

Interview with Wilson Bryan Key
27/3/05 (phone), 30/6/05 (at his home in Nevada)

How did you get interested in subliminal advertising?

In the beginning I spent a big part of my life in the military. And I had a lot to do with reading aerial photographs. And in aerial photographs, if you look at it from a military perspective, wherever you see something that looks too normal, it should be there, it's perfect, *distrust* that - because someone is putting one over on you. You begin to question everything.

I'd been a journalist and a feature writer, when I found myself writing four or five stories all over again I decided to get the hell out of it and get a PhD. And my life was half-way between business, advertising, public relations work and universities. I ran a market research business in Puerto Rico for about 6 or 7 years, and I was tied in with a political party... And then I needed a way to make a living so I went back to teaching. Ended up in Canada, University of Western Ontario. I was there 6 years.

What was your PhD in?

Psychology.

And your position at Western Ontario was teaching psychology?

Communications Studies. I was a tenured professor. I worked in the journalism department, sometimes in the psychology department and I even took some art classes occasionally. But my background is very un-concentrated, I wandered all over the place. I thought, when you get a tenured professorship you think, 'Well now I'm safe. They can't fire me any more'. Well, that's not true.

So what happened? You discovered this subliminal business? How did that come about?

The first one was I think an illustration in Esquire Magazine, and I was lecturing to the class on this particular article, it was on one of the beatnik poets of the day. And I looked at the picture, I think it was of him, a painting of him, upside down. And there on the bookshelf behind him was an erect penis as a bookend. I walked around the table: 'Jesus Christ! That shouldn't be there!' Then I started poking around and within three months I had a two foot pile of the stuff in my office. And then I got the students interested. They were delighted with this. It was almost like participating in a revolution! So I had no trouble getting material. Once I started looking for it I started, for a month or so, looking at the pages of magazines just off the edges, looking horizontally, not confronting it. I knew that they were putting something into this printing. And then I discovered the S E X business.

You see, the whole society depends so greatly on marketing, advertising, whatever you want to call it. And to assume that these people left language and pictorial communication alone? They have refined it to a degree vastly beyond what anybody suspected before. And to assume everything is the same as it is in language? Forget it! That can't be true! They spend an enormous amount of money. These ads, some of them that I have used in these books, I was able to make a fairly good estimate of the amount that was spent: \$10 million! In one of [my] books there is an advertisement featuring ice cubes in an empty glass - Johnnie Walker, I believe, and that thing was in use for at least 10 years. It's been on the back cover of every magazine in this country and probably many others.

The advertisers know that most of it doesn't work. But they try everything. And part of it depends on the volume of ads they put out. But when they find one that does work, demonstrably, they'll go with it, they'll milk it as much as they possibly can. So we tried to go in the book with these ads that were repeated immediately. And invariably when you look at these super-ads, you find subliminals.

Anything in communications studies that looks sincere, honest, straightforward, that it's all hanging out: distrust it! Distrust it very much! Because someone is pulling your leg.

In the beginning I got a lot of help from radiologists, people who spend their lives looking at x-rays. And they again were very well-trained in being very distrustful. For example, no physician will read an x-ray of someone he is emotionally involved with, his wife, for example, or his child. Because you can't be certain what's there is really there: the big question is, how do you differentiate between reality and fantasy? And our society now has got to the point where it is extraordinarily difficult for us to make this differentiation.

The x-ray people were very sensitive about this because they'd have someone else read the x-ray, they wouldn't touch it. I asked 'Why do you do that?' and they said it was this business of projection. It's like looking at a Rorschach inkblot. And looking at a Rorschach inkblot, there's nothing there. Anything you put there, you are making it up. It's a fantasy. And that's where a lot of my interest in this evolved.

Your suspicions were piqued by the vast amounts of money being spent on advertising by major corporations, weren't they?

