



News & Press Releases

Date: Jan 3, 2008

Subject: News: News: Squirrels Cross Road in New Viral Campaign for Monroe Shocks and Struts

(Chicago, Illinois--January 3, 2008) Monroe Shocks and Struts has launched a fully integrated campaign, "Save the Squirrels," created by Cramer-Krasselt, the third-largest independent advertising agency in the U.S. The campaign is built on the humorous premise of reminding consumers to check their shocks from the vantage point of road-crossing squirrels.

The first in a pair of offbeat Web shorts centers on the world of static squirrel figurines. Directed and edited by Cutters' John Dingfield, "Acceptance" brings viewers into a squirrel-eye view of the roads. With the tagline, "Squirrels Make Bad Decisions," the spot gives consumers a unique reason to always be sure their shock absorbers are up to par: Squirrels that can be smart enough to get into college are also quite foolish when it comes to crossing the street.

The Webisode begins with a young squirrel that has just learned he has been accepted to the fictional "Acorn State." He starts to cross the street to share the news with his mother and father squirrels, but does not look both ways. A car comes to a screeching halt, coming dangerously close to ending the young squirrel's bright future. Thankfully, this smart driver had his shocks checked after 50,000 miles.

You can view the spot on our YouTube channel [here](#).

"This is a great example of what we're always trying to do: come at things from an angle that creates a fresh, new kind of relevance," said Marshall Ross, chief creative officer, C-K. "Shocks are easy to forget about, and their importance is easy to underestimate. But putting the story through the mouths of squirrels, even if they're stuffed squirrels, suddenly makes the conversation something

worth engaging in."

The videos were shot under the premise that human actors had originally been cast, but at the last minute the casting director swapped them out for the stuffed squirrels. Consequently, the approach to the shorts was serious and melodramatic.

"We embraced the absurdity of seeing stuffed squirrels in human situations, engaging in realistic conversations," said Dingfield. "We let the humor come from there."

Produced by SOLdesignfx, the cinematography, sets, lighting, costuming and sound design feel more like a feature film than a Web short. To emphasize how static their lead actors were, producers brought in elements of background movement to serve as contrast: clouds moving across the sky, leaves rustling in the trees and cars in the distance. The camera movement was kept to a minimum with cinematic framing and visual composition helping the audience see that the squirrels are stuffed. The production also used human-sized settings such as a suburban home to keep the visuals grounded in reality.

"My inclination as an editor was to cut these spots so that the timing was slightly off," Dingfield commented, "including some awkward pauses to increase the humor and allow the visual of these static squirrels to sink in."

The sound design for the project was approached with the same seriousness accorded the look and tone of the films. "If you close your eyes and listen to these films, you'd never know that they starred a bunch of stuffed squirrels," said Dingfield, who had principal VO talent record a number of vocal reactions, dialogue lines, and character voices to help fill in the sound design. "And ultimately, that's what we wanted: a series of serious films about squirrels that teaches a serious lesson about shock absorption."

Additional elements to the campaign include: outdoor boards that encourage motorists to "Save a Squirrel" by replacing their shocks at 50,000 miles, radio spots featuring translated interviews with squirrels and a micro-Web site, Monroesavethesquirrels.com, which will house the webisodes,

The team is currently working on the second Web short, "Wedding," set to launch in early 2008.

Credits:

Client: Monroe Shocks and Struts

Spot Title: "Acceptance"

Agency: Cramer-Krasselt/Milwaukee

Creative Director: Brian Ganther

Copywriter: Jason Ziehm

Art Director: Tony Maurer
Account Executive: Kelly Vogt, Justin Happel
Producer: Dinah Goris

Production Company: SOLdesignfx
Director: John Dingfield
DP: Max Miller

Editorial Company: Cutters
Editor: John Dingfield
Editorial Assistant: Charles Moore
Editorial Producer: Patrick Casey
Graphic Designer: Todd Whatley
Post Producer/Line Producer: Megan Maples

Sound Design: Another Country
Sound Designer: Ben Keller
Audio Producer: Tim Konn