

Ads that do their magic

Monty Arnhold | July 16, 2008

I've been told my columns have been getting a tad long-winded of late, so I'll need to summon up a bit of magic to limit today's rant to the recommended 700 words or so.

In an astonishing co-incidence, magic is the theme that links the ads I'm commenting on, so without further ado, here goes.

First up is the new entrant into the gaming industry, Intralot.

If part of the brief was to establish Intralot as a big and impressive company by spending a small fortune on producing a lavish launch commercial, the campaign can already be considered a success.

'The Luck Factory' is both the creative idea and the slogan.

The commercial takes us inside a factory which looks like something from a bleak British pre-war movie, but inside it's an Aladdin's Cave staffed by bizarre characters in a hybrid of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, Santa's Workshop and Charlie and the Chocolate Factory.

But it's another commercial in the campaign which is actually more ingenious, using one medium – television - to promote another - radio.

The eccentric factory boss, sitting at his desk opposite an Indian Chief we saw fleetingly in the launch spot says "I like smoke signals too, but how are we going to tell people about Lucky Bingo Star?"

"Magic Box." Replies the Indian.

"Magic Box?" asks the puzzled factory boss.

"Magic Box." says the Indian as he, charade-like, makes a square shape with his fingers, much like a cricket umpire referring a decision to the third umpire.

"Magic Box. Magic Box. Magic Box," the two men chant in unison as we cut to a shot of an old radio sitting on a filing cabinet in the room.

Bingo.

A voice-over then tells us to listen to a certain radio station at a specific time to play the game.

Next bit of magic comes courtesy of Four 'n Twenty pies. They've invented the 'Magic Salad Plate', a wonderfully silly dinner plate, which makes it appear that your typical Aussie bloke's eating salad with his pie – until we realise that the salad is actually a plastic replica that's part of the plate!

In a further act of inspired lunacy, you'll be able to buy one from a special Four 'n Twenty website.

I love the way this ad self-deprecatingly acknowledges that a pie hasn't got a scrap of nutritional value. And in giving the finger to political correctness and healthy eating, it re-enforces the brand's no-nonsense, blokey essence.

Talking about giving the finger, the third bit of magic worth commenting on today comes to us courtesy of the launch issue of the new Top Gear magazine.

The commercial is a send-up of the NSW RTA's anti-speeding and hoon driving campaign in which women derisively raise a crooked little finger as a sign of disapproval to young men driving aggressively. Think about it...yes, you've got it.

In the Top Gear version we're introduced to a rather distinguished- looking chap swanning around in the latest Audi R8 supercar. He pulls up alongside a woman standing on a street corner.

Eyeing him off scornfully, she gives him the flaccid pinkie, only for him to give her an 'up yours' with his own upright little finger – which just happens to be about twice normal size!

Last but certainly not least, the final bit of magic for today comes from Vodafone.

'Take your world with you' is the line in a triumph of special effects which shows us firstly how a map of the world can be taken from a wall and folded into a phone-sized object which a young bloke then places in his pocket.

He then repeats this trick with a laptop, a plasma TV, an entire bookcase full of CDs, and then just to show how clever the post-production house is, the young geezer folds his sleeping girlfriend up and pops her into his pocket before stepping out onto the street.

I like everything about this commercial, except its logic. To me it would be a brilliant ad for a specific digital device, such as Apple's spectacular new iPhone.

But in fact it's selling the virtues of the Vodafone network. I would have thought that any network could deliver the services represented so impressively.

So really, there's nothing magical about the spot after all.

Monty Arnhold is founder of A Second Opinion, which offers marketers unbiased creative appraisal of advertising ideas.