

SPORTS

Reebok Made the Cringiest Sports Ad We've Seen Lately, but It's Actually Damn Perfect

'Storm the Court' ... with your dad shoes



By [Angela Natividad](#) on Mar 13 2019 - 10:00 AM



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There's something to be said about the timeless style of fathers. Stereotyped for stodginess, cringey jokes and horrifying dances, the tribe of fathers nonetheless possesses a strange confidence and an aesthetic all its own.

It is hard to describe. But you know it when you see it.

These are the things we contemplated upon watching "Storm the Court," the new ad for Reebok by Venables Bell & Partners. The mood is difficult to identify for seconds that ache. Then it happens—a shadow of *daddishness*, cleverly camouflaged.

Reebok | Storm The Court



It's OK if you don't see it yet. Stay with us.

Part of Reebok's "Sport the Unexpected" campaign, "Storm the Court" introduces the Reebok Aztrek Double, a revamp of Reebok's own Aztrek sneaker from 1993. The ad breaks conventions typically associated with sports advertising—that pure, glorious sense of emotional triumph.

This is more like a summoning of awkwardness—with the girl who interrupts the basketball game and suddenly spreads a contagion of concentric, cringey dancing, a ritual possession whose power apparently stems from her chunky egg-white shoes.

The press release slyly claims this is the stuff of '90s nostalgia and "defying convention," but we know what we're really looking at. The Aztrek Double is a dad shoe, a trend ripped out of our fathers' everyday-wear shelves and made cool by the likes of Gigi Hadid, Kim Kardashian and Alexa Chung early last year.

Such shoes are easy to identify: Often you've got fat soles, a discomfiting selection of colors, and a design that feels busier than necessary. They are prized for being "comfortable"—a laughable notion before we hit the point when we realize that, yes, actually, that's important.

Gigi Hadid helped launch the Aztrek Doubles, along with an accompanying clothing line, last month. In an interview with [Footwear News](#), she says, the Aztrek Double "is a shoe that is in style right now — the dad shoe. But a lot of people are buying thousand-dollar dad shoes and can't actually go to the gym in them. I'm making the dad shoe that can actually support your foot, and you can play anything in it."

Or creepily dance in it. "Sport the Unexpected," which launched Monday, builds on all this dad-shoe branding but inches unsubtly away from that clunky appellation.



"With this campaign, we're showing another side of Reebok, a side the consumer hasn't seen in quite some time," says Melanie Boulden, Reebok's global head of marketing and brand management. Boulden arrived at Reebok in April 2018—prime time of the appropriated dad-shoe trend—and this brand campaign is the first in her new role.

"These are young people who love to be active, love to be stylish. They want to mix it up and call their own shots. They want to do—and wear—what's unexpected. And most importantly, they want to be entertained—and this campaign certainly delivers on that."

That's a pretty long way of saying, "We the people are leaning into the ugly but undeniable comfort of dad shoes," but we're excellent readers of subtext.

"Storm the Court" isn't so much nostalgic as it is a weird parody, playing on the sleeping tropes that live inside us. Films about demonic possession come to mind when that little girl appears, creepy and lone and infecting everyone with eye contact. When asphalt slowly rises away from her sliding shoe in slow-mo, we're reminded of the meditative movements of kung-fu, *à la Wu-Tang*.

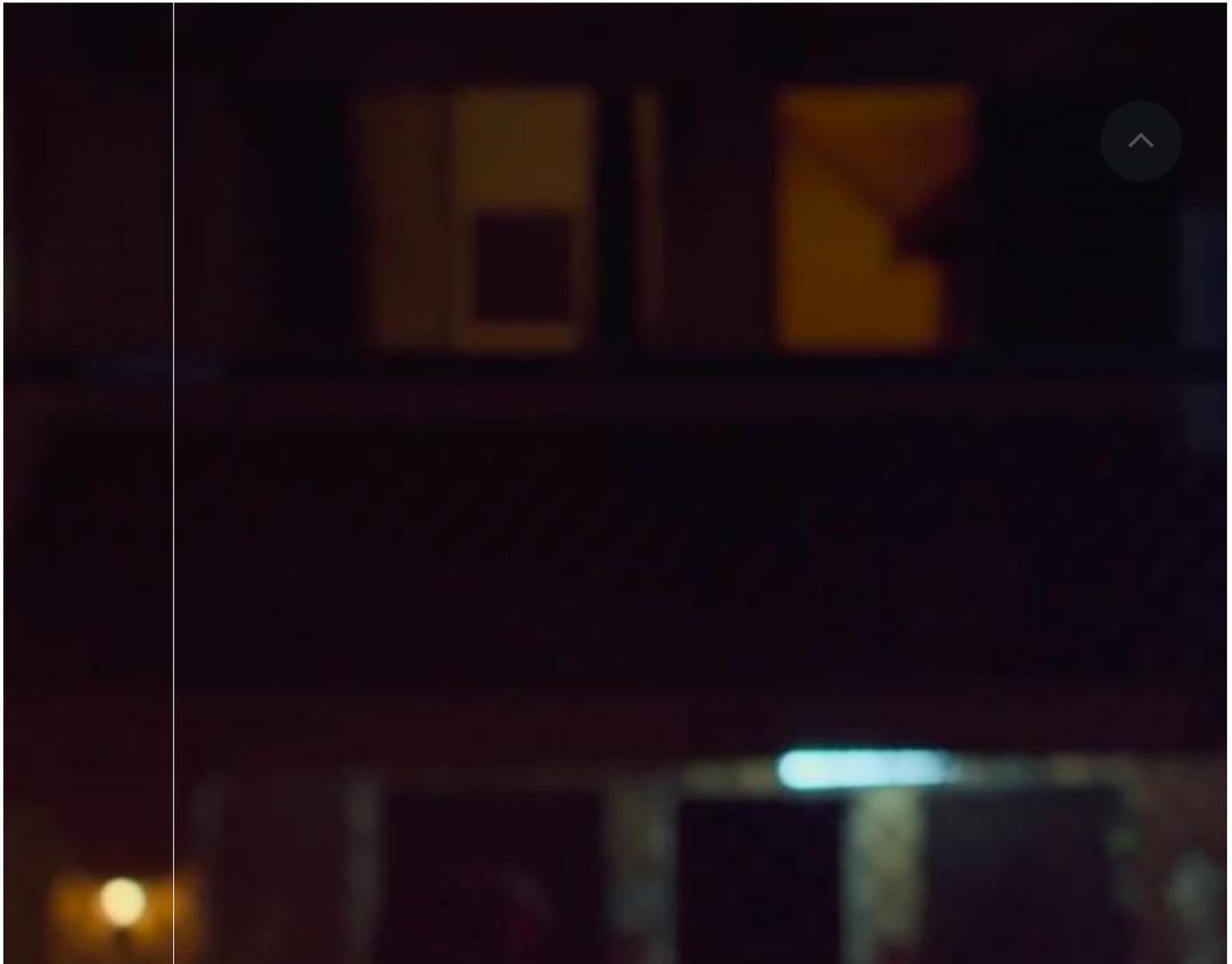
But it's when she kicks off her dance, and infects the basketball player with it, that it all clicks into place: *That's a dad dance*. The entire court is infected with dad dances!

