Vista." Levi's were the uniform of pioneers like the gold rush 49ers as they made their way west. They clad the workers who "in performance, really enact to-day the grandest arts, poems, &c., by beating up the wilderness into fertile farms, and in her railroads, ships, and machinery" (Whitman). The ads remind us that Levi's have always been and shall always be American, through the good times and the bad. This appeal to the American aesthetic is difficult to demonstrate, as the aesthetic is ever-changing—but the elements used in their ads can be analyzed in order of appearance to demonstrate just how effective these commercials are at weaving the Levi's name into the fabric of America.

Their first ad, entitled "Go Forth" was filmed mostly in "Katrina-ravaged sections of New Orleans" showing actors "often barefoot, shirtless, and sweaty, and their jeans looking dirty and lived-in" (Stevenson). Beginning with a flickering sign reading "America" emerging from muddy waters, the voice of Walt Whitman, recites from the past via bees'-wax phonograph cylinder, his poem of the same name: *America*. "Equal sons and equal daughters," Whitman reminds viewers, as images of suit-clad CEO types are mobbed in their limos by jeans-wearing teens. The grainy black and white images flicker out waving wheat and urban sprawl. Thin but fit actors splash water on their faces in tenement housing, they jump chain-link fences and back-flip off concrete pylons. These actors ride Indian ponies next to federal highways, as the flag flaps from behind a cage of telephone wire. Throughout the ad, bombs burst in air, reminiscent of the National Anthem, every Fourth of July viewers could recall, or the night bombings in Iraq. It is grim while hopeful, and features Americans of all ages, and races, as it ends with the kiss of an inter-racial couple. The screen darkens with the last bursts of fireworks, and two youths run out into the darkness with a banner that reads, "GO FORTH," a clear reference to Whitman's poem "There Was a Child Went Forth."

The commercial is effective as kitsch, because it portrays Levi's as the conductor in this American symphony, as the common thread in all these images of pure America. The company grabbed the present political and economic feel by the hair, and ran with it. This ad is almost a response to Whitman's plea for a distinctly American "nature," and Levi's implies that if he were to view these ads, he would approve of the use of his poem, voice, and virtues.

The second ad is a bit different. Almost progressing forward through a corridor of nostalgia, the second ad of the campaign, entitled "We are workers," seems to be a homage to the WPA and its public work projects. Featuring the city of Braddock Pennsylvania, the ad depicts first the decay of the city, then the people in it. They are black and white, young and old, men and women, all of whom pull on jeans, shirts, and work-boots. The images are of the work projects in Braddock, the urban gardens, construction, and the renovation of a church. The mayor of Braddock, John Fetterman, explains that because so much of the city has fallen into disrepair, it will be Yankee know-how that will turn the town around. The ad ends with the words "There's work to be done" flashed on the screen, as a dog runs free through an open field.

The Levi Strauss corporation contributed to Fettermann's WPA- reminiscent work projects by paying "over $1.5 million to turn an abandoned church into a new community center and to expand an urban farm program, and it shot the commercial using real people from town, paying them standard rates for a commercial appearance" (Rambow). Their use of Braddock is also fitting to Whitman's ideology, for it is exactly the picture of democracy he hoped to realize when he wrote:

> *I can conceive such a community organized in running order, powers judiciously delegated -- farming, building, trade, courts, mails, schools, elections, all attended to; and then the rest of life, the main thing, freely branching and blossoming in each individual, and bearing golden fruit. I can see there, in every young and old man, after his kind, and in every woman after hers, a true personality, develop'd, exercised proportionately in body, mind, and spirit. I can imagine this case as one not necessarily rare or difficult, but in buoyant accordance with the municipal and general requirements of our times. And I can realize in it the culmination of something better than any stereotyped eclat of history or poems.*

In very similar language, Holger Cahill, National Director of the Federal Art Project, wrote in 1936:

> *There has been at least the promise of a broader and socially sounder base for American art with the suggestion that the age-old cleavage between artists and public is not dictated by the very nature of our society. New horizons have come into view. American artists have discovered that they have work to do in the world.*

In its support for Braddock, Levi's created a positive change in society, fulfilling the goal the WPA had set for itself when it tackled the problems facing America; simultaneously it wove this support into a commercial campaign that utilized the American aesthetic. The claim this paper makes -- that Levi's has effectively utilized an elusive American aesthetic -- can be supported by noting the soundtrack to this particular ad. The ad shows the images of these urban farms, reminiscent to the victory gardens of yesteryear, attended by fedora-wearing citizens of Braddock, while the dwarfs' marching theme ("Hi Ho, it's off to work we go") from Disney's *Snow White* (1937) is played in big band jazz style.

Whitman had argued that all other nations of greatness had their own ballads. The Scotch, English, and Irish, but "What has America?" (Whitman). It wasn't until Mumford cried out for an American aesthetic that jazz emerged as *the* American music. The birth of this style of music is the greatest example of America's melting pot in action. Jazz came from the blend of African music and European styles that is a distinctly American genre of music. It was despised by the Nazis, while preformed in Europe at USO shows. There is one more element to reflect upon, that being the use of a song from a well-known Walt Disney cartoon. It is difficult to think of an element of American culture "blacker" than jazz music, or "whiter" than Walt Disney's cartoons. This choice in song and