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Bring on the Stones

## These Duds Are For You

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As tough as it may be to imagine Keith Richards in a crisp polo shirt with a snappy red-and-blue logo, it is sportswear designer Tommy Hilfiger who is sponsoring the "No Security" tour that comes into town Sunday and Monday.

Hilfiger customers who are contest winners will be down front for the show, where the Jumbotrons will be pulsing the Hilfiger emblem before the concert begins.

The Rolling Stones started the corporate sponsorship trend in 1981, when they announced that Jovan perfume would sponsor their U.S. tour.

The man behind the tie-in was **Jay Coleman of Entertainment Marketing Communications Inc.**

"It got a lot of attention for a lot of reasons," says Coleman, who moved the EMCI offices to Stamford six years ago. "Something like that hadn't happened before. At the time, the Stones were so iconoclastic - the bad boys of rock 'n' roll - the idea of doing something with a corporation was unusual.

"But for the Stones, it was a way to generate a piece of revenue they didn't have before."

For Jovan, a struggling musk oil company, "it put them on the map in a major way."

Every Stones tour since has had a sponsor, from Budweiser in 1989 to Sprint in 1997 to Hilfiger now. After Jovan, though, some performers maintained the connection between music and advertising had an odor all its own - especially when tours started to be sponsored by cigarette and alcohol companies.

The Who were especially criticized for using Miller Beer as a sponsor of one of its farewell tours. Rock musicians began a sort of synergy that saw them appearing -in commercials as well as playing beneath beer banners on stage.

But few have been as willing as the Rolling Stones, who have allowed the band's lips and tongue logo to be adapted by advertisers. For Sprint, the logo appeared with the phone company's trademark pin through the tongue.

This year the red lips appear on the Tommy Hilfiger flag of blue and red.

The rationale behind corporate sponsorships was to help bands offset the costs of expensive tours. But with the Stones charging up to \$300 for tickets on the current tour, how much extra help do they need?

In this case, an association with Hilfiger, a hot label among young people who may not listen to the Stones, may inject hipness by association.

"Tommy Hilfiger is a powerhouse in the youth market," said Michael Cohl, promoter of the Stones tour, "and his involvement with 'No Security' will further expose the Rolling Stones music to yet another generation."

The combination already has resulted in shared advertising in all of the fashion magazines in rock themed multi-page Hilfiger spreads featuring models Rebecca Romijn-Stamos lolling around on amps amid guitars.

The shots were done at the Wiltern Theater in Los Angeles but are cut to make it appear they could be at Stones shows.

Hilfiger, who made his name when Snoop Doggy Dogg wore his duds on "Saturday Night Live" in 1992, can't always get the band to wear his stuff on stage.

But the Goo Goo Dolls, who are opening the weekend's Stones shows, will be wearing Hilfiger. The trio wore Hilfiger at the Grammy Awards in Los Angeles last month, said Hilfiger spokeswoman Amy Glickman. So if Joan Rivers or anybody stopped the group and asked who dressed them, they could say "Tommy Hilfiger

Hilfiger outfits were also worn by Aerosmith at the Academy Awards earlier this month, Glickman said.

In some cases, winners of contests at individual Hilfiger shops across the country will come to Hartford to see the show. In addition, customers making a purchase of \$75 or more at one of the shops will also receive a complimentary copy of the new Rolling Stones live album, "No Security," which the current tour is promoting.

"Mick and Tommy knew each other, so that helped," says Coleman, who previously matched Pepsi with Michael Jackson, and Elton John with CitiBank.

Tour sponsorships became a controversial choice for rockers in the '80s. Journey had a tour sponsored but regretted it because of all the meddling by the sponsor and vowed never to do it again. Stalwarts like Bruce Springsteen, Billy Joel, Tom Petty and John Mellencamp have never entertained a corporate-sponsored tour. "Bruce has been offered literally tens of millions of dollars over the past 15 years," he says. "And basically he just says no thanks."

Neil Young wrote a song about his refusal, "This Note's for You," which began, "Ain't singing for Pepsi, I ain't singin' for Coke."

When the Spice Girls announced their first tour last year, they did so on a table full of Pepsi, which sponsored them, but took sips of bottled water hidden behind the cola. Their "Spiceworld" album included a song that sounded like an ad for the new Pepsi campaign.

In an era when some corporate sponsors' names appear on every ticket sold for an event - such as "The Budweiser Concert Series" at the Meadows Music Theatre in Hartford -- it's harder for artists to avoid the associations. Young appeared at the Meadows as part of the H.O.R.D.E. tour a couple of summers back in spite of the Bud banners. Next month he plays the SNET Oakdale Theatre in Wallingford.

Indeed, whole venues are turning their names into corporate logos. Just this week the venerable Great Woods Amphitheatre in Mansfield, Mass., announced it was changing its name, effective immediately, to the Tweeter Center.

