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Assignment 1

Detroit Future City Response

The video from “Detroit Future City” and Cadillac’s Superbowl commercial present two distinct future-facing views of Detroit that attempt to build on a perceived heritage and history of the city itself. However, their distinct visual languages and rhetoric highlight contrasting frameworks for what the future and legacy of Detroit actually means, and who is centered within those perspectives.

In “Detroit Future City Sets a Bold Agenda for 2030,” we see a brighter, colorful, and optimistic outlook on the city of Detroit and the communities within it. As leaders within the think tank outline their missions, the video displays an emphasis on residents of the city, their diverse identities, and an element of communal bonding. The video infuses a bright and colorful liveliness to the city through various pieces of footage from community engagement, family bonding, and recreation. While much of the video’s wording remains vague in a hopeful building of the Black middle class, it effectively establishes a people-centered outlook on the city’s trajectory, celebrating the identity and perseverance of the city’s current residents.

The Detroit Future City video demonstrates a departure from the Cadillac commercial that came before it. This earlier commercial presents a darker, more ominous tone to the city’s character and identity. Additionally, the video’s visual component focuses much less on people within the city, and instead embraces the industrial infrastructure and material-opulence of Detroit’s landmarks. This video puts forth an aspiration of the city’s industrialism and production toward symbols of wealth, luxury, and elitism. The only figure prominently featured is rapper Eminem as he drives in a luxury Cadillac vehicle. As Eminem exits his car and walks into the Fox Theatre, he is met by a Black chorus that sings to an empty auditorium, almost as though these people are an ornament to the luxurious frontier of Eminem’s world.