • 52 mins • Shot on Mini-DV • Color • NTSC • BETA/DVD/DVCAM  
Aspect Ratio 4:3 • Stereo • English/English Subtitles

## ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

### **GENE BROCKHOFF | Producer & Editor**

Gene Brockhoff has no history in film. He has been and still is a flooring contractor who made this film in his spare time. "Nobody else was doing films about consumerism, so I thought I'd fill the void," he says. "It was also a way for me to confront my own desires for materialism." In the making of the film, he became very proficient with Apple's editing software Final Cut Pro and did some of the cinematography as well. "I discovered a love of editing and the trillions of possibilities. I'm a possibility junkie!" He is still available in the SF Bay Area for installing and refinishing hardwood flooring in a sustainable and non-toxic way.

### **MEDIA EDUCATION FOUNDATION | Distributor & Sales Rep**

The non-profit Media Education Foundation (MEF) is the nation's leading producer and distributor of educational videos designed to inspire students and others to reflect critically on the structure of media industries and the content they produce. Founded in 1991, MEF's mission is to answer the challenge posed by the radical and accelerating corporate threat to democracy.

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The non-profit Media Education Foundation produces and distributes documentary films and other educational resources to inspire critical reflection on the social, political, and cultural impact of American mass media.

[www.mediaed.org](http://www.mediaed.org)