



Apple Holiday 'The Song'

The Jay Chiat Awards 2015



Summary

Every Christmas, Apple sends a holiday gift to fans around the world. While most brands heavily focused on buying the right gift, Apple wanted to bring out the creativity in everyone and provoke people to think different about gift giving.

With “The Song”, our strategy sought to push against a cultural tension by showing that it’s not the product, but what you do with it that makes truly special holiday moments. We created a beautiful film showcasing a young girl inspired to create an emotional gift for her grandma, a duet that brings two generations closer together.

For the very first time, Apple created a holiday campaign that celebrated Christmas globally as well as the Chinese New Year, the most important holiday in China. Our goal was to create a brand campaign that could connect with a global audience despite significant cultural differences in how the holidays are celebrated in different countries.

This paper tells a story of how we identified one universal insight around the holidays and translated it into two beautiful spots, which achieved remarkable global success.



The Background & Challenge

The objective for Apple holiday campaigns is to express strongly-held Apple values and to connect with people on a deep emotional level in order to reinforce the love people have for Apple and its product.

Throughout the year of 2014, our advertising focused heavily on product stories (e.g. “bigger than bigger” for the iPhone 6). The holiday season became a big moment to reflect what makes Apple unique as a company and help people feel our difference at a brand level. This was even more important for an emerging market like China, where people didn’t have a deep understanding of Apple.

As Apple became a more global company (with international sales accounting for 60% [1] of 2014 fourth quarter’s revenue), we had a big opportunity to create a global campaign in 2014. This meant that we needed to expand how we approach “the holidays” from a US-centric view to a global appreciation of holidays.

Our biggest challenge was developing a holiday campaign that would resonate in the Chinese market, the second [2] largest market for Apple. Rapid retail expansion in the country also raised the need for Apple to engage with the Chinese audience in a relevant, emotional way.

But this wasn’t an easy task. We needed a unified, global holiday campaign that was rooted in a universal insight, but also nimble enough to adapt to a market as unique as China. This required a large exploration of holiday truths around the world to find common themes while navigating cultural nuances.

Source:

1. *Apple Reports Fourth Quarter Results*. Apple Press Info. 20 Oct. 2014. < <https://www.apple.com/pr/library/2014/10/20Apple-Reports-Fourth-Quarter-Results.html> >.

2. *Apple Reports Record First Quarter Results*. Apple Press Info. 27 Jan. 2015. < <https://www.apple.com/pr/library/2015/01/27Apple-Reports-Record-First-Quarter-Results.html> >.

The Insight

To reach a global strategy, we leveraged our global network to define holiday tensions.

Although Christmas and the Chinese New Year are celebrated with their own traditions and rituals, we found that the two holidays share similar sentiments. They are both about family, gift giving, looking back, and celebrating the year ahead.

After looking through global holiday ads of the past few years, we saw a trend of brands delivering more emotional messages centered around reuniting with family and showing kindness to the people around us. However, most of these ideas were still rooted in the act of buying gifts. In the western world, people are inundated with messages like “best holiday gift lists for dad, for mom”, “ultimate holiday gift guide”, etc. In China, gift-giving is deeply rooted in culture with giving red envelopes as a norm. But when the act of giving becomes an obligation, it starts to lose its meaning and specialness. Many white-collar migrant workers in big cities are afraid to go home for the Chinese New Year, as they can’t stand the tremendous financial pressure from parents and grandparents who expect them to bring back gifts and red envelopes.

This led us to the discovery of our universal tension. The holiday season has always been about showing generosity to those around us, but this generous spirit has been swallowed up by the stress and pressure of finding ‘the perfect gift’. By showing how Apple empowers people to create meaningful gifts, we opened up a rich territory that speaks to the brand value and product truth.

