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And now, just pause for the best words from the sponsors

Wednesday, June 30, 1999

TV Guide compiled a ballot of top commercials and submitted it to 37 ad and marketing executives, commercial directors and journalists who cover advertising. They invited them to add to the list and then rank the best commercials.

Their picks tend to be funny, clever, groundbreaking or timeless. Notable by their absence: Heinz ketchup's "Anticipation" spot, the Jolly Green Giant, Morris the cat, Charlie the tuna, Bill Cosby and Jell-O, Brooke Shields and her Calvin Kleins, children singing about Oscar Mayer wieners and an entreaty to take it off, take it all off.

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And the winners are:

- 1. Apple Computer**, "1984," 1984 -- Not bad for a spot that aired only once, during the Super Bowl. It features an ominous, large-screen Big Brother whose tyranny is about to be shattered by the introduction of Apple's Macintosh personal computer.
- 2. Alka-Seltzer**, "Spicy Meatballs," 1969 -- During the filming of an ad for spaghetti sauce, an actor repeatedly flubs his lines, has to start over, develops heartburn and needs an Alka-Seltzer.
- 3. Volkswagen**, "Funeral," 1969 -- Penny-pinching Harold, who drives a Bug and brings up the rear in the funeral procession, inherits his uncle's fortune.
- 4. Volkswagen**, "Snowplow," 1963 -- A Beetle triumphs over winter's fury to deliver its driver to a snowplow.
- 5. Federal Express**, "Fast-Paced World," 1981 -- Motormouth actor John Moschitta talks at warp speed and plugs the speedy delivery service.
- 6. American Tourister**, "Gorilla," 1970 -- The luggage maker lets Oofi, a former circus performer, abuse its hard-sided suitcase to demonstrate its durability.

- 7. Coca-Cola**, "Mean Joe Greene," 1979 -- On his way to the locker room, the dejected Steeler stops to accept a Coke, a smile and kind words from a young fan, who gets thanks and a jersey in return.
- 8. Miller Lite**, "Everything You Always Wanted in a Beer -- And Less," 1975 -- Bob Uecker makes the point that real men drink light beer.
- 9. Wendy's** "Fluffy Bun," 1984 -- Models, smodels. Two words: Clara Peller.
- 10. Life Cereal**, "Three Brothers," 1971 -- Cereal guinea pig Mikey likes it -- and he hates everything.
- 11. Partnership for a Drug-Free America**, "Fried Egg," 1987 -- Unless you did too many drugs, you probably remember the egg sizzling in the frying pan and the tagline, "This is your brain on drugs. Any questions?"
- 12. Coca-Cola**, "Hilltop," 1971 -- "I'd like to teach the world to sing..."
- 13. California Milk Board**, "Aaron Burr," 1993 -- It doesn't do any good to know the answer to a radio trivia question if you have a mouthful of peanut butter and no milk to wash it down.
- 14. Alka-Seltzer**, "Prison," 1970 -- Forget TV privileges and conjugal visits. The inmates here want only one thing, and that is Alka-Seltzer.
- 15. Benson & Hedges**, "The Dis-advantages," 1966 -- Back before cigarettes were called cancer sticks, this spot celebrated too much of a good thing. Extra-long smokes got caught in elevator doors and burned holes in newspapers.
- 16. Keep America Beautiful**, "Crying Indian," 1971 -- Litter and pollution move Iron Eyes Cody to tears. Or tear.
- 17. Cracker Jack**, "Train," 1965 -- Jack Gilford intercepts a box of Cracker Jack as it's being passed from one sleeping berth to another.
- 18. Nike**, "Bo Diddley," 1989 -- When Bo Jackson, Bo Diddley and the line "Bo, you don't know diddly" just do it for the sportswear giant.
- 19. Energizer Batteries**, "Bunny," 1989 -- The pink rabbit just keeps going and going.
- 20. LBJ for President**, "Daisy," 1964 -- Willie Horton was tame compared to this. A girl plucks petals from a daisy as a nuclear holocaust nears, a none-too-subtle warning about rival Barry Goldwater.
- 21. Pepsi**, "Security Camera," 1996 -- A Coke delivery man tries to steal a Pepsi from a refrigerator case, only to send a cascade of cans crashing.
- 22. ESPN**, "This is SportsCenter," 1995 -- By using its own staffers and

such luminaries as Mark McGwire and Kerri Strug, ESPN became even more must-see than before.