I figured at least 10 million dollars over a period of 7 years was spent printing one single advertisement. That probably cost \$100,000 for one artist to do it. Now, what the hell's going on here? They're not playing a game. If it doesn't work, they will know about it in 2-3 weeks. I used to work for Seagram's. And most ads probably don't work. At least, not dramatically. They do succeed in keeping the name out there. But if they find one that does work, that one ad for Seagram's was used for 10 years and they spent several million dollars buying space for it. And a good ad is an ad that sells. That's all. Nothing else matters.

I worked in advertising for a long time. And I ran a consulting firm for 10 years. Publicly, no, they can't admit to all this. There's a law against it! It would be dreadful!

*Did you come across Vance Packard [author of *The Hidden Persuaders*]?*

Yeah. And I was intrigued. I got to know Packard and we were doing some experiments with this stuff. He had no idea that this was going on with subliminals but he did know there was *something* going on with the media. They had improved the cost effectiveness of it and he thought he was dealing with analyses of markets and so forth, and had he kept going – he was a damn good writer and researcher – he would eventually have stumbled upon what I stumbled upon.

Packard got near one of the outstanding intellectuals in advertising who told him a lot but didn't tell him everything. He did one book on this and then dropped it. He should have gone ahead with it. He was a good researcher. He was on the track, just never quite made the bridge. Hell of a good writer, though.

Did you ever look into the work of [Norman] Dixon? I've never met him, I always hoped I would before he died. His books, I got them after I had written my first book. I was already into it. In fact I didn't have the word 'subliminal' for some time. A student came up with it. I said 'Hey! You've put a label on it!'

I talked to a newspaper man one time who knew Dixon who said Dixon was extremely upset about what I had done. He didn't suspect any of what I came up with. ... He never even guessed. The fellow at the Times told me that Dixon had admitted to working as a consultant to advertising agencies. This is third party, hearsay, you have to be careful about it. I'm sorry I didn't have a chance to meet him.

Did you ever come across James Vicary [author of the 'eat popcorn/drink Coke 'experiment']?

No I didn't. He disappeared. I knew people who knew him and worked with him and spoke very well of him. ... A lot of people were involved, many academics and professors and so forth. Vicary had the idea of how to make money out of all this. But the minute he gave his press conference, this became the most threatening thing ever to have happened in the media in the United States. Because they saw – anybody can see – you carry this to its logical conclusion: this is big trouble. And most of those people either got fired or they backed away from the project. One professor from medical school at Tulane in New Orleans, we became very good friends and he told me he was so threatened by Vicary – not by Vicary but what he was doing – that he backed away from it.

Vicary had come up with something. And nobody at the time really understood. Vicary had a flair for publicity and when he got his name in the paper everybody around him got scared to death. Well, they all backed away from Vicary. And I don't know what happened to Vicary. No one seems to know what happened to him.

This whole subliminal advertising issue – it's pretty controversial, isn't it?

I've said some things in my books – 5 of them – which to most people would appear absurd. Like, the portrait of Lincoln, on the old \$5 bill. In his beard he has the letters 'S-E-X'. It's an old engraver's trick and they had it in Canadian currency at the time. One of the crown colonies had a picture of the queen and she had a 'SEX' in her hair and apparently the engraver had let it come through a little too strong. And they were picked up on it and the exchequer in London recalled all those 50 rupee notes, I think they were.

Most people don't want to know this. It's upsetting, profoundly upsetting, to many. Because the things they have trusted, all their lives - to suddenly discover that they are fraudulent, that they have been cheated.

A lot of people think it's crazy.

Yeah.

How would you counter that?

Well, I've made a living out of conspiracy theories! I did an interview in Hollywood with the BBC, and I took some material with me to show how and why it was being done. And even the producer who was running the show, he was doing the interviewing – he didn't want to believe it. He said 'no!' In his books, Dixon says repeatedly there is no known way to commercially use this technique. And he repeats that statement. Well, *surprise!*

Why should the word 'SEX' hidden in an advertisement – even if the word SEX is hidden in an advertisement - make anybody do anything?

Why is really complicated. This is a technique of communicating with the unconscious. Hypnosis, sodium pentothal, sodium amytal, there's a number of ways you can get to this level - this altered state of perception. But in hypnosis, or using these other things, the two things that are very dominant, that people are very sensitive to, is sex and death. The beginning of life and the end of life. All the world's great religions focus on these two critical parts of life: the beginning and the end.