MEDIA HEADLINES ABOUT HOLIDAY STRESS	
 <p>How to do Christmas presents on the cheap - and still look like the best friend ever</p>	 <p>Two Thirds of Holiday Shoppers Stress About Finding the Perfect Gift, Staples Study Shows</p>
 <p>Tips for Reducing Stress as We Enter the Holiday Shopping Season</p>	 <p>10 stress-free ways to avoid holiday shipping hassles</p>
 <p>Afraid to go home for Chinese New Year? You're not alone <i>It's one of the most family-oriented holidays of the Chinese calendar, but many people are fearful of going home this Chinese New Year, and it's not just mom's cooking they're dreading</i> <small>By Xing Zhao 12 February, 2010</small></p>	<p>“Travel plus buying presents for my parents would cost my whole month's wage.” - Chen, CNN interview</p>

The Idea:

Think Different about “Giving”

Once we defined the tension, the idea was clear to us. We wanted to give the gift of giving, to inspire people to create something meaningful through Apple products, to bring out the creativity in everyone. It could be a movie, a homemade card, or a song that transcends time and brings generations together.

“The Song”: From Voice-O-Graph to GarageBand

“The Song” brought to life the idea that the most special holiday gift is something you create, rather than buy. It’s the thoughtfulness, ingenuity, and creativity that make the gift meaningful.

In the film, we follow a young girl home for ‘the holidays’ who finds an old vinyl recording of her grandmother singing when she was a young woman. The girl decides to use GarageBand and turns the recording into a duet between the two of them, as a gift.

The Voice-O-Graph record booth, which was featured on Jimmy Fallon’s Tonight Show earlier in the year, gave us a cultural opportunity to communicate a different approach to giving. It was a great analog to Apple technology in that it democratized the recording process and allowed people to create gifts that went beyond simply checking off the holiday checklist.

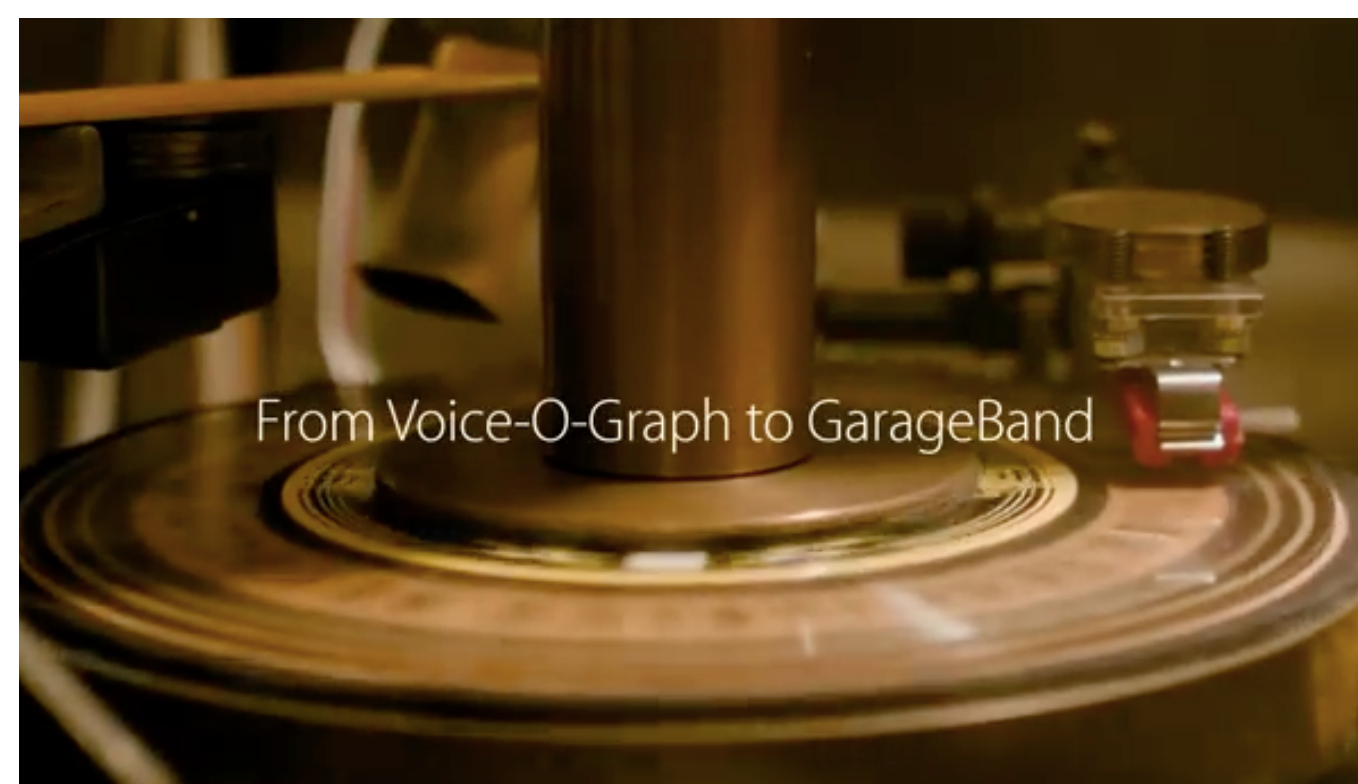
The campaign showed that whether it’s the Voice-O-Graph or Garageband, it’s not the technology that counts but what you do with it. It is the thought behind the gift, not the gift itself.



