

## FOREWORD

**IN THE OLD MOVIES ABOUT BROADWAY**, when the curtain went down, the troupe always headed for Sardi's to wait for the opening-night reviews. Some kid in a waiter's uniform would come running in with a dozen copies of the *Herald Tribune*, and everyone would rifle the pages looking for the write-up. The reviews were always raves.

Most of the year, "review" is a dirty word in the ad business. If an account is in review, it means you're inches away from losing it to another agency. But once a year, the ad biz and show biz converge for the Super Bowl, and we get overnight reviews, just like old George S. Kaufman used to.

Seconds after the final whistle, we retreat to CyberSardi's and check out how our ads did on the various Internet opinion polls. Even a couple of jaded, been-there-done-that ad guys like us revel in the excitement. There it is in black and white. They loved that one, they hated that one, and, uh-oh, they ignored that one. The Super Bowl is as close as ad people get to opening night.

Most of the time we're judged by metrics and testing and client opinions, but this one time, the critics and the public tell us what they love and hate.

The Super Bowl, in a word, is *it*. The big one. The ad show of shows. When it comes to launching new campaigns and introducing new ads, nothing, but nothing, comes close to that one dazzling day in January.

First, the TV audience is double the size of that for any other TV event. And second, this is no regular audience. This audience is *primed to watch the*

*commercials*. This is the one day of the year on which viewers all across America actually look forward to the spots. It's estimated that only half the people watching are actual football fans. The rest are there for the beer, the chips, the party, and to see the ads.

So for advertising people, it's the rarest of moments: being in front of *an audience actually willing to be advertised to*. But you'd better not show anybody a cutaway drawing of a sinus cavity or any flaming metaphors for hemorrhoid discomfort, because they'll zap you to ad oblivion.

The Super Bowl audience is ready and willing to absorb your brand message as long as the ad gives something back, as long as it entertains. A great Super Bowl ad can't lecture, it can't cajole; it has to win the hearts and minds of the viewers with its wit, its charm, and its outright uniqueness.

For seasoned Super Bowl ad veterans, there's no mystery to this. It's rooted in the simple reason people watch TV in the first place: entertainment.

That's what the great Super Bowl commercials are all about—full-scale entertainment packed into miraculous 30- and 60-second packages that deliver a real brand message. The big payout is famous, engaging, from-the-heart messages that can add huge value to a client's brands.

The fact is, the truly superb Super Bowl spots entertain, but they also sell like hell.

Apple's "1984" catapulted Macintosh to immediate fame and relative fortune.

Two-thirds of Master Lock's entire annual ad budget played out in a single Super Bowl spot that turned a nowhere brand into a household name. Go ahead, name another lock.

And a brand close to the hearts of every BBDOer, Pepsi, gave the competition at Coke sleepless nights with knockout spots that boosted sales and won *USA Today's* Super Bowl Ad Meter survey six times.

So it's no wonder advertisers are spending small fortunes on the game, not just for media space, but on TV production as well, and for big-ticket celebrity endorsers who add yet more glitter to this lustrous event, from Michael Jordan to Jackie Chan to the Osbournes.

Like many top advertisers, Pepsi swears by the Super Bowl. And so does Visa, FedEx, Frito-Lay, M&M's, Nike, Budweiser, and many more.

And, for the right clients, so does BBDO.

For creative people—the people who make the ads—the Super Bowl has all the pressure, all the competitive angst, of the game itself. Reputations,

legends, and careers have been made—or broken—on Super Bowl spots. The pressure to be the best is overwhelming. And the process of getting a spot to the big game has all the rigors and hard knocks of the regular football season.

The Super Bowl ad season starts early. Agency creatives are in the trenches as early as June, drumming up concepts and executions that won't debut for another six or seven months.

Hundreds of ideas spill out of word processors and layout pads all across the country. But only a select few will make the cut. At BBDO, the “kill rate” is exceptionally high.

It's those surviving fifty or so spots that will be presented in all their glory in the largest one-day sale in history. No other media vehicle commands as much money as a spot on The Game, because no other vehicle gives a brand such incredible reach, ratings, and impact.

A spot on Super Bowl Sunday—just one—makes a huge public statement. It says you're part of a special culture. It says you've arrived. But while just “being there” worked for Chauncey Gardiner, it won't work for just any old ad. You've got to spin some magic. And that's what separates the real players, the all-stars, from the rest of the league.

So while we're writing this, we're busy getting ready for next year's game. What are you going to see? We have no idea—we can only tell you that the ones you'll remember will be big, enthralling, and talked about for weeks after you've forgotten the score of the game.

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