



**CONTAGIOUS
SPECIAL REPORTS**

BRANDED ENTERTAINMENT

2008



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02 / Introduction

As a concept, branded entertainment (BE) is nothing new. But recent, irrevocable changes in the way we consume media has thrust it back into focus for brands and advertisers. In order to cut through, messaging now has to be entertaining, and ideally with interactive elements. The new challenge for advertisers in the 21st century is finding a way to do that while staying on message.

03 / Back to the Future

Branded entertainment began in earnest with the Procter & Gamble-sponsored radio plays of the 1930s, which later evolved into the television soap operas of the 1950s. For the next 50 years, the combination of brands and ad messaging continued along fairly conservative lines, with product placement and straightforward sponsorships being the order of the day. All that changed with BMW's *The Hire* film series in 2001, which paved the way for marketers to re-address branded entertainment as a concept.

04 / Branded Entertainment / An Overview

What we call 'branded entertainment' can take a variety of different forms, spanning sponsorship, product placement, the creation of original content, alternate reality games, experiential solutions such as live concert and social events,

interactive campaigns, video games and more. Subtlety, creativity and tonal appropriateness are the keys to success. As planning and projects evolve, branded entertainment will become more sophisticated, encompassing multiple touchpoints and technologies.

05 / Opportunities and Partnerships

This is the era of the media partnership. The new advent of branded entertainment opens up a number of mutually beneficial partnership possibilities for brands. Proven hotspots include the hobbled music industry, IPTV (Internet television stations such as Joost), digital television service providers, and social networks, who many believe have the capacity to reach the Y and Z generations in a way that television no longer can.

06 / The Fallout / When Things Go Wrong

Success in branded entertainment is about finding a balance between legitimately compelling content and on-point brand messaging. Stay true to your brand's tone: the worst, most destructive thing you can do is get involved in branded entertainment for the sake of it. Execution and openness are key; make sure your content is simple to access and share. If it's worthwhile and entertaining, consumers will be happy to do both.

07 / Around The World

A quick scan of the world's branded entertainment landscape: France's broadcast legislature allows for sponsored, bite-sized pieces of content in primetime; China is a sleeping giant but is slowly starting to get involved; Sweden is years ahead in the digital game and therefore market leaders in interactive work; India is hugely stratified, but branded entertainment is making strides thanks to Bollywood, sport and desperate alcohol and tobacco companies.

08 / The Work

Here we take a look at over 40 significant branded entertainment projects to emerge in the last 18 months, worldwide.

09 / Future View

Branded entertainment will not replace regular advertising; better to consider it as one of many tools in a marketer's toolkit. There are home truths about what works, but by and large, there is no final word: this is a time of experimentation and exploration. As ever, technology and the web will drive and shape this sector, but mainstream television also stands to play a big role in BE's ongoing maturation. All brands have a right to this arena – there is no velvet rope.



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Like 'viral' and 'digital' before it, 'branded entertainment' is one of those container terms that represents a vast array of drastically differing disciplines and forms, a lot of which agencies, entertainment companies and brands are still in the course of refining. So, in the interest of adding some definition to the subject, we thought it'd be helpful to provide a rough taxonomy of the most prevalent and promising trends within branded entertainment.

04.01 / Advertiser-Funded Programming

Since AFP, or advertiser-funded programming, is one of the quickest ways for brands to get immediately involved, it's also one of branded entertainment's most popular categories. And although AFP encompasses a raft of strategies that range from simple brand / content partnerships to the development of bespoke content, you can more or less divide the work into three basic subcategories:

1. Sponsorship

Essentially just a glorified update on the traditional sponsorship work that brands have been participating in for decades ('This show has been brought to you by...'), sponsored AFP generally presents a low-effort, low-stakes opportunity for a brand to soak up the halo effect from a particular piece of content. Examples include the 2006 **Nike**-sponsored video for

Common's *Be*, which married the Chicago rapper's critically acclaimed single with Nike products and related imagery; and **NBC Universal's** recent campaign for the drama *Life*, which featured **MasterCard**-sponsored 'pod-busters' during the commercial breaks that reinforced the show's characters with a series of small clues that sent the viewer back to the MasterCard-sponsored Life portal on **NBC.com** for more.