The stuff still persists, is still making a great deal of money for a lot of people. Including, this weekend, the Catholic Church! It shouldn't surprise anyone. Artists have always done this.

You really hold that these images are actually there? Surely you could see a rude picture in just about anything, if you tried hard enough? Like inkblots...

No, wait - you're talking about Rorschach. Now, if you see something in a Rorschach inkblot, you're making it up. There's nothing there. I used to take my class, the first

day on the class we'd take them out and lie down on the lawn and have them look up at the clouds. And you would be astonished at the filth that is floating around up there! You're making it up!

You're asking 'how do you tell the difference between fantasy projection and reality?' And that's not easy to do any more. Because we can make fantasies so much more appealing than reality. So to make this distinction, say a clever artist, photographer, who is being rewarded highly enough – that seems to be the common denominator – can make you believe almost anything.

How did your first book ['Subliminal Seduction'] come about?

Oh, I sent it to Prentice Hall, and then it went out. The first book, nobody ever heard of me outside the university, but I published it the second year I was there. The book sold 1000 copies the first month in the university bookstore alone. No book had ever sold that much in the university bookstore! [There are] something like 8.5 million copies of my books in print today, I am told. So suddenly I went from being obscure and unknown to the most famous professor on campus, which attracted an incredible amount of hostility.

...I was getting problems from the board of trustees ... Their lawyers came to me and they said 'What would you want to resign?' I said 'Nobody's gonna resign! I am happy here!' So my attorney at the time ... negotiated the \$64,000 ... They didn't actually fire me but they paid me \$64,000 to go away. For my resignation.

Why do you think the university wanted you out?

They were getting a lot of static from the advertising industry.

They felt threatened?

Oh, yeah. I was threatened! Phone calls at 3 in the morning and a voice says 'We know where you live, we know what your child looks like. We're gonna get you and you'll never know where it's coming from!' It's a little unsettling. So finally I re-negotiated it and took the \$64,000. And left town.

By now it didn't matter, of course: you had a new career as an expert on subliminal persuasion techniques?

...This subject has taken me into consultancy with special forces, on Panama and a few other things. And Delta Force, which deals with hostage situations, developed a system using subliminals. They used it to get Noriega out of the Vatican compound in Panama City.

Really? What was the system?

They surrounded the compound - it was like a city block, 15 feet-high walls - with speakers, like they use at rock concerts. They blasted [Noriega] with heavy metal music, which is great because the volume allows you to hide all kinds of things in it. And it's so ear-splitting that normal people are not gonna listen very carefully!

Fort Benning had a place, University de las Americas. And he was a graduate. They took a recording of Noriega's voice and they worked it into this thing at Fort Benning, telling him what a nice guy he was, how we respected him and loved him and all this. 'We're your friends, we've supported you through all your troubles, so surrender and come out!'

Using Noriega's own voice?

Yes. That was part of it. The minute he saw those speakers go up, he should have known! He was a graduate of the special forces training school! He lasted about 5 days [after that].

How did you make contact with Delta Force?

They contacted me. Just like you did.

Can you remember the name of the person who contacted you?

Yeah, but I'm not gonna tell you. You work for these people, you sign a whole sheaf of security documents. And I really don't wanna make those people angry at me. They do things that are not very nice!

But remember Waco, David Koresh and the Branch Davidians? I saw it on TV one night and I saw these two guys walking around: DEA jackets, black jackets with DEA on the back, and something about them looked familiar. They were dupes! Delta Force colonels! I recognised them from the Panama thing ... They surrounded the Branch Davidians and they blasted them. They had quite a variety of stuff: Gregorian chants in which they'd buried voices, subliminal stuff, and - [they had] Charlton Heston's voice as God speaking beneath the Gregorian chants, telling them to come out. The same guys that did this, the Delta Force guys, were involved in the Noriega thing.

It doesn't appear to have worked very well at Waco, does it?

No. This is the problem. Outcomes are unpredictable. You don't know how they're gonna come out. This was the danger... But I assume they are still doing it and have developed it even further.

