

Automakers Capture Top Super Bowl Ads

by Gerald Scott
News Dept.

Collectively, the automakers have seized the proverbial high ground when it comes to Super Bowl TV advertising, according to one expert.

Coming off of the 2012 Super Bowl, GM ran a half-dozen ads with lasting impact, and Chrysler's "It's Halftime in America" ad, starring Clint Eastwood, remains one of the most talked about ads coming out of the event.

This is notable because just a few years ago, in the auto bankruptcy era, the carmakers largely weren't running any of the expensive TV ads during the Super Bowl football game.

And now look. "What we've seen is the economy is a driver here - NBC was able to command a half-million more (per ad, at \$3.5 million for 30 seconds), which is certainly a strong sign," said Dr. Michael Bernacchi, advertising and marketing professor at the University of Detroit Mercy.

"This is two consecutive years when the autos have dominated in terms of quantity, there's no doubt about it.

"Really, the autos have never, in terms of quantity, been so dominant. This is a sea-change in Super Bowl advertising."

Bernacchi cited two reasons for this - one, the automakers are more stable than just a few years ago and therefore have more advertising money to spend. And two, the advent of social media is giving the ads a second, third and fourth life past the Super Bowl telecast itself.

LBJ's '64 Lincoln Auction Benefits His Foundation

SMITHVILLE, Texas (AP) - A white 1964 Lincoln Continental convertible used by President Lyndon B. Johnson has been put up for auction in Texas.

Dan Kruse Classics has announced the March 3 sale of LBJ's personal vehicle, which he drove until his death in 1973.

An auction spokeswoman said last week that the convertible is on display at the Central Texas Museum of Automotive History, founded by collector Dick Burdick. The auction will take place at the museum in Smithville, located about 35 miles southeast of Austin.

The auction will benefit the LBJ Foundation, which owns the luxury car. The foundation provides funds to The University of Texas at Austin, the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum, and the Lyndon Baines Johnson School of Public Affairs.

Note that LBJ's Lincoln was his private car and did not belong to the U.S. government. Many of the official Presidential limousines used by the White House are now at the Henry Ford Museum.

That factor is not to be underestimated because Volkswagen's "Darth Vader" ad from last year has been seen another 48 million times on YouTube while Chrysler's "Eminem" ad from 2011 has been seen 20 million times on YouTube following the original broadcast as well.

"Furthermore, if you take a look at the AdMeter, it's unbelievable, four auto ads were in the Top 10 (reviewed)," Bernacchi pointed out.

"Chrysler's ad was at halftime, and it's received almost as much discussion with the Clint Eastwood ad as they did last year with Eminem. So it's home run, followed by another home run."

As for the fuss about the Clint Eastwood ad for Chrysler - which most viewers seemed to link back to the 2011 Eminem ad as local and

national ads reflecting the same theme - Chrysler CEO Sergio Marchionne defended the ad's apolitical aspect in an interview with Paul W. Smith on WJR radio last week.

"It has zero political content. I think we need to be careful, and God knows, I mean I can't stop anybody from associating themselves with a message, but it was not intended to be any type of political overture on our part," Marchionne said.

"We are as apolitical as you can make us. You know, we're just an ingredient of a big machine here in this country that makes us go on.

"I wasn't expressing a view and certainly nobody inside Chrysler was attempting to influence (political) decisions.

"The message is sufficiently universal and neutral that it should be appealing to every-

body in this country and I sincerely hope that it doesn't get utilized as political fodder in a debate. But you know . . ."

Meanwhile, almost lost in the discussion was the fact that Cadillac's 30-second preview of the upcoming 2013 ATS compact sport sedan shown in the Super Bowl XLVI broadcast was the most-viewed single advertising spot in U.S. television history, according to a study released last week.

Kantar Media's Super Bowl audience study found that the Cadillac spot reached an audience rating of 43.5, highest among all advertising spots shown during the NBC-TV telecast. With Super Bowl XLVI reaching a record U.S. television audience of 111.3 million viewers, this means the Cadillac spot had the highest audience ever for a single ad.



The 2013 Cadillac ATS undergoes careful sound testing in labs at GM's Milford Proving Ground.

How Cadillac Achieves The Sound of Silence

DETROIT - The all-new 2013 Cadillac ATS is being developed to achieve excellent driving dynamics, say Cadillac officials - and that performance focus extends to the sounds it makes.

While designers define how a car looks and engineers develop how it feels, other experts carefully craft how a luxury performance car should sound.

Kyle Stanforth, noise and vibration engineer on the Cadillac performance team, said the ATS is engineered to enhance the performance-tuned sounds for each of the three available engines, while minimizing unwanted noise in and around the car.

"Cadillac customers expect a level of refinement beyond what most cars have. Yes, it's quiet, but it's more than that," Stanforth said.

"They also love to hear that sound of refined power when they ask for it. So when you open it up, you not only feel the power, you hear it too."

ATS engineers carefully shaped the intake system to allow the engine to breathe in fresh air, while minimizing unwanted engine noise.

Similar designs to the exhaust system ensure maximum engine performance, while lowering the sound levels at idle and cruising speeds.

Inside, the ATS uses technology to further refine the sound. Bose Active Sound Management technology continuously monitors the sound inside the cabin and generates a cancellation signal to reduce unwanted engine noise.

In addition to helping create optimal sound quality, this approach reduces the need to add acoustical materials - which supports the ATS's estimated curb weight of less than 3,400 pounds.

"The ATS sounds distinctly like a Cadillac should," said Stanforth.