Bringing the Idea to Life

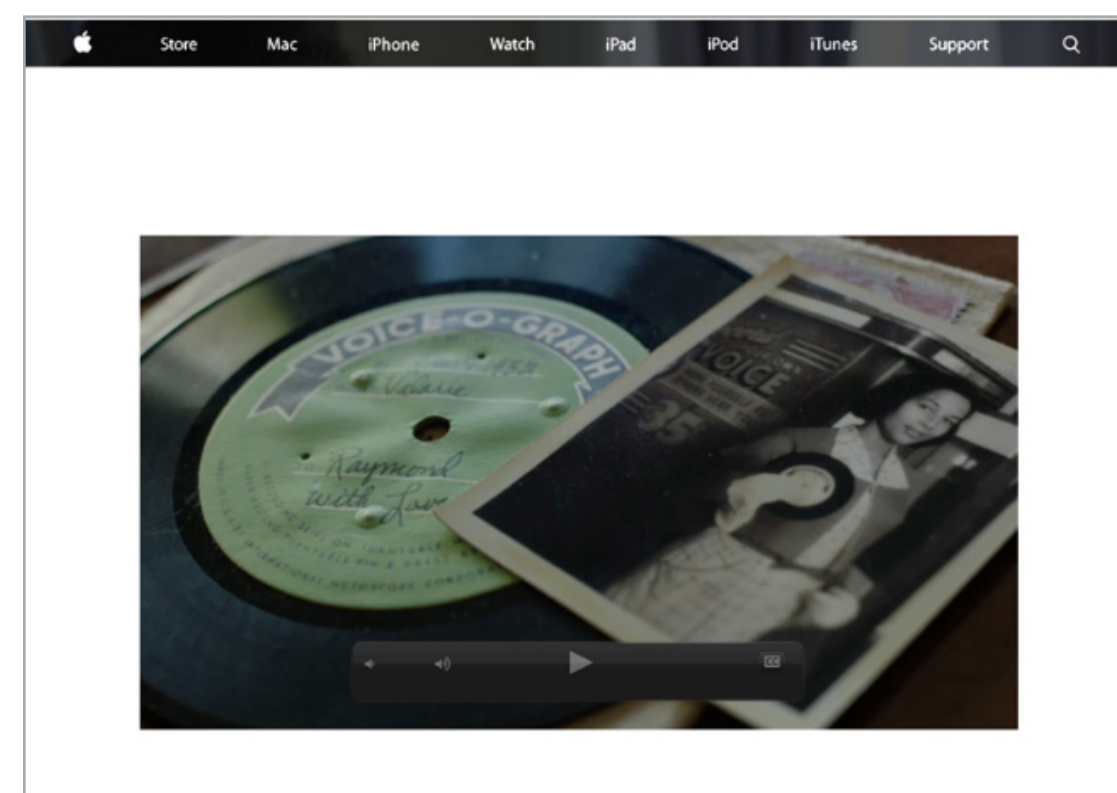
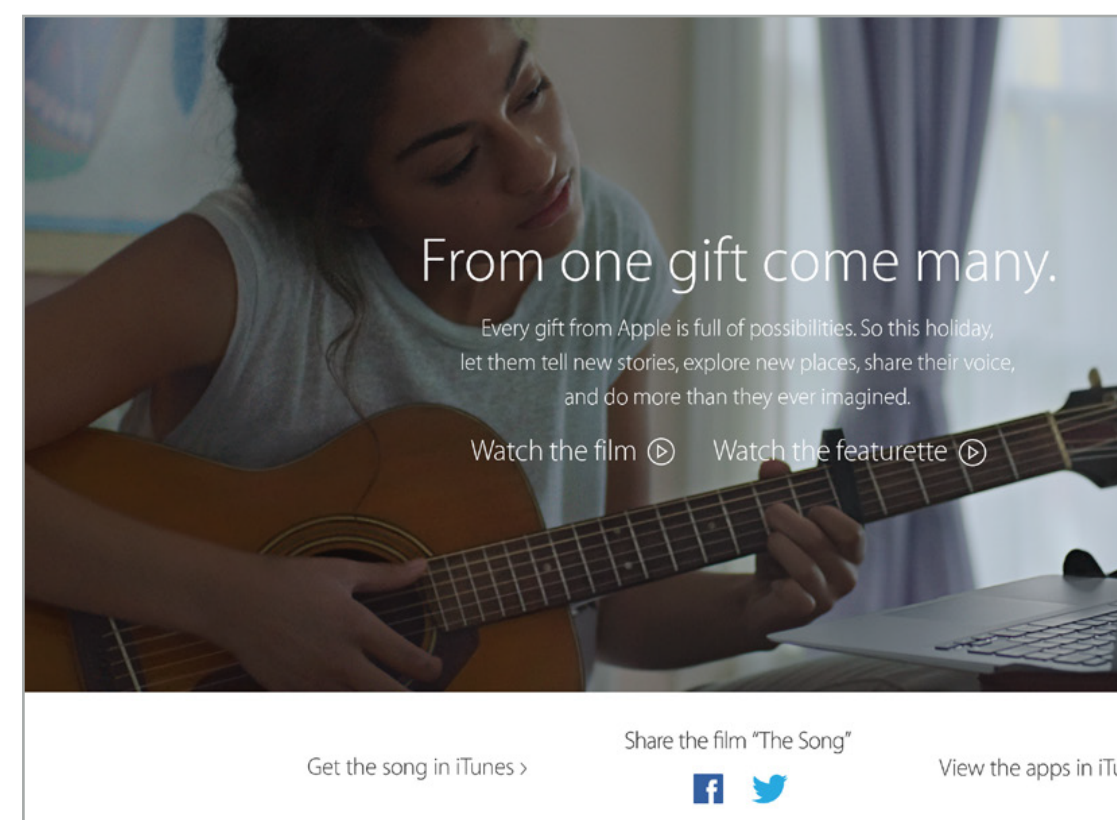
To communicate our brand message on different media platforms, we supplemented TV with digital, retail, and social.