Did you go down to Panama for the Noriega deal?

Yup. I was a civilian, I was a consultant. '89 or '90. The thing that was hard to believe

after it was over was that he could have been so dumb as to come out. Because he could have stayed there the rest of his life.

You don't think it was the subliminal messages that drove him out?

Yeah I'm pretty sure it was because this thing was put together in Fort Benning in La Escuela: there was electronic equipment in there that I've never seen in any civilian institution. I'm sure they've gone far beyond that [since then].

What, exactly, was your role in Panama?

Making sure that what they were doing was feasible. ...you're dealing with stuff that is very intangible.

How did you come to be involved in the Judas Priest subliminal trial?

These two boys [James Vance and Ray Belknap – who shot themselves in December 1985] came from a town adjacent to Reno - Sparks. Sort of suburb, really. And one day, somebody had told their attorneys about me and they invited me to lunch. I had never heard the term 'heavy metal rock music' before.

... This one particular album, [Judas Priest's] *Stained Class*, which was the subject of the case – these boys had listened to it and committed suicide. Six hours, over and over and over again. They knew the words, they knew everything about it. Then they took the shotgun and went down to the churchyard. One blew his head off.



These were two young kids, 18-year olds, who weren't doing very well in school or at everything. The court tried to prove that they were high. Well, we had the blood tests on them and there was no alcohol in their blood. Not enough to qualify as even modestly intoxicated.

How much? 5-7 beers each?

Yeah, something like that.

But they had been smoking marijuana too, hadn't they? 12 beers between them and a joint or two might account for...?

Which they THOUGHT was marijuana, but there was no trace of that in the urine. We checked that.

So [the attorneys] gave me a record [Stained Class] and I took it home. Wow! There was all kinds of stuff hidden in that thing! The theme of this whole genre of music

was suicide... We took the lyrics and transcribed them – I don't think they'd ever been transcribed - and began to analyse them: 'who's talking to who about what?'

And who was talking to whom about what?

Well, [*Better by You, Better than Me*] was inducement to suicide ... The total content of that thing was subliminal. I analysed the lyrics. What does it mean? OK, it's a young man, talking to Satan, his god, asking Satan to talk to his mother and tell her what a noble thing his life had been, how good he was. Because he was going to kill himself. Now, it's there. It's not a conjecture, or an opinion thing. I mean, you can cite that out of the lyrics. ...

Then [there were the] embeds: I found that one voice that was put in, I did a spectroscopic analysis of it, it was Halford the lead singer and in between the phrasing, the singer takes a breath and in between the phrasing they put 'Do it! Do it! Do it! Do it!' at increasing levels in the stereo. Now, that was dubbed in after the thing was made.

Hidden in the song were secret, subliminal messages?

They [heavy metal bands] were all playing with it. The kids knew about it. Their parents sure as hell didn't know about it! So I went to some rock concerts - one in Sacramento, one in Texas, and videotaped them. And this thing was fascinating to watch. It was like watching some kind of Passion ceremony. The band was structured on stage. You had the lead singer, he didn't play an instrument, and he was talking to his acolytes, his audience, and the audience were all going like this [makes horns hand-sign]: the Devil. Satan, their God. That's all play acting of course, and some art designer had designed it – the goddamn costumes were amazing. Tight black leather pants the lead singer wore, had a tail sewed into it. Of course, everybody knows the Devil has a tail!

I started taking estimates, what would it cost to stage this? Because it was quite a production. They came onstage with this motorcycle, and to set that up so that you could carry it from place to place would be somewhere close to half a million dollars. You realise very quickly that you are involved in something that has a great deal of money. A GREAT deal of money. In fact, *Variety* called it a diamond mine. More money is made out of heavy metal rock music than any genre of other music. And CBS owned about 10 of these major groups. It was their concentration.

What happened at the trial? I understand that the judge didn't take your view of things too seriously?