2. Product placement

Although often derided as a patently unsexy solution, product placement still accounts for a significant chunk of AFP's transactional tally in America, and thanks to legislation announced by the EU in November, looks poised to become a factor in Europe as well. Under the new EU directive, television, IPTV and TV-on-demand networks will be able to broadcast product placement in 'cinema, films for TV, sports broadcasts and light entertainment' programmes, with the proviso that broadcasters must demarcate the beginning and end of each segment with title signals.

Elsewhere, though, the advent of serialised web-based content has already created more opportunity for brands. A good example is the recent **Bebo.com** smash **KateModern** (more on that later), which features 'deep brand integration' from names like **Orange, P&G, Disney, Cadbury** and **Microsoft**. As ever, success in product placement favours a subtle touch. 'Brand placements become forced the moment there's any overstatement,' says **Bates Asia's** creative group head **Diptanshu Roy**. 'It has a ►



NBC Universal / Life



Bebo / KateModern /



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While the agency had pre-written enough plot points over the course of the five days to ensure the story's general arc, a huge portion of the campaign was ultimately supplied by viewers, who, through chat requests, polls and blog posts of their own, helped guide much of the action. And while having three photogenic models prance around in their skivvies on a live webcam didn't hurt the site's traffic figures (which reportedly tripled as a result of the campaign), it was ultimately the level of engagement and meaningful interaction that kept users there for the better part of a week. It's these kinds of experiences, says Farfar's creative director **Nicke Bergstrom**, that brands need to deploy if they want to have any real claim to the word 'interactive'. 'Let's say you go to a car website that's [branded] an interactive experience, but the interactive part is you can choose between green, blue and red for the rim. In some ways that's interactive, because you can pick and choose, but they could have made a catalogue with the same content.'

Another award-winning interactive campaign from 2007 was the **California Milk Processing Board's Gettheglass.com**, built by Swedish whiz kids **North Kingdom** and backed by an integrated campaign from **Goodby Silverstein & Partners**. The site boasts beautiful graphics that wouldn't be out of place in the latest commercial games releases coupled with a compelling narrative, urging gamers to overcome a series of challenges while moving along a board game grid towards a life-giving glass of milk. The site achieved lengthy dwell times of up to 30 minutes at weekends and deservedly gained a Gold Cyber Lion at Cannes.

This year sees the **Got Milk** campaign continue with a new website at www.whitegoldiswhitegold.com, this time in collaboration with design studio **Odopod**. The campaign features an irreverent rocker **White Gold**, styled like an over the top Ben Stiller complete with flowing white hair, backed by **The Calcium Twins**. White Gold started life as a mess of frail hair, a dull smile and a scrawny body. Before he hit the milk. Now, he's a model of masculinity and a true rock God. The highly interactive website – which needs to be explored rather than uncovered through simple menus – features games, videos and footage of the band, whose album can also be downloaded.



Gettheglass.com /

Links/

www.nbc.com/Life
www.bebo.com
www.bartleoglehegarty.com
<http://channel.audi.co.uk>
www.ideaologue.com
www.greygoosevodka.com
www.sundancechannel.com
www.mtv.com
www.radicalmedia.com
www.gluesociety.com
www.officemax.com
www.iagr.net
www.cakegroup.com
www.benjerry.com

www.visitlondon.com
www.42entertainment.com
www.ilovebees.com
www.beingirl.com
www.cathysbook.com
<http://www.cpbgroup.com>
www.farfar.se
www.diesel.com
www.gettheglass.com
www.northkingdom.com
www.goodbysilverstein.com
www.whitegoldiswhitegold.com
www.odopod.com