Apple Youtube Channel



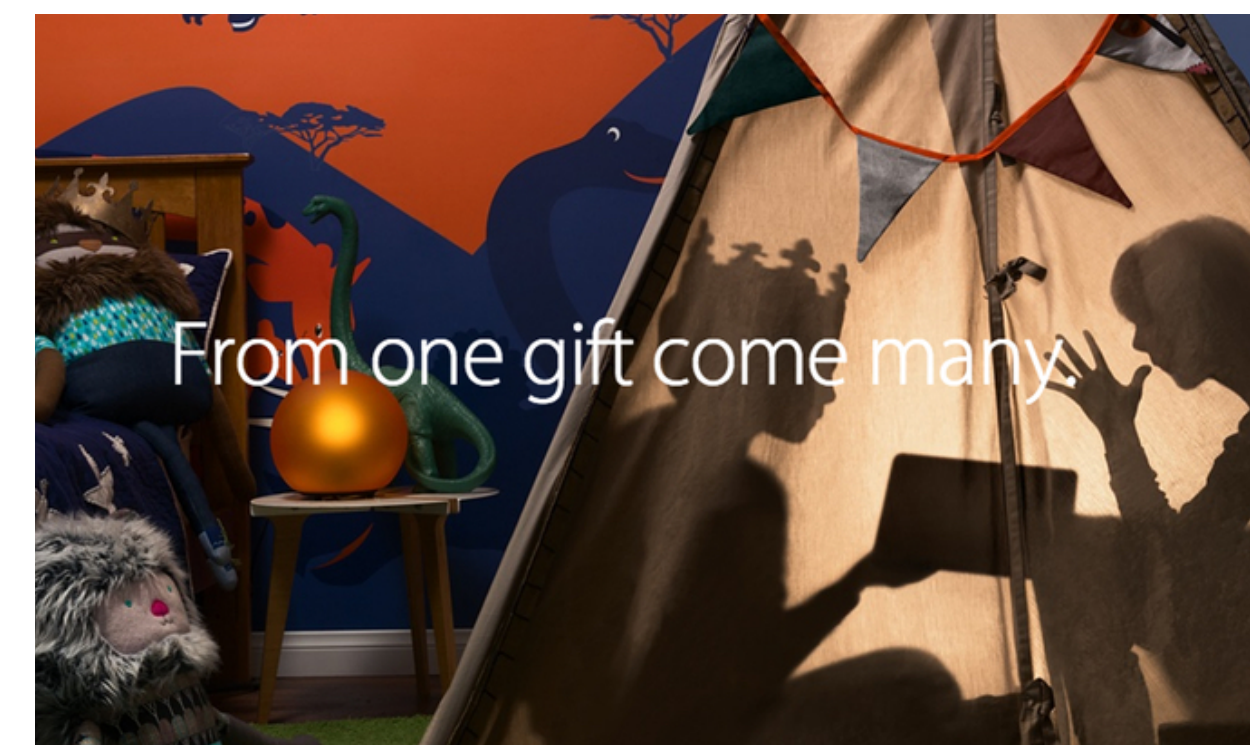
supplemented with a behind-the-scenes video

Front page of apple.com