It's the perfect way of saying "These are dad shoes" without saying "These are dad shoes." And cheers to Reebok for embracing the fact that, while it's never been the sexiest kicks brand on the block, it knows its people.

"Reebok has been its most successful when we've been bold and provocative —when we've had a strong perspective on culture and embraced being daring and different," says Boulden. "If you look at the marketing coming from our industry over the years, it looks similar. With this campaign, we're breaking convention and offering an alternative point of view on sport and life. We want consumers to know there is an alternative in the category. We want them to be proud to sport the unexpected."

So put those dad shoes on without shame.





"Sport the Unexpected" will feature three video executions. Following this one, Reebok will introduce a time-traveling film called "Back Where We Started," which will feature another classic model, the Club C (incidentally **also a dad shoe**, but we love dads, so that's OK). Brand ambassadors Cardi B and Future will produce supporting work alongside the launch of two new Aztrek colorways.

CREDITS

Client: Reebok Producer

Global Head of Marketing & Brand Management: Melanie Boulden

Senior Director Brand Management James Woolard
Senior Manager Brand Management Chris Strachan
Brand Advertising Coordinator Shelby Kreienberg

Agency Venables Bell + Partners
Founder, Chairman Paul Venables
Executive Creative Director Will McGinness
Creative Director Byron Del Rosario
Sr. Art Director Allie Nordstrom
Sr. Copywriter Elliot Nordstrom
Director of Integrated Production Hilary Coate
Producer Namrata Abhyankar
Head of Brand Management Michael Chase
Freelance Brand Director Kristin Obi
Brand Supervisor Hector Romero
Brand Manager Alex Kaye
Associate Partner, Head of Strategy Michael Davidson
Senior Strategist Dylan Phillips
Director of Business Affairs Quynh-An Phan
Business Affairs Manager Sametta Gbilie
Senior Traffic Manager Jermelia Holling
Assistant Traffic/Business Affairs Manager Christine Tom
Director of Lumberyard Raquel Bedard
MCR Operations Manager Jeff Saunders

Production Company Prettybird

Director Tom Noakes

Co-Founder/Executive Producer Kerstin Emhoff

Head of Production Rika Osenberg

Producer Julie Sawyer

Director of Photography Larkin Seiple

Production Designer Jason Hougaard

Editorial Exile

Editor Shane Reid

Executive Producer CL Weaver

Head of Production Jennifer Locke

Senior Producer Michael Miller

VFX/Finishing Framestore

President, Advertising North America James Razzall
Director of Production & Operations Bethan Thomas
Executive Creative Director Aron Hjartarson
Creative Director Chris Waitt
Creative Director Ben West
Senior Flame / Lead Artist Raul Ortego
Flame Artist Humberto Reynaga
Integrated Advertising Producer Georgina Poushkin
VFX Coordinator Jose Alvarado

Telecine Color Collective
Executive Producer Claudia Guevara
Colorist Alex Bickell
Color Assistant Alex Jimenez

Music Barking Owl
Executive Producer/Creative Director Kelly Bayett
Producer KC Dossett
Music Supervisor Barking Owl
Storm the Court Music Prayer Hands by A-Trak & YehMe2

Mix & Sound Design Barking Owl
Engineer AJ Murillo
Assistant Eolyne Arnold

Sound Designer Morgan Johnson
Creative Director/Partner Kelly Bayett
Producer KC Dossett

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Angela Natividad

@luckthelady

Angela Natividad is a founding contributor to Muse. She is also the co-founder of esports agency Hurrah.gg, and co-author of Generation Creation.

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