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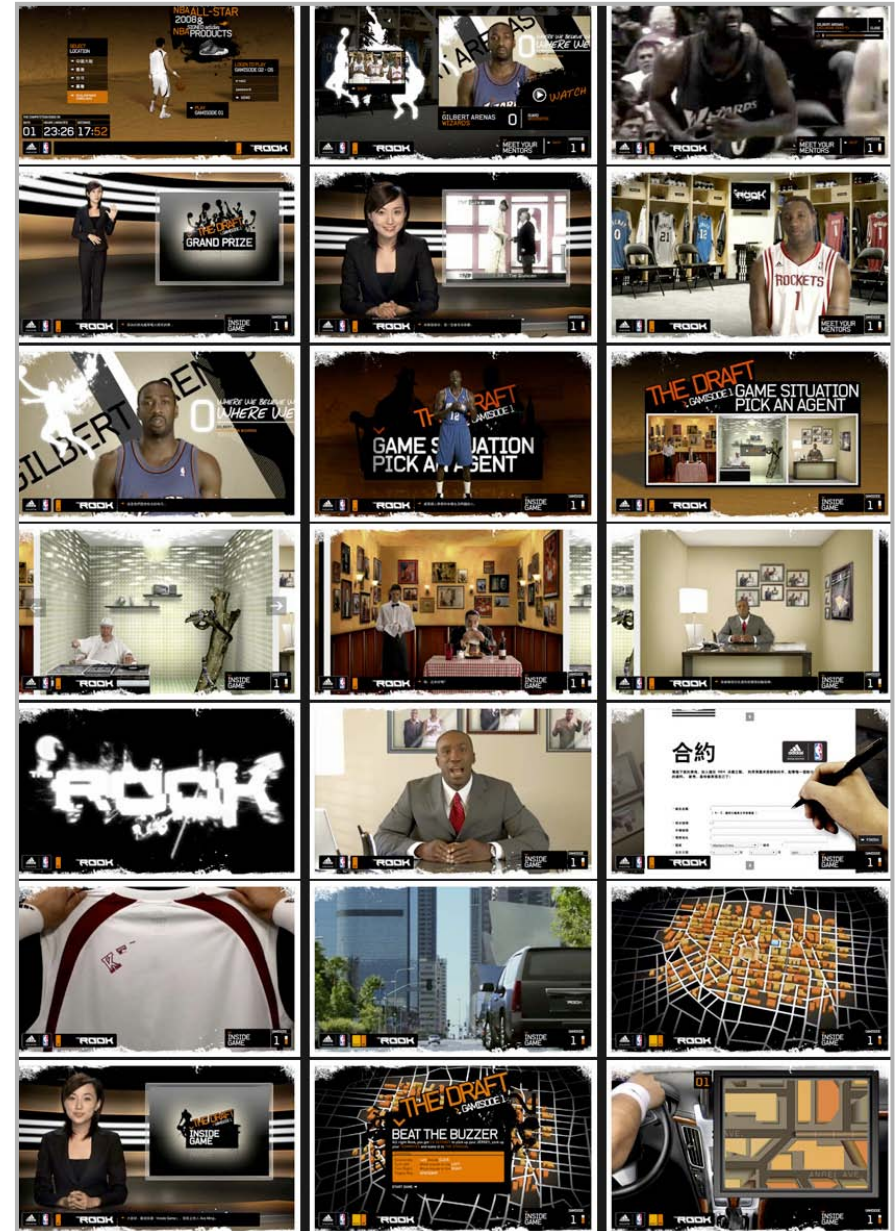
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07.02 / China

As evidenced by the advertising industry's increased awareness of China and its intimidatingly enormous market, the one billion strong nation is catching up on the marketing front, and branded entertainment is an unmistakable part of that. **OgilvyOne China** president **Chris Reitermann** has witnessed the industry's incredible growth spurt firsthand, and although he's doubtful that the traditional television model will relinquish its stronghold on the country any time soon, he's also noticed a significant uptake in consumption and interest levels in other kinds of entertainment across other kinds of media. Because television is so heavily regulated, he says, a lot of that content is heading towards the web. And although branded entertainment as a discipline isn't nearly as well-defined in China as it is in the US or UK, the nation's burgeoning interest in new kinds of advertising combined with the opportunities afforded by the web's slightly less-controlled environment has opened the door for some world class-level work.