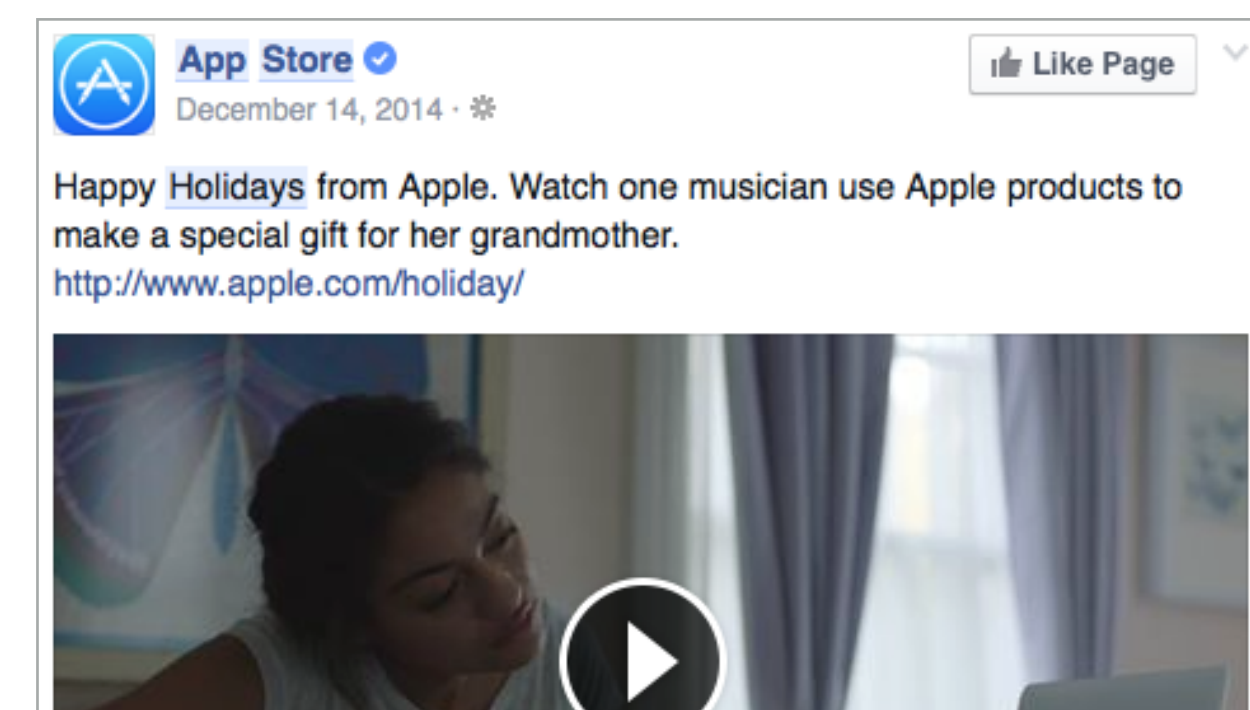
campaign was integrated to the website & linked to music creation apps on iTunes