For reasons I am not privy to, decided he didn't like me very early. I mean very, very early. In the hearing over the first amendment, that was 7 or 8 months after the trial started, I was demonstrating a subliminal thing. I was demonstrating something – most people won't believe this – a Camel cigarette package. This was designed in 1913 and if you look at the camel, it's facing to the left and if you look at the four legs of the camel, there's a little man standing there, looking to the rear of the camel. His hand is on his hip, his right leg is formed by the camel's left foreleg, his left leg by the camel's right foreleg. He is looking backwards, with his hand on his hip. He has an erection. And that's been there since 1913. Well, in 1950



they went back and they gave him a longer pecker and they gave him a more conventional head. It used to be more triangular. And once you show this stuff to people, 10 years on, 20 years on, every time they look at the camel, their eyes go right to the penis! Well, I brought that up in the court and the court enjoyed it. [But the defence] didn't like it at all and when they objected to it, [the judge] upheld their objection...

A lot of things went on in that trial ... We went up against Sony. Now, suing Sony was like suing God. Maybe more difficult, because they have more money... The judge, he gave two decisions over the case. First we had appealed to the first amendment. The judge wrote a brilliant decision on that and said no, because once you use subliminals, these are inherently deceptive and therefore unlawful. You cancel out your first American rights. So at that point we were pretty enthusiastic about this, we could win this!

What really screwed us up was that our lawyers decided that they would rather have a judge trial than a jury trial. When they told me that I almost cried! We could have won a jury trial. But with the judge trial – and particularly this judge who... didn't like me at all... ..Oh god! If you tried this case in a suburb of San Francisco, you might have been all right. But in Nevada! Look, they said they spent half a million dollars on this. That's CBS Records. We were hawking typewriters just to pay for the tax stamps (?) in the court. They spent 4 or 5 times that in court. The problem with the case was that if we had got the decision, it would have opened Pandora's Box. Because every damn heavy metal rock composition or recording used these techniques!

Were you aware that these messages appeared in other records, too?

Oh yes. Composers were into this thing 500 years ago when they played with compositions, quadrophonic sound and – Bach's Cantatas are weaving these four

levels of sound in and out. You can only hear one, unless you are a trained composer. Mozart, they say, could do all four. Could hear them, then write them down after one hearing. It was most unusual. But most composers – the audience listens to one level of sound. But all the other levels of sound are weaving in and out and back-grounding. So in a very real sense I think they are actually providing a subliminal stimulus. No-one carried this commercially as far as did CBS records. And of course by this time all the other record companies were doing it.

A lot of the stuff that I dug up, actually, was ignored by the court. ... I've been in court quite a few times as an expert witness, and I won't take any shit from these people. They had – the judge, the attorneys kept trying to get me to answer 'yes' or 'no', and I said 'look, I'm a psychologist, I don't work like that, I don't know any question about human behaviour that I can answer with a simple yes or no. It's not that simple.' So at one point, or a few points, [the judge] threatened me, citing me for contempt of court.

This ended up in a confrontation with the judge, and **** told me later, 'The judge doesn't want you in this courtroom at all.' I said 'Hell, that's suppressing evidence!' ... The things that went on! We could have won it, I think, if we had gone to a jury.

Have there been other subliminal cases?

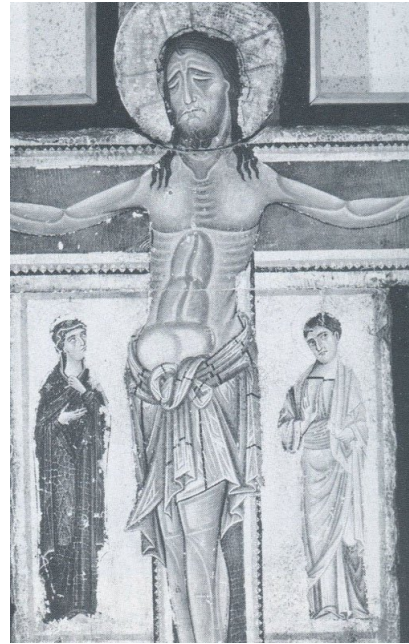
There was one suit in Utah, against a group of attorneys using subliminal stuff in advertising: the judge saw what he was supposed to see. Another one in Texas was in a bar. Nightclub, a murder - and that went pretty well.