"We've created a signature sound that expresses Cadillac power, refinement and luxury - and we make it sing."

Much of Stanforth's work is conducted in GM's sound labs and anechoic chambers located at the Proving Ground in Milford (see photo above).

The 2013 Cadillac ATS debuted to positive reviews at the Detroit Auto Show back in January.



Kyle Stanforth

Chicago Show: A Different Influence

by Ginny Carter
Special Writer

CHICAGO - Detroit's presence at the 2012 Chicago Auto Show last week could hardly be missed.

Chevrolet, one of the centerpieces of the exhibit, celebrated the 60th anniversary of the Corvette. Since its inception, the production has been moved from Flint to St. Louis to Kentucky.

The white 1953 Corvette on display is probably the finest example of its kind in the world. (There were only 300 first-model-year Corvettes ever made back in 1953.)

Cruze and Sonic were in full display with a variety of col-



One expert said the Chrysler Super Bowl ad starring Clint Eastwood was used to great effect for the automaker.

"We have a big message this year - Cadillac is expanding with new models challenging the world's best luxury cars. This stunning viewership data proves that Cadillac's big message reached the largest audience," said General Motors Global Chief Marketing Officer Joel Ewanick.

"When it comes to Super Bowl ads, everyone has opinions on their favorites. But it's

a fact that this Cadillac spot had the biggest audience during the game."

The Kantar Media analysis showed that spots airing in the hotly contested game's fourth quarter had higher viewership than those appearing earlier. Cadillac's spot, called "Green Hell," aired at 9:37 EST, during the game's "two-minute warning" official timeout.

Boler-Davis Named GM VP

DETROIT - Alicia Boler-Davis was appointed last week to U.S. vice president, Customer Experience, responsible for leading General Motors' effort to make the way customers are treated a driver for repeat purchases of Chevrolet, Buick, GMC and Cadillac products and services.

Boler-Davis, whose appointment is effective immediately, will report to GM North America President Mark Reuss.

Boler-Davis, currently plant manager, Orion Assembly and Pontiac Stamping in Michigan, replaces Paul Copes, who was appointed to the newly created position in 2011.

Copes will assume leadership of GM Customer Care and Aftersales Global SAP project, a key enabler to achieving world-class customer service.

"The breakthrough change that Alicia led as plant manager at Orion Assembly, while launching the all-new Chevy Sonic and Buick Verano, needs to be brought to our customer experience," said Reuss.

"What I admire about her is her candor with leaders and



Alicia Boler-Davis, GM's new U.S. vice president for Customer Experience.

strength of commitment she engenders among her team."

Boler-Davis started her GM career in 1994 and has served in various engineering leadership positions including Vehicle Line Director/Vehicle Chief Engineer, Small Car; Plant Manager for both Lansing Consolidated Operations in Michigan and Arlington Assembly in Texas.

She earned a bachelor's degree in Chemical Engineering from Northwestern University and a master's degree in Engineering from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.



2013 Dodge Dart at the Chicago Auto Show

ors along with the all new Malibu.

The Buick Verano, as well as the rest of the Buick lineup, were all there in eye-catching displays. The La Crosse was

shown in a deep gray metallic finish that was awesome. The Regal was placed near the center of the exhibit.

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Attorney Kevin Buick, a distant relative of brand founder David Dunbar Buick, with his new 2012 Buick Verano compact luxury sedan in Sycamore, Ill. It is the first Buick vehicle he has ever owned.

'I Finally Have a Buick in My Garage' - Kevin Buick

DETROIT - Buick attracted more than 40 percent of its customers from outside General Motors in 2011. That number rose to more than 50 percent last month for the new Verano compact luxury sedan, which went on sale in December.

One of those new customers is Kevin Buick, an attorney in Sycamore, Ill.

"With my name, I've been asked if I drive a Buick for as long as I remember," said Buick, a distant relative of brand founder David Dunbar Buick.

"But the cars were never right for me. The Verano, though, is truly perfect in every way that I ask of a car.

"It honestly feels like it was made just for me, so it's amusing that I get to step over my name embossed in the sill plate every time I get into my car.

"I couldn't be more excited to finally have a Buick in my garage, instead of just having the name on my mailbox."

Buick's new Black Onyx Verano replaces a Subaru Outback and offers what he says is just the right combination of size and content.

"I need some creature comfort, but I'm not interested in a larger, more expensive car. My Verano has a high quality level for the price. Small things like the heated steering wheel make a big difference," said Buick,

Verano is Buick's first compact luxury sedan, offering a standard seven-inch Color Touch radio and other features at a starting price of \$23,470, including destination.

"A lot of people want small, high-quality cars," Buick continued. "It's a little narrow-minded to equate luxury with size. I'm pleased, and proud, to see American carmakers stepping in that direction."

January sales of Verano tripled as inventory is still ramping up from the assembly plant in Orion Township, Mich.

The LaCrosse luxury sedan, which comes standard with Buick's innovative eAssist light electrification powertrain, also

reported a retail sales increase in January of 7.7 percent versus the same period in 2011. LaCrosse's 4,013 sales topped the Lexus ES350 by approximately 1,400 units.

Overall, Buick retail sales were down 18.5 percent for the month, amid the phasing out of the Lucerne sedan. Despite the decrease, GM reports, Buick outsold key competitors, including Acura, Audi, Infiniti and Lincoln.

More than just Buick's vehicles are changing. Some 1,900 of the brand's dealerships around the country are in the process of updating their designs, adding customer lounges with Wi-Fi and loaner programs.