Retail



aligned with the retail push

Facebook video integration



launched the first Facebook video integration for the brand

“The Old Record”

Extending the campaign for the Chinese New Year

Part of our global strategy was to extend the campaign for the Chinese New Year. What started out as an insightful idea about giving, creativity, and love, came to life in China as a beautiful spot.

The local strategy maintained the same campaign idea while incorporating authentic Chinese cultural elements. The usual clichéd Chinese New Year depiction of red lanterns and firecrackers were intentionally avoided. Instead, we delivered a truly authentic holiday that's highly resonant only with the local audience.



Dialing Up Local Tensions

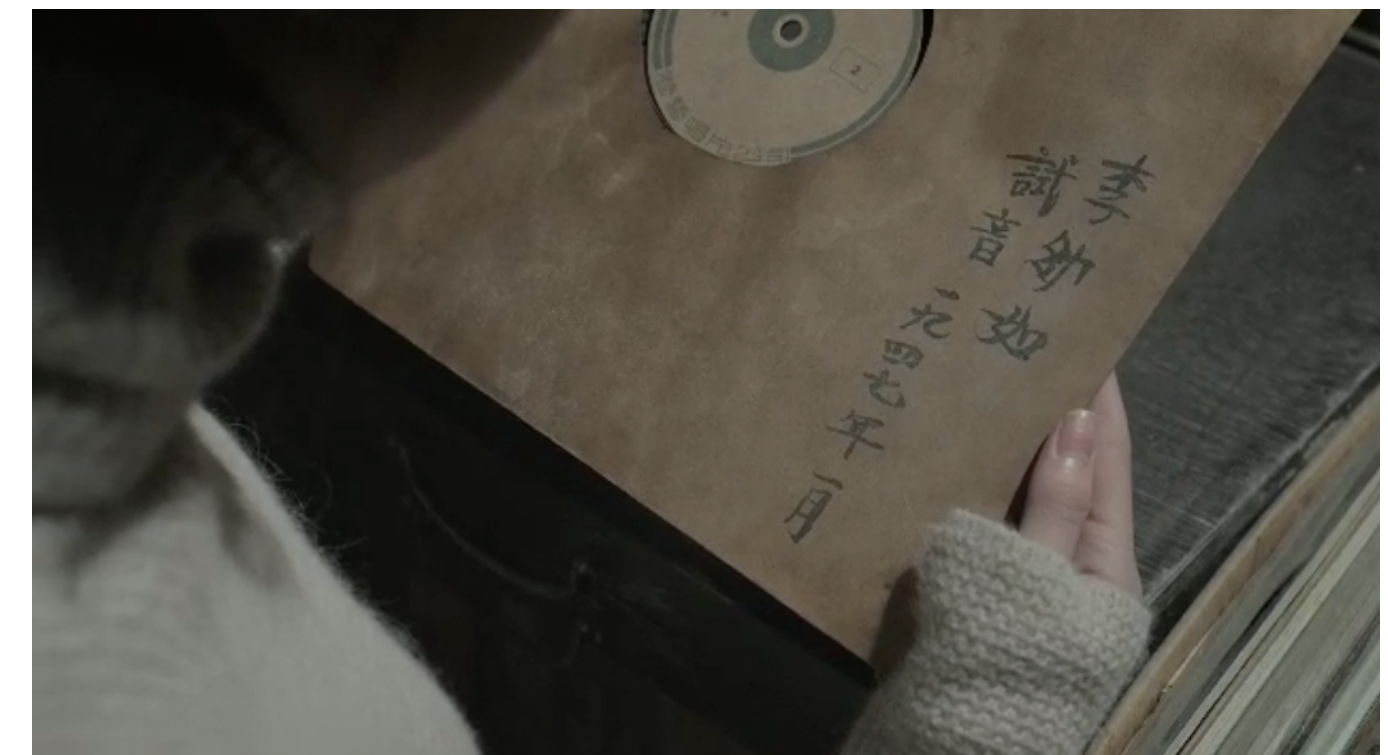
We leveraged several cultural insights to make the film more genuine for the local audience.

