

Dimensionalized Derriere Daguerres: Dorky, or Diabolical?

BY BERNIE TRUEBLOOD



It was an in-pack premium to arouse the Creature from the Black Lagoon.

Titillating target-audience testosterone, the folks at *Sports Illustrated* tipped 3-D glasses into their latest swimsuit edition. Readers could don them to decode the derrieres of more modern creatures, those from blue lagoons.

Talk about value-added. The glasses-and-glimpses combo enabled *SI* to justify six bucks for a three-buck magazine. It's still flying off shelves.

To catch eyeballs in today's sports environment, where digitally dramatized graphics are commonplace, photographers Klutmeier and Klutho turned backward to 19th-century technology. According to *SI*, they literally reinvented the 3-D equipment. The result was some of the most startling print visuals ever seen.

The plum was model Heidi Klum. Throwing her hat toward the reader, she may have performed the best leap off an *SI* page since Air Jordan. (For those of you following along at home, see pg 93.)

This leaves analysts with two choices: either jump onto the already groaning bandwagon of *SI*-bashers who rag on the rag for its arrant shamelessness or, alternatively, graciously acknowledge a marketer who knows its prospects and wisely accepts them for what they are.

If the goal was to motivate well-heeled baby-boomer sports dorks who grew up with View-Masters and Hef, as opposed to generation-somethings weaned on Playstations and porn sites, *SI*'s promotion did the trick — right down to the stereotypical (alas, not stereoscopic) photo of Klum proffering a pair of

coconuts in modest preservation of her decency.

Observers should also accolade those advertisers who played along with the game. Lexus, Jim Beam, Toyota, and Universal Studios produced the best, if not first, ROP 3-D ads ever. Shame on those who overlooked this opportunity.

TITANIUM PLASTIC

Speaking of dorky offers, ponder the latest mail-apropism from MasterCard. To outflank mere gold and platinum cards, MasterCard has introduced — ta da — the Titanium card. My, what won't they think of next?

OK, presumably this has been tested. It probably does have appeal for those aspirational souls whose status symbols help them feel good about themselves. It allows them to flaunt their credit-worthiness, if only so that waiters and desk clerks will stand in awe of their specialness.

But one wonders whether titanium has a higher perceived value than platinum, or is even differentiated by appearance? It's all neither here nor there — titanium plastic has arrived.

So guess what the master card masterminds at First USA offer for signing up with Titanium? Upgrade to first class? Nope. Exotic travel sweeps? Nope. Tiger Woods driver? Uh, nope. They offered two free cases of Coca Cola! Doesn't it just make you covetous?

PUDDING PARADOX

Finally, dear reader, we arrive at the conundrum of the month: Was it the points, or was it the publicity?

Seems that Conagra's Healthy Choice offered that most dangerous of promotion incentives: one more valuable than the product itself! Consumers who



Hats off to Heidi.

bought 10 of the brand's 25¢ pudding cups, or \$2.50 worth, could get 1,000 frequent-flier miles, or about \$25 worth.

If you ever are tempted to make so rich an offer, be advised that your normative redemption-liability forecasting models go out the window. To insure against a busted budget, then, you must remember to clearly state a limit on your offering. Who would have ever thought that some nut might go out and buy 12,000+ cups of pudding, just to collect more than a million miles?

Well, that's exactly what David Phillips did. (Reminiscent of John D. R. Leonard, who saved enough Stuff proofs to order the Harrier jet Pepsi had offered in jest!)

Now if Mr. Phillips were an isolated case of over-indulgence, it might be tempting to credit Conagra with the publicity coup of the decade. They got press coverage galore, including a full-page story in *People* magazine. But suppose millions of puddingheads leapt at the offer. Who knows? It might have ignited a budget blowout of the magnitude that capsizes careers.

That's the truth.

To share your opinion with Bernie Trueblood, or to borrow his 3-D glasses, contact him at btrue@promoprimer.com.