

THE MOST MEMORABLE ADVERTISEMENTS MADISON AVENUE EVER SOLD

A panel of New York ad executives ranks the top twenty since '68.

MADISON AVENUE has spent the past four decades refining the art of the big sell. To determine the very best ad campaigns developed since 1968, we polled four generations of creative directors to create a long list of nominees. Then two dozen contemporary Mad men (and women) ranked their favorites. The jury favored high-concept spots over simple slogans, and fell for a disproportionate number of strange-looking actors. Go to nymag.com to view the ads.



2. "BIG FLUFFY BUN"

CLIENT: Wendy's
AGENCY: Dancer, Fitzgerald,
Sample, 1984

Eighty-one-year-old Clara Peller and friends inspect a hamburger bun—"a very big fluffy bun," one admits—and upon finding a tiny patty, Peller exclaims, "Where's the beef?" Director Joe Sedelmaier (who also shot "Fast-Paced World") used hyperbolic patty-size comparisons to take on the Whopper and the Big Mac, chief rivals of upstart Wendy's. "Where's the beef?" was adopted by Walter Mondale in the 1984 presidential-primary debates and has since been used by countless disillusioned Americans from Leonard Cohen to Homer Simpson. "It's arguably the best line in a commercial over the past 25 years," says David Apicella, a vice-chairman at Ogilvy.



3. "MAMA MIA"

CLIENT: Alka-Seltzer
AGENCY: Doyle Dane Bernbach, 1970

A beleaguered actor shooting a meatballs commercial tries to get his lines straight, flubbing them again and again, each time eating another forkful. He finally nails it after taking an Alka-Seltzer—"Mama mia, that's a spicy meatball!"—until the oven door falls open and the take is ruined. The spot fades with a call to break for lunch. "This is one of the first ads to make fun of the making of advertising itself," says Bob Kuperman, former CEO of DDB. It cleverly positioned Alka-Seltzer as an antidote to the daily grind.



4. "FUNERAL"

CLIENT: Volkswagen
AGENCY: Doyle Dane Bernbach, 1969
David Ogilvy called it the funniest commercial he'd



1. "FAST-PACED WORLD"

CLIENT: Federal Express
AGENCY: Ally & Gargano, 1981

Speed talker John Moschitta Jr. plays a type-A businessman making rapid-fire decisions, straightening out Pittsburgh with Pete, and conducting a Dallas deal with Dick, Dave, Don, and Dork ("Dick, what's the deal with the deal? Are we dealing? We're dealing. Dave, it's a deal..."). Moschitta's machine-gun chatter became synonymous with the "done yesterday" business mentality the brand has aligned itself with ever since. "FedEx could run this spot today and it would still feel contemporary," says Scott Vitrone, co-chief creative officer of Y&R NY.

ever seen: a funeral procession for billionaire Maxwell E. Snavely, who, in a voice-over reading of his will, ruthlessly shafts those who spent his money liberally. ("To my sons Rodney and Victor, who spent every dime I ever gave them on fancy cars and fast women, I leave \$50 in dimes.") Nephew Harold, though, whose little Beetle is the tail of the procession, always said, "It sure pays to own a Volkswagen" and receives all of Uncle Max's \$100 billion. The thrifty shall inherit the Earth, we learn, and Volkswagens are for people who get the joke.



5. "ABSOLUT BOTTLE"

CLIENT: Absolut
AGENCY: TBWA\Chiat\Day New York, 1980

"When people used to say, 'Advertising doesn't work on me,'" says Ari Merkin, executive creative director of Toy New York, "I'd ask them what kind of vodka they drink."



6. "BLOW-AWAY GUY"

CLIENT: Maxell
AGENCY: Seali, McCabe, Sloves, 1979
A sunglasses-sporting badass is settled back, arms high on his chair, when a butler appears, producing a Maxell tape. "The usual, sir?" the butler asks. The high fidelity delivers, and our protagonist's tie, hair, lamp, and glass of wine all blow back to "Ride of the Valkyries." Classy, cool, and proto-eighties, the spot reinforced Maxell's hi-fi brand message. "This is one of the best examples of hyperbole, both visually and sonically," says Steve Novick, former vice-chairman of Grey Global Group.

