

iSPOT Of The Week: Dog Joins Honda's "Element And Friends" Campaign In New Video Ad



SANTA MONICA, Calif., March 19, 2008, Ken Liebeskind --- There are 43 million dog-owning households in the U.S. Most of them own cars. Many of them buy cars with their dog's comfort in mind. And some of them visit a website, DogCars.com, that named the Honda Element "DogCar of the Year" in December 2007.

This was inspiration for RPA, the agency that created the "Element and Friends" campaign in 2006 that started with the popular "Pinch" crab spot, to extend the effort with "Pointer," which includes a :30 for TV and a :15 that is running online. The spot was produced by WILDBRAIN/San Francisco.

The spot began playing March 10, with the agency placing a buy on the Google content network that plays the spot at 95 dog centric sites, such as Pamperedpuppy.com, Dogbreedz.com and Pugvillage.com. It's also playing at YouTube, where the agency bought overlays on dog-related video content.

"We wanted to creatively tell people about the award and we can cater directly to dog lovers because they love the car," said Edmund Purcell, RPA's VP/management supervisor. "The goal is to reach 18 to 49-year-old males with an active, outdoor mind set."

RPA is trying YouTube overlays, which were introduced in August 2007, for the first time for the Element. Fifteen seconds after a dog-related video clip starts playing, the overlay appears on the bottom of the screen, which can be clicked to play "Pointer." When it plays, a companion unit runs next to it that can be clicked to go to www.elementandfriends.com. "The beauty of the unit is you get a branding message whether you click on it or not," Purcell said. "If you click on it, great, but if you don't you still get the branding message so it produces different levels of engagement. We don't want to interrupt the fun they're having but if they're interested, they can self select our message."

In the spot, the dog has a humorous conversation with a voice inside the car, then enters the car and comments on features like the waterproof seat fabric before lying down in back. "Hey, what's goin' on back there?" the voice responds.

Gordon Clark, the WILDBRAIN director, said the animation was created from photos of dogs it found and the car, which RPA provided. "We cut them out in Photoshop and put them in After Effects, we puppeted them," he said.

He added that the spot "moves to a place you don't expect, so it doesn't feel cartoony or standard. It's all about the timing."

WILDBRAIN has produced 23 animations for "Element and Friends" and "Pointer" differs from the others because it features scenes inside the car with specific features mentioned. "Usually it's about name recognition and a fairly subtle play on what it has to offer, which isn't as specific as what we did here," Clark said.

"Pointer" will run at the Google sites and YouTube through the end of March. The spot doesn't currently play at elementandfriends.com, but will be added at a later date.