One such piece is an OgilvyOne initiative for **adidas** called **The Rook**. Designed to leverage adidas' NBA professional sponsored stardom against China's basketball-crazy demographic, the project attracted over 200,000 registered users during its six-week run from November to December 2007. Over the course of five 15-20 minute instalments (which the agency has dubbed 'gamisodes'), users undergo a full rookie season from a first-person perspective, starting with The Draft and finishing with The Finals.

With a full-screen interactive film module at its core and cameo appearances from some of the NBA's biggest stars, the project also offered up exclusive footage, interviews and unlockable bonus materials. The fact that it took over 100 different people to facilitate this particular production, says Reitermann, speaks to China's increasing interest in making content of this kind. 'There's a lot of stuff happening online that's happening much faster and more aggressively than it probably does anywhere else,' he says. 'The online space is kind of a big, kind of laboratory right now. There's many things where nobody knows the best way to do it, and I think clients are a bit more open to like let you just try things.'



adidas / The Rook /



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You've probably realised by now the one simple truth about branded entertainment: there is no one simple truth about branded entertainment. More than anything, this is a time of experimentation and exploration. Some initiatives are going to capture public imagination, while some are going to fall by the wayside. This scattered marketplace makes it almost impossible to say with any certainty just exactly how things are going to play out, but there are some things we can say for sure.

In June 2007, the New York agency **Droga5** and New York's **Smuggler Films** launched a bold and expensive new venture called **HoneyShed**. Bankrolled by the **Publicis Groupe** and further supported by brands, HoneyShed is basically an online television channel that merges original content with the sales pitch. **David Droga** describes the vision: 'Most of the time the strategy has been to create entertaining content and then seed it, put it on YouTube, or elsewhere. So content is king but the king didn't really have a throne. Our idea was wouldn't it be brilliant to have a site where you could be overt about the brand. The site gets at the entertainment value and the sociability of shopping.'

While early results on the venture are still out, the site (which some have likened to a home shopping channel for hipsters) has been the source of intense public scrutiny. Where its supporters maintain that the vision behind it marks a brave new evolution for the

branded entertainment model, HoneyShed's detractors hold that the model goes completely against the way people normally conduct commerce on the web. While we'll reserve our judgement until all the cards are in, we applaud the intent behind Publicis' commitment. The fact is that branded entertainment is only going to get bigger; the brands that realise this sooner are more likely to be rewarded.

It's not just the creative entities who need to pay more attention: branded entertainment has the potential to shake things up on the media side as well. The digital distribution model that most BE is founded on seriously undermines our concept of the traditional media spend.

Whereas in the old-school broadcast model, it wasn't uncommon to spend a wodge of cash on an advert and then five times more on the media buy, these kinds of projects invert the ratio: you might spend more money on the production, but relatively less to get it seen. You can see why some brands who can't compete on the level of massive media buys might find this compelling.

BBH's Mark Boyd cites their recent project for **Audi, TT Remastered**, as a perfect example. 'It was an album, it was a podcast by **Jo Wiley**, it was a music mixer where you could upload the tracks that we owned, it was a TV programme, it was a radio show, it was a partnership with *Observer Music Monthly*, all with that kind of central idea of TT Remastered at the heart of it and all with very clear consistency you can feel across every execution,' he says. 'We took the whole lot and went "Listen, for the kind of consumers



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