

Iconic channelling

 By [Brendan Seery](#)

13 Oct 2020

Kudos for Showmax Pro: makes the point elegantly; Onion for grating American accent in RDG Gearboxes ad...

Last month, Miller Lite beer in the US produced a clever piece of ambush marketing, by setting up a fake website which purported to offer free livestreaming of top sports matches.

The idea was to emphasise that this sort of piracy costs the sports industry billions of dollars a year.

When fans tried to use the dodgy site, they were greeted with a country-and-western/rock music video telling the graphic story of how you could end up in federal prison for such piracy.

“But I was only streaming a game” is the man’s plaintive cry as the cell doors close behind him.

At the same time, Miller Lite – the tippie of choice for millions of US sports fans at game time – offered participants the chance to win an actual TV antenna, housed in a Miller can, which could pick up local TV broadcasts... including National Football League games.

Illegal streaming of top matches is a huge industry and because it is underground, it is not the victimless crime it sometimes appears: dodgy websites are often connected to ad fraud but even worse activities like drugs and human trafficking, according to experts in the US.



It was with some curiosity, then, that I looked at the latest ad for Showmax Pro, which offers to “change the way you watch” sport. It offers streaming – legally – of events from around the globe on the DStv platform. Showmax Pro bundles the existing Showmax streaming service with music, news and live sport from SuperSport.

The pitch for Showmax Pro focused on the game-changing aspects of the offering. And what better way to talk about changing the game than using one of sport’s most enduring icons, the legendary boxer Muhammad Ali?

Egg Films’ Adrian de sa Garces and his team tackled the job of bringing “The Greatest” to life at the height of Level 4 lockdown, which had its own logistical and production challenges. In the end, they found a muscled fighter pretty similar to Ali, down to the floating like a butterfly, stinging like a bee moves which brought him so many world titles. The hair and makeup added the final touches and the silhouetted way the video was shot in black and white added atmosphere and also left the Ali mystique in place.

The punchline was also well done, with the new Showmax Pro offering shown in colour – a real game change from the black and white of “the past”.

The ad works because of the contrasts and the simple, but elegantly made point that the Showmax Pro package is

extensive.

Orchids to Showmax, Egg Films' de sa Garces and the post-production people at Chocolate Tribe who brought it to life.

Judging by the people on social media comparing the government's call for people to wear masks to slow the spread of the coronavirus to "tyranny", and the prevalence of the sort of "MAGA" (Make America Great Again) rhetoric, never mind the gun-toting in recent protests, it seems some of our people would be happy relocating to the redneck heaven of the Deep South of the U S of A.

We consume truckloads of American culture on our TVs and in our cinemas, so I suppose we don't even notice the entertainment imperialism happening all around us.

But why, oh why, do we still think an American accent is the way to sell our products?

Even Ford – the quintessential Yankee automotive product – doesn't do it in its South African advertising, even though it is increasingly referring to bakkies as trucks, exactly the way Bubba and his mates do in Alabama...

Yet, RDG Gearboxes, which repairs all manner of vehicle transmissions (although I would bet my house only a tiny percentage are American in origin), thinks the way to convince customers of its expertise is to use an American accent. The TV ad, which shows people competently stripping, repairing and assembling gearboxes, is ruined by the faux American voice-over. It is very grating to hear about "backies"... No boet, it's bakkies, as in the rugby player.

If you're not confident enough to use the indigenous voices of the country in which you do business, RDG, why should I have confidence in you?

You get an Onion to add to ya crawfish pie, y'all...

ABOUT BRENDAN SEERY

Brendan Seery has been in the news business for most of his life, covering coups, wars, famines - and some funny stories - across Africa. Brendan Seery's *Orchids and Onions* column ran each week in the *Saturday Star* in Johannesburg and the *Weekend Argus* in Cape Town.

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