

Young men under the spell of My Little Pony

The 17-year old twin brothers Wouter (left) and Lander Roozeleer love the sugary sweet cartoon pony.

My Little Pony, toys and cartoons that are only supposed to appeal to girls? Forget it, young men of eighteen years and older also gush over the sugary sweet figurines, as we observed in Mechelen.

Yesterday the cinema Utopolis showed the avant-premiere of the episode of *My Little Pony* in which princess Cadence gets married. This did not only attract a lot of little girls, but strikingly: several young men as well. They had even risen at 6 o' clock that morning to lend a hand in receiving the audience. "Just like that, for free. Because we are fascinated by *My Little Pony*", as the 17-year old twin brothers Lander and Wouter Roozeleer from Itterbeek say.

Mitch van Hove (18) from Groot-Bijgaarden also travelled to Mechelen. "I discovered *My Little Pony* on the internet, and after a single week I had watched the entire first season."

Meanwhile he has gathered a considerable *My Little Pony* collection. "I have dvd's, posters, T-shirts that, by now, are made for men as well and a whole range of figurines. I've purchased a few, but most I collected through McDonald's. During their action I spent pretty much all of my money on hamburgers to collect as many figurines as possible.

What is so interesting about cartoons that were actually made for little girls? "The stories and characters are so different from what you see everywhere else nowadays", Wouter and Lander tell us. "*My Little Pony* is about friendship, and everyone sees their own person reflected in one of the characters. I strongly relate to Fluttershy because I'm pretty quiet, my brother is mostly fascinated by silly Applejack."

"*My Little Pony* has a great influence on me", Wouter admits. "In the past I could be pretty aggressive, but the series have brought me calm."

"Many youth are searching for themselves, and the ponies are also searching for themselves." Mitch tells us. "This is where the children's cartoon surpasses itself and also appeals to young men that struggle with their identity just as much. This summer I was at a Brony meeting, as the fans call themselves. Of the eighty attendees there were only six females. Sll the others were men between eighteen and thirty."

No shame

Even though Wouter and Lander have other hobbies such as soccer and karate, coming out as a brony as a young man does not seem to be without danger to your image. "It doesn't bother me", Lander says. "I wear a badge saying *Keep calm and Brony on*. When someone asks, I

simply explain what it means.” Mitch is slightly more careful. “I don’t really spread it around.”

By the way, *Love and tolerate* is the bronies’ internet slogan, according to Wouter, who mentions that there are thousands of Bronies worldwide, and that New York is home to an actual Brony-convention. “On the internet the *My Little Pony* community is big. Being part of a group feels good. That way you don’t have to be ashamed for your passion.”, Mitch concludes.