But the issue is still very much around. Sony, or CBS records, which was bought by Sony records for \$2bn. CBS records own about twelve of the major heavy metal rock groups. Nobody ever made as much money out of music in the history of the world as CBS Records on the heavy metal rock thing.

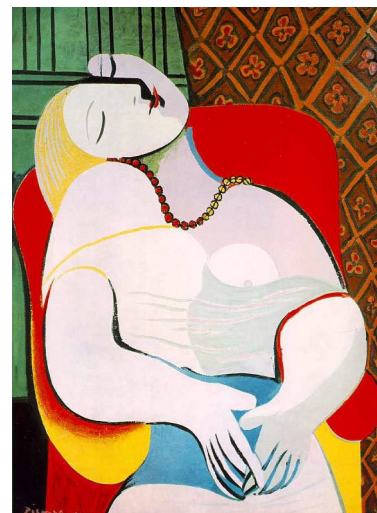
Is it still happening now, the use of subliminal messages in the entertainment industry?

Of course! We saw Clint Eastwood's movie *Million Dollar Baby* recently. Brilliant. The man is a genius. But there were things in that movie that you could call subliminal. One of the aspects is the age of the leading character, Clint Eastwood, the fight promoter. And so he was made up to look much older than he actually was. There is one scene where the camera hits the back of his hand for a quite a long moment – 5 seconds. And on the back of his hand is a large, quite ugly sore, the kind of sore that older people get. And I saw that. I went around asking for two weeks afterwards, other people who saw the movie: 'Did you see that sore on his hand?' No-one saw it. So Eastwood had cut this in, it's a subliminal support. For much of the movie the characterisation he portrayed depended on his being very old, quite old. And no-one remembered the lines in his neck, the makeup that made him look like that.

This subliminal idea, I think it has been a part of art for...well, the oldest one of these things I found was the San Damiano Crucifix, which dates to 1120-1130 by an anonymous Italian artist. I think I used it in my last book. It's in the Chicago Museum of Art. And it's Christ on the crucifix and it's painted on wood and – 12th century! – there's not much of it left. And they bring this thing out whenever they have a religious exhibition. I heard about it and when I saw it, it was in a vault down in the basement. And the director of the museum, who was a friend at the time: I showed him this enormous erect penis in the body of Christ, with testicles. And I mean, it's *there*. Once you see it, there is no question at all what the artist is doing. And - I mean - he paled. He couldn't believe that people in the 12th century could do things like this. But he was an artist and I believe artists are manipulators of perception, if they are good enough.



And of course you find Picasso. We've just had an exhibition in Las Vegas - 14 paintings, including Rembrandts and Picassos, a billion dollars worth of art. And the Picasso, I've used in one of my books, it's *The Dream*. I've seen the original in New York several times. To see the original was remarkable. There were some changes: in the original, all the prints that were made in the painting show the penis on the head as purple. And in an art department, purple is usually known as a genital colour. The original of that somehow has faded, somehow it's almost brown now. But in the reproductions of the painting, that thing appears purple. Very light purple. It's fascinating to see.



But here again, we went - and I had students at the time, I was a professor. Students dug up about 50 reviews of that painting 'Le Reve'. None of these reviewers, including Life Magazine, that reproduced it full-page back in the nineteen thirties, no-one mentioned the penis. No-one mentioned there were 6 fingers on each hand. No-one asked the simple questions! If someone had asked me, I would have asked those questions from the beginning. No-one asked.

The two subjects that are loaded emotionally are sex and death, and if you do hypnosis you find out very quickly that these are the two areas that most people that you hypnotise are extraordinarily sensitive about. In fact a lot of the stuff in my books I found out using hypnosis. I taught students to do it, and when you look at something in hypnosis you find, your brain at this other level – assuming you are communicating

with the subconscious, which is a word game since we're not even sure what the subconscious amounts to – but there is something in the head that does what most people say involves the subconscious. Hypnosis is a direct way of communicating with the unconscious level. In the hypnotic state you see things in art that you couldn't have imagined were there. And we had a lot of fun with this, hypnotising people and getting them to look at abstract paintings, things at a cognitive level you would probably reject the idea of – it's too bizarre! And yet the artist put it in there at a level that is not available to most people.

