

A blitz of critics

Out advertising columnist gets a ferocious rush of opinions from readers concerning the Super Bowl of Advertising

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At no time is the axiom about everybody being a critic more true than in the aftermath of the Super Bowl of Advertising. We heard from plenty of readers who took issue with our Monday roster of favorite and least-favorite spots from advertising's big Sunday.

And, of course, we took note of what USA Today's Ad Meter participants had to say about the Super Bowl ad lineup. That crew preferred Anheuser-Busch's feel-good Clydesdale spot backed by the "Rocky" theme, followed by FedEx's meticulously realized "Carrier Pigeons." AOL conducted an online poll that also ranked the Clydesdale spot as the favorite, followed by Bridgestone's "Squirrel" spot and Coca-Cola's effervescent "Balloons" execution.

But after everyone has had fun playing critic for a day, we are left with the task of deciding what to make of this 2008 Super Bowl of Advertising. Not much, really, since you ask. The vast majority of the ads, truth be told, were merely average. OK. Maybe a few notches better than what you'd see during any major prime time program event.

When all was revealed, however, there was a pervasive sense that ad agencies and clients have simply stopped trying to grab for the really big idea and the eye-popping execution, preferring instead to settle for the little idea, shock value or a glitzy star to get viewers' attention. If things continue in this vein, the Super Bowl of Advertising will eventually become a hugely diminished event. It's already well along the way to becoming just that.

Meanwhile, here's a sampling of what our readers had to say about this year's Super Bowl ad lineup:

The negative reaction to the 2007 Snickers Super Bowl ad with two guys kissing had little impact on this year's ads. Stereotypes and violence toward the gay community again made appearances during the 2008 big game. In the "Headlights" ad for Bridgestone tires, a man swerves on a dark road to avoid hitting a deer and rocker Alice Cooper. But when he sees Richard Simmons acting in a stereotypically gay manner, he guns the engine and nearly hits Simmons. Pepsi's ad featuring Justin Timberlake flying by the window of a man in a blond wig with Justin photos around his mirror was another example of gay representation in a less than positive light -- with the bewigged guy's sexuality serving as the punch line of a joke.

Richard Ferraro

I think you missed the point of the cartoon characters chasing the Coke bottle. In the end there's Charlie Brown, the kid for whom things *never* work out right. But this time, for once, Charlie Brown gets the Coke.

Doug Todd

What a sweet and delightful ending for that poor kid Charlie Brown, who bratty Lucy never did let kick the football. All those times she promised and he believed. And she lied, and pulled the ball away. What a great little moment of justice to cap off a Super Sunday like that. I hope whoever wrote that ad gets at least a Coke balloon.

Dave Jones

I have to disagree with your rating of "Breathe Fire." The spot was a blatant ripoff of a previous commercial, namely Dairy Queen's "Flamethrower," which ran last year.

Merrick

Tangible Worldwide

I'm surprised you left out Doritos' "Mouse Trap," Bud Light's "Invention of the Wheel" (more funny than "Language of Love") or any of the E-Trade commercials.

Brad G. Holden

My favorite was the rather unique ad for the Honda Element. Remember that one?

Richard Higgins

The Tide To Go ad was great. I got it instantly. It plays to a younger audience. Those who don't find Carlos Mencia funny.

Max Paolucci

You left my favorite spot from your Super Bowl list. That E-Trade "Baby Stock Buyer" spot was funny as hell to me, maybe because it was so unexpected. Besides showing a baby doing the stock deal is the perfect way to illustrate the simplicity of using E-Trade.

Clyde Hogg

SUPER POLL

Readers weighed in on their favorite ads at *suntimes.com* with Lew's online coverage of the Super Bowl of Advertising. As of 5:40 p.m. Monday, 7,883 people voted. Of 22 ads, the favorite was the Bud Light "Fly" commercial (2,548 votes, 32%). Check out video links to ads and Lew's blog and stories at www.suntimes.com/business/lazare/index.html.

Florida-based stocks, options, futures and forex broker TradeStation Securities has named ESW/Chicago as agency of record. ESW is working to develop a new brand positioning and messaging for TradeStation.

Steve Mann has joined JSH&A Public Relations in Oakbrook Terrace as an account supervisor. He will work with clients such as the Hershey Co. and Redbox.

Chicago-based public relations firm Arment Dietrich is opening an office in Denver. The new outpost will be headed by **Sydney Ayers**, a former principal and owner of Ayers Strategic Public Relations/Denver.

Matter, the entertainment marketing division of Edelman, is opening a unit of the practice in Chicago. Matter's Chicago operations will be headed by **Brett McCall**, who has more than 12 years of entertainment marketing experience at companies such as Jam Productions, Paramount Pictures and Aaron Walton Entertainment.