

A&E Paranormal State

Problem

How does a new television series generate organic buzz?

Solution

Use OOH technology to connect with the audience in a unique way.

Background

A&E was debuting a new television show called Paranormal State, following a group of students as they investigate claims of supernatural occurrences. A&E had never utilized the newly available, high-profile newsstands in New York City in their previous OOH ventures. This campaign highlighted A&E's continued commitment to interactivity within its media plans (digital jukeboxes and audio on walls).

Objective

A&E sought to “scare up” program premiere success and make a big impact with consumers by tapping into the show’s “spook” factor and the inherent phobias people carry with them every day. Beyond ratings, the company also wanted to garner organic (non-PR-driven) buzz.

Strategy

The campaign utilized a mix of traditional and non-traditional OOH at multiple touch points, including the New York City “Whispering Walls” (wallscapes with audio) were significant components of this effort.

Regarding the wallscape, the directional audio technology had never been utilized in this way before. The execution captured the essence of the program’s subject matter by beaming sound only to certain passersby but not to others (similar to how a flashlight beams light).

The highlight of the campaign came across when people would walk by the wallscapes. Some did not even notice the advertisements until they heard a faint whisper of a spooked woman saying, “What was that? Who’s there?” drawing attention to the advertisement nearby.

Plan Details

Multiple OOH media formats were used to convey the message to consumers in A&E’s top 3 markets (NY, LA, Chicago) with a national overlay of cinema (including content integration) and the following OOH media:

- National cinema lobby posters, :30 spots, and 2:00 content integration
- Digital interactive jukeboxes with microsite in bars and clubs in NY, LA, and Chicago
- Bulletins on major arteries/areas covering NY DMA



- A high profile three-face spectacular billboard at the Port Authority Bus Terminal
- Newsstands and bus shelter panels in New York City
- Wallscape with directional audio in New York City's SoHo neighborhood
- Bulletins in major areas covering LA DMA
- Full motion 3D protruding face on a high profile bulletin on LA's Sunset Strip
- Bus shelter panels and king sized bus posters in Chicago

Results

Paranormal State, which aired in December 2007, was a tremendous success. It generated the best ratings for an A&E original series premiere since 2004. Beyond this, the publicity was almost immediate upon

campaign launch. Audio components took center stage, with attention on Gawker.com, adfreak.com, the NY Times (online and print), Advertising Age (including being AdAge's weekly poll), the Guardian, radio programs and even international newspapers.

The Whispering Walls campaign also garnered huge buzz within the advertising industry and the key viewing demographic. The campaign was talked about in forums and blogs of those interested in "ghost stories" with articles featured on such websites as "True Ghost Tales" and the blogs on CNET. These websites not only discussed the storyline of the show, but touched on the impactful and innovative advertising techniques that were being used.

The campaign not only achieved its rating objective, but it created buzz and attention for the new series. The agency successfully used innovative executions and mass reach to garner additional word of mouth and recognition for the program.

