



Coke and Pepsi race to colonize the Earth in The Cola Conquest.

Coca-Cola-nization

The Cola Conquest ★★ ★ 1/2

(1998) 3 videocassettes, approx. 50 min. each. \$60 (\$270 w/PPR). DLI Productions. Color cover.

In the late 19th century, Coca-Cola was promoted by owner Asa Candler, a devout Methodist Sunday school teacher, as a "brain tonic"—an apt label given that the "coca" in the name referred to the coca plant, the source of "cocaine." When it became apparent, however, that the general populace was inclined to swill the caramel-colored sugar water regardless of whether or not their brains were fatigued, Candler shifted the focus of his advertising efforts to change the image of Coke from a health drink to a "delicious and refreshing" beverage,

and began spending an unheard of 20% of his budget on marketing his product. The rest, as they say, is history, and it's a pretty fascinating history at that. Inspired by the NY Times Notable Book *For God, Country and Coca-Cola* by Mark Pendergrast (who is also a *Video Librarian* contributing reviewer), director Irene Angelico's *The Cola Conquest* traces the rise and rise of the most recognized brand on Earth, from its public debut in 1886 by creator John Pemberton (a morphine addict who would sell the company for a song and die penniless at 57), through the infamous Cola wars between Coca-Cola and its prime competitor Pepsi-Cola, and beyond to the current ongoing Coca-Cola-nization of the world. Combining interviews with Pendergrast and other social commentators (including Faith Popcorn), curators, and soft drink industry execs, this engaging two-and-a-half hour tour is also generously sprinkled with wonderful archival footage, including one of the most well-known commercials in television history ("I'd like to teach the world to sing..."). Although the French introduced a (failed) bill to ban it, and Mao Tse-Tung derided the drink as the "opiate of the running capitalist dog," Coca-Cola has weathered French economic insularity and easily outlived Mao. Today, there are 3 billion people in the world who prefer to drink coffee, tea or water, but with a market cap of \$150 billion and a bordering-on-religious global outreach effort that would have made Christ jealous, Coca-Cola is working on converting those unenlightened souls. *The Cola Conquest* offers a perceptive commentary on American capitalism, both home and abroad, presented through the engaging story of a 19th century over-the-counter Atlanta tonic which would go on to become the number one bestselling soft drink in the world. Highly recommended. Aud: J, H, C, P. (R. Pitman)