23. Xerox, "Monks," 1975 -- Monks go modern with a Xerox machine.

24. Pepsi, "Archaeology," 1985 -- A professor and his Pepsi-drinking students unearth a relic from the past, something called a Coke.

25. Levi's, "The 501 Blues," 1984 -- Great music, even better-looking folks sell jeans.

26. California Raisins, "Lunchbox," 1986 -- The purple ones dance to "I Heard It Through the Grapevine" in a stroke of marketing genius.

27. Timex, "Acapulco Diver," 1962 -- A cliff diver, with a Timex strapped to his hand, sails off a cliff, slices into the churning waters, and his watch keeps on ticking.

28. Nike, "If You Let Me Play," 1995 -- Young girls and women, excluded from most sports when the ad game was young, are encouraged to play and participate.

29. Little Caesars, "Training Camp," 1995 -- Novice drivers are schooled in the art of knocking on doors and dodging dogs.

30. Bartles & Jaymes, "Yuppies," 1986 -- Folksy vintners confuse cooler-loving yuppies with Hare Krishnas.

31. Dannon, "Old Russians," 1977 -- The yogurt maker used geriatric Russians to peddle its product to young and old.

32. Marlboro, "Marlboro Man," 1962 -- The very picture of masculinity peddles smokes.

33. American Motors, "Driving School," 1968 -- A harried driving instructor tackles nervous novices in an AMC Rebel.

34. MCI, "Parents," 1982 -- In a parody of AT&T's spots, a mother weeps in shock after getting her phone bill.

35. Union Carbide, "Chick," 1967 -- A baby chick is placed in a container insulated with Union Carbide material. After being dropped into boiling water, the bird emerges safe and sound.

36. Cheer, "Diva," 1988 -- A mixologist uses ice water, a cocktail shaker and some Cheer to do laundry.

37. Dunkin' Donuts, "Time to Make the Doughnuts," 1982 -- Fred the baker sacrifices sleep so he can make the doughnuts.

38-39. (tie) McDonald's, "Showdown," 1993, and **Hallmark**, "Dance Card," 1991 -- In the first, Michael Jordan and Larry Bird compete in ever-crazier competitions for a Mickey D meal. In the other, a boy

successfully uses a card to ask a girl to dance.

40. Pepsi, "Ray Charles," 1990 -- The performer can't see that someone subbed a Coke for his Pepsi but he can taste it.

41. Diet Pepsi, "Apartment 10G," 1987 -- Michael J. Fox goes to great lengths to get a Diet Pepsi for Gail O'Grady, later Donna Abandando on "NYPD Blue."

42. Wendy's, "Russian Fashion Show," 1985 -- Lumpen models, clad exactly the same for daywear, evening wear and swimwear, manage to promote burgers and laughs.

43. Jeep, "Snow Covered," 1994 -- Snow? It's no problem for Jeep.

44. Eastman Kodak, "Daddy's Little Girl," 1989 -- Sentimentality sells, as this dad and his about-to-marry daughter, prove.

45. Nissan, "Toys," 1996 -- GI Joe, Ken and Barbie lookalikes create a diminutive drama, even as they sell cars.

46. Sunsweet Prunes, "Today the Pits," 1967 -- A gentleman is pleased to discover pitless prunes but still despises the wrinkles.

47. McDonald's, "Clean Up," 1971 -- This spawned the "You deserve a break today" jingle.

48. Taco Bell, "Romeo & Juliet," 1998 -- Gidget the wonder dog speaks ("Yo quiero Taco Bell") and viewers listen.

49. Isuzu, "Joe Isuzu/Liar," 1985 -- A car salesman who lies? Gotta be fiction, courtesy of David Leisure.

50. Budweiser, "Frogs," 1995 -- Like "1984" before it, this spot debuted during the Super Bowl. Instead of literary references, it gave us a trio of frogs.



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