

Most bang for their bucks

Amateur ads, humor on tap for Super Bowl commercials

By SETH SUTEL
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK

There's one place where you can find both FedEx, the overnight package delivery service, and "Fed-Ex," or Kevin Federline, the future ex-husband of pop diva Britney Spears. Both will be making appearances in Super Bowl ads, the highest-profile advertising event of the year.

FedEx Corp. is keeping mum about what its ad will look like, keeping up a tradition of ultra-secrecy that many marketers follow in hopes of building up the maximum amount of surprise during the game, which airs Feb. 4 on CBS.

Advertisers want to get the most out of the huge cost of an ad in the big game, which is running as high as \$2.6 million this year, up slightly from \$2.5 million last year.

Federline will be poking fun at himself in a humorous spot for the Nationwide Mutual Insurance Co. under its "Life Comes At You Fast" campaign. Those spots, which have previously featured the supermodel Fabio and MC Hammer, will show Federline winding up working in a fast-food restaurant.

Humor and attempts to drive viewers to the Web, two themes from past years, are back again with some variations, and this year's Super Bowl commercials add a new twist, viewer participation.

One of the biggest new themes of this year's game is getting



AP PHOTO

Kevin Federline is seen in a clip from the Nationwide Super Bowl ad for the firm's "Life Comes at You Fast" campaign.

amateurs into the act. General Motors Corp.'s Chevrolet division ran a contest for college students to propose an ad that would be made by a team of professionals, and PepsiCo Inc.'s Frito-Lay unit will run an ad made entirely by an amateur contestant.

Meanwhile, Bayer Corp.'s Alka-Seltzer has a spot in the pre-game broadcast featuring the winner of a contest to come up with an updated version of its "plop-plop, fizz-fizz" jingle. The winner was Josh Anderson, a DJ at a radio station in Greensboro, N.C. The NFL also made an ad from an idea generated by a fan contest.

Many of the other spots made available for preview ahead of

the big game show a decided shift to lighthearted, sometimes campy humor. That's in contrast with a number of ads last year that highlighted oddball violence, such as a female player in a touch football game getting clobbered with an illegal tackle.

Several marketers are trying even harder to use their ads to drive traffic to Web sites associated with their brands, such as Chevrolet's college-student contest and Nationwide, which posted outtakes from its Federline ad on its Web site.

Jo Ann Ross, the head of ad sales at CBS, says the spots have been selling well, and that several advertisers have inquired

about making a tie-in with Black History Month in February given that the coaches of both teams, for the first time, are black.

"That is a very, very positive story," Ross said.

Ross said demand had been brisk for the ads, and the network was seeing strong interest following a highly rated AFC championship game and the recent announcement of nominations for the Academy Awards.

"We're wrapping it up," she said. It's been a busy few weeks for Ross and her staff, including a personal trip to Omaha, Neb., to seal a deal with infoUSA Inc., a marketing database company that is one of the first-time advertisers in this year's game.

Vin Gupta, the founder and CEO of infoUSA, said the Super Bowl represented a key chance to reach the 20 million sales people and 10 million small-business owners that his company markets its services to. An excerpt of the ad provided by the company shows a successful salesman emerging from a snazzy new red sports car.

"If you're trying to reach 30 million potential clients, the Super Bowl is the best way to reach them," Gupta said. "Plus, it gives you instant credibility."

Garmin International Inc., another first-timer, is planning a campy spot inspired by 1960s Japanese monster movies with a showdown between an evil "Maposaurus" and a hero who uses a Garmin-made electronic navigation device to save the day.

Heinz, Hoosier firm fight over 'red zone'

By DAN NEPHIN
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

PITTSBURGH

Ketchup giant H.J. Heinz Co. is seeing red over a smaller Indiana ketchup maker's use of the term "red zone."

Heinz partners with the Pittsburgh Steelers and three other NFL teams to make charity donations whenever the home team gets past the opponent's 20-yard line, the so-called red zone.

Heinz claims Elwood-based Red Gold Inc.'s "Red Gold Red Zone" program is too similar to its "Heinz Red Zone" program.

That program donates to charity when the Indianapolis Colts enter the red zone.

Heinz has about 60 percent of the ketchup market, while Red Gold has less than 1 percent. The food giant sent the Colts a cease-and-desist letter about a year ago and is pursuing trademark registration of the term "Heinz Red Zone" in the context of entertainment purposes at sporting events, said Heinz spokesman Robin Teets.

Teets downplayed the dispute, which Red Gold has used to seek publicity in a David-vs.-Goliath campaign as the Colts marched to the Super Bowl.

Last week, after learning the matter wasn't settled, as Red Gold officials thought, the company issued a news release saying Heinz was trying to claim ownership of the term and urged people to sound off on its Web site.

"That's why we are so perplexed by the Heinz challenge to this," Greg Metzger, head of marketing at Red Gold, said Friday. "The red zone is a term that was coined 20 or 30 years ago."

"We thought maybe it's time we share with our customers and our Colts fans here locally what Heinz is trying to do," Metzger said. "Whether it's high school

football or college football or peewee football, the fans and the community own the red zone."

Teets stressed Heinz was not trying to trademark "red zone" in and of itself.

He dismissed Red Gold's campaign as a publicity stunt and said he was confident the matter would be resolved soon.

Heinz has been doing its campaign since 2002, Heinz said. Red Gold has been doing its program for the past four years, Metzger said.

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