I'm guessing that if this happens in art, it could be used politically, too?

The War [in Iraq]: sold like a package of cheese to the American public! The whole thing was insane from the beginning! But it was the only thing Bush had going for him. This guy was a low-C student at Yale when he went to college. And he brags about not reading books! We've got somebody who couldn't efficiently run a gas station – and he's running the country! I'm just looking at the material used in the last election by George Bush. His people used subliminals in both of his elections, and he got to be president. ... Bush puts these things in and it's done now electronically, in a way that would be very difficult for people to tell. I can see it. I've been working on this for years.

I have a picture of him and Barbara, his wife, standing in front of their farmhouse, a beautiful day and so sincere: my god, sincerity just reeks out of this – what honest straightforward people they are, nothing hidden! But you look at it, it's got the word 'SEX' all up and down the fly of his pants, she has it all over her neck. Repeatedly, of course. They're doing this electronically, with a computer image programme. You can take any area of a painting and you can choose any area, from 1-10, you can put it in A1 and you get it so low so that it's there, it will affect behaviour, but it's not detectable to most people on a conscious level. And they have refined this so completely, that – wow! There's nothing you can look at in this country that does not involve this.

Subliminal techniques were used to sell the war in Iraq?

Oh, sure! We sold the war. We sell a lot of wars in this country: we're very good at it! I remember I was with a British writer who was writing about propaganda in World War II and we were on a TV show, and I looked at his book and in the material – I couldn't find subliminals in it: it was clean. Now, the stuff that we used locally, domestically, was loaded with subliminals.

Were you aware that James Vicary's experiment ['Eat Popcorn, Drink Coke'] was a sham – that it's been argued that there never was an experiment at all?

That's bullshit. Look, the minute that thing hit the fan, every advertising company – and these guys are smart as hell, they've got power – 'Discredit him in any way you can do it!' People I have talked to, and I have talked to people who were in that situation, backed away from him, because it got too hot.

But he gave an interview in 1962 in which he admitted that the experiment was bogus.

I hadn't read that. But from what I know of Vicary, and I never met him personally, he was highly respected by the people around him but he had this flair for publicity. He looked for it. He thought he had something that was really hot – and he did – but at that time there was no precedent for it – that was his first shot. And the data in that New Jersey theatre was good data. They had taken the most conservative position possible, because they knew that they would be attacked.

But there was no data there at all.

There was!

The data were never presented, the experiment failed and he later admitted that it hadn't happened and an investigator who visited the cinema found that the experiment had never taken place...

I wouldn't know anything about that ... Who knows? It's a strange world we live in. But I do know that when he got attacked all the people who were around him in the beginning just backed off. At that time almost anything could have happened to the poor bastard and at that time he wouldn't have understood what was happening because there was no precedent to it. The minute they did the study in New Jersey, and I've forgotten the name of the movie – the heavens opened up and rained all over all of them.

Why, if this is so widespread, has there been no whistleblower?

I think that there have been. People that are friends of mine will confirm everything I have said. Look, I've never been sued. And I gave names, examples. If I made it all up, sue me! You'll end up owning Prentice Hall, which is now owned by Simon Schuster. Not a chance.

What would you say to people who are still sceptical about all of this subliminal stuff?

Look at the Camel cigarette package. Tell me: that's been there since 1913 and it's sold a lot of cigarettes. Psychological theory is a swamp that you get covered up in mud with, very fast. The thing you cannot deny [pointing at the Picasso painting] is that that's a prick on the top of her head, and that she's masturbating. It's clear. You can see it, you can explain it, you can deal with it. And you didn't know it was there before I told you! 30 years from now you will look at that painting and your eyes will go straight to the top of her head. You can't help it. That's why it's subliminal. Nothing is hidden in these pictures. Nothing. Except what you have hidden from yourself. Perception is total.