In the recent decades, China went through massive social and cultural shifts, creating an unprecedented gap between grandparents and grandchildren. We wanted to bridge this gap by creating a more intimate relationship between the girl and her grandma, which reinforces the notion that Apple creates meaningful and human connections. Two generations coming close together through the act of selfless love delivers a powerful and touching message.

Adapting the song and picking an appropriate time frame wasn't easy, given that the majority of the historical songs after 1949 were for government propaganda. We worked with our music team to select the love song "Forever Smile" from Shanghai's booming jazz era in 1920s-1940s, a golden time for creativity. This timeless piece struck a chord with different generations.

We also chose to set our film in an old Shanghai lane house. This brought profound nostalgia by serving as a counterpoint to the regions' rapid modernization and development.

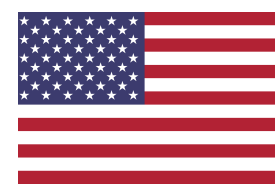
By leveraging these local tensions, we brought to life an authentic film for the Chinese New Year that resonated deeply with the local audience.



The Results: "The Song"

Between its launch and the New Year, "The Song" saw explosive viewership worldwide :

- 3.2 Million views on Youtube with a 92% positive sentiment
- 43.1 Million views on Facebook with 360k likes



21M views



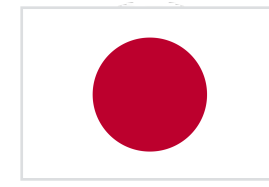
5M views



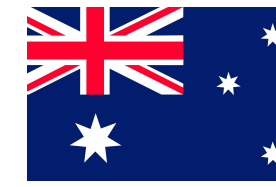
4M views



3M views



3M views



380k views



725k views



3M views



3M views

And it did more than just make people cry. It reaffirmed the brand belief that Apple products are not only to be purchased but to be used for learning, for creativity, and for strengthening connections to those we love. This message was reflected in the media's response, which ranged from advertising press to style publications.

TIME

"Apple often serves up its most heartwarming commercials just in time for the winter holidays, and this year is no different."



REFINERY29

"I'm sorry, is someone cutting onions in here? These Apple ads tell exactly the right stories in a time when it seems like most people use technology as a means to avoid human interaction and emotion — not foster it."

ADWEEK

"It's not (only) the toy, in other words. It's what you do with it. Whether it's a Voice-O-Graph or an iPhone, that's a worthy message for any holiday season."



"It's beautifully played by the two characters. What could have been a schmaltzy, gooey affair is instead understated and personal. There's no cloying Christmasness, no cliché in sight."

The Results: "The Old Record"

After its launch in China from Feb.2-22, the campaign drove overwhelmingly positive social buzz, was praised by mainstream media, and drove the best holiday sales quarter ever.

- 179.9 Million TV impressions
- 125.9 Million impressions and 2.6 Million clicks on online TV sites (Youku, Tudou and Tencent)



This spot is regarded as the most successful Apple campaign in China with phenomenal responses.



"The Old Record is the best Apple ad in China"



For the first time the Chinese censorship official said, "we simply love the spot."



"Apple draws inspiration from families reuniting for New Year holiday and delivers an emotional story... leveraging bicycles, an old Shanghai style house, narcissus flowers, and an iconic singer Zhou Xuan instead of cliched red colors, percussion, firecrackers."



"Apple launched a new spot on their CN website with authentic Chinese flavors. For the very first time Apple did a Chinese Spring Festival spot. It captures the close family bond in traditional Chinese culture and demonstrates how Apple products help actualize creative ideas in daily life."