11. "TAP PROJECT"

CLIENT: UNICEF
AGENCY: Droga5, 2007

A campaign to sell tap water in New York restaurants, to benefit UNICEF.

12. "UNCLE SAM"

CLIENT: Hebrew National
AGENCY: Seali, McCabe, Sloves, 1975
God as celebrity endorser.

13. "HILLTOP"

CLIENT: Coca-Cola
AGENCY: McCann-Erickson, 1971

Young, harmonizing hippies who love their Coca-Cola.

14. "I WANT MY MTV"

CLIENT: MTV
AGENCY: Lois Pitts Gershon, 1982
The old Maypo line, repurposed for a rock rebellion.

7. "I ♥ NY"

CLIENT: New York Commerce Commission
AGENCY: Wells Rich Greene, 1977



Milton Glaser's pro bono logo is among the world's most recognizable, initially concocted to boost tourism to New York State as the city teetered on the brink of insolvency. Glaser had first suggested a pair of ovals with NEW YORK inside and admits he approached the job as something to "bang out" quickly. But since its debut, the campaign has achieved an international ubiquity rivaling that of McDonald's Golden Arches. "The symbol struck a chord far beyond whatever could have been expected," says Scott Donaton, publisher formerly of *Advertising Age* and now of *Entertainment Weekly*. "It may have been designed to boost tourism, but it went beyond that: It revived New Yorkers' pride in their city."



8. "GORILLA"

CLIENT: American Tourister
AGENCY: Doyle Dane Bernbach, 1970
A handler tosses an American Tourister suitcase into a cage with a ferocious ape, who proceeds to give it the business. A voice-over dedicates the spot to "clumsy bellboys, brutal cabdrivers, careless doormen, ruthless porters, savage baggage masters, and all butterfingering luggage handlers all over the world." "Torture tests are a tried-and-true advertising technique that's usually boring," says Kevin Roddy, executive creative director of BBH New York. "But this one"—a slightly smug comparison between heavy-lifters and apes—"engages, entertains, and sells."

15. NOTHING COMES BETWEEN ME AND MY GALVINS

CLIENT: Calvin Klein Jeans
AGENCY: CRK Advertising, 1981
Brooke Shields in tight pants.

16. "DANCE PARTY"

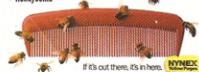
CLIENT: TBWA\Chiat\Day, New York, 2006
Office workers gyrate

to Salt-N-Pepa's "Push It."

17. "TRAINING CAMP"

CLIENT: Little Caesar's
AGENCY: Cliff Freeman & Partners, 1995
High-intensity training for Little Caesar's delivery service.

▶ Honeycomb



9. "IF IT'S OUT THERE, IT'S IN HERE"

CLIENT: NYNEX
AGENCY: Chiat\Day\Mojo, New York, 1987

A series of simple, disparate images would appear on billboard ads for the NYNEX Yellow Pages—a bull and someone napping, a Matchbox truck held up by a fork—and a few weeks later, the pun would be revealed (bulldozer; forklift). The campaign in effect turned billboards into giant quizzes. "These were some of the first interactive advertising," says Gerry Graf, chief creative officer of Saatchi & Saatchi. "Made you look," agrees Rosemarie Ryan, co-president of JWT New York. "They took something as mundane as the Yellow Pages and got people to engage."



10. "MIKEY"

CLIENT: Life Cereal
AGENCY: Doyle Dane Bernbach, 1973
Three young boys approach a new breakfast cereal with caution—it looks much healthier than the sugary stuff they're used to. So the older two put young Mikey to the task, and you know what happens next. "He likes it!" "It works because of the conspiratorial nature of the brothers," says the One Club CEO Mary Warlick. "They act like real kids."

PLUS

18. "PROFILE START POLLUTION. PEOPLE CAN STOP IT."

CLIENT: Keep America Beautiful
AGENCY: Advertising Council/Marsteller Inc., 1971
Liberal guilt, care of a tearful American Indian.

19. "DRIVING SCHOOL"

CLIENT: American Motors
AGENCY: Wells Rich

Greene, 1969
Hapless driving students abuse AMC Rebels.

20. "FISHERMAN"

CLIENT: Oscar Mayer
AGENCY: J. Walter Thompson, 1977
A kid in overalls, holding a sandwich in hand. Singing the wiener song.