

## Brand highs, lows and heroes of Super Bowl LII

By Christopher Lehmann

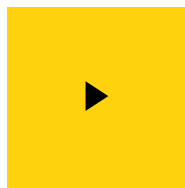
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7 February 2018

With commercials running for north of \$5 million per spot, it's no wonder brands wanted to make an impact during this year's Big Game. Whether their goal was to be funny or heartwarming, bold or relatable, the one thing every brand wanted was to be memorable. With a wide range of brands from WeatherTech to Amazon, the approaches, tones, and topics of the spots varied greatly. So which brands got their Super Bowl appearance right—and which ones got it wrong?

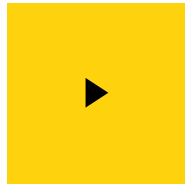
### Here's the branding breakdown from Super Bowl LII:

#### 1. MVP



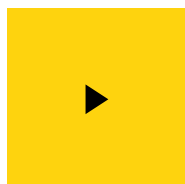
Tide nailed the Super Bowl extravaganza with a set of commercials that no one expected but everyone will remember. Using a good dose of hilarity and some well-placed celebrities (Isaiah Mustafa to spoof Old Spice in a Tide commercial! David Harbour as narrator!), Tide made its spots memorable while also keeping its product at the forefront. Most impressively, it found a way to keep its brand top of mind throughout the game—even when its ads weren't running—by getting viewers to question every semi-ambiguous spot, waiting for the Tide logo to pop up at the end.

## 2. Play of the game



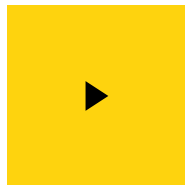
I have to hand it to Doritos and Mountain Dew. Their joint ad featuring Doritos Blaze, as represented by Peter Dinklage, and Mountain Dew Ice, portrayed by Morgan Freeman, found a humorous way to feature two products at once in a way that was completely on-brand for both. Added brilliance: The products can stand on their own, but the ad seems to suggest that they can also be eaten together for a fire-and-ice-flavored snack. Their respective social hashtags—[#SpitFire](#) and [#IceCold](#)—bring the spot full circle and get viewers immediately engaged. Best of all, it's impossible to forget which brands this ad was for since they were foundational to its plot and message. This was a home run (forgive the shift in sports metaphor) for Doritos and Mountain Dew, and a refreshing change from the [#PuppyMonkeyBaby](#) nonsense of years past.

## 3. Best touchdown



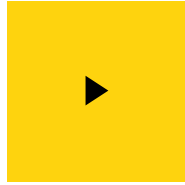
Amazon was at it again, this time with a star-studded spot that imagines a world where Alexa has lost her voice. The humor of the ad is a big payoff for viewers, but the spot really shines because of its successful trifecta: It stayed true to Amazon’s quirky brand ethos, communicated product features and usage scenarios, all while implying that Alexa is the voice consumers can trust. After a great holiday season, Amazon will undoubtedly see another uptick in sales. Well done, Amazon, well done.

## 4. Biggest fumble



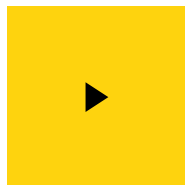
Hopes were high for Pepsi after the Kendall Jenner debacle, but its latest spot lets us down again. The hype and expectation surrounding a modern remake of Pepsi’s iconic Cindy Crawford spot made this one of the “spots to watch,” but the 0.2 seconds of face time Crawford received—paired with the ad’s heritage-centric message—left us feeling unfulfilled and ambivalent. This was a major missed opportunity for a brand looking to restore its image.

## 5. Hardest tackle



Many of us expected a certain level of sniping between Sprint and Verizon, but Sprint went for the jugular with its mocking, robot-laden Super Bowl spot. Not only does it feature Paul Marcarelli, the longtime face of Verizon, professing his preference for Sprint, but the robots that gang up on their maker—a scientist who hasn’t switched carriers—go so far as to point and laugh at him, telling him that he has “a dumb face.” The hilarity of the spot only serves to highlight its obvious point: If even half-made robots without brains think Sprint is better than Verizon, why haven’t you switched too? Who’s to say whether Verizon will come back swinging, but it’s a fight we’ll all watch with glee.

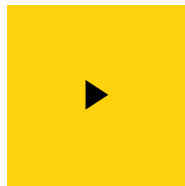
## 6. Biggest Hail Mary



You’ve got to give it to Kia for being ballsy. Its much-lauded BMW challenger, the Stinger, has surprised car aficionados with its interesting mix of premium driving experience, luxury features, and value pricing. Perhaps Kia was trying to communicate this mixture through its odd Stephen-Tyler-driving-backward-while-time-traveling commercial, but the connection between the rocker and the brand remains dubious at best, while the time travel

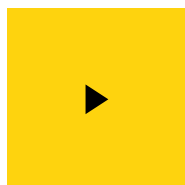
correlation came across as forced and unclear. It's obvious Kia was swinging for the fences (oops...there I go again with an improper sports metaphor), but this one was a definite strikeout.

## 7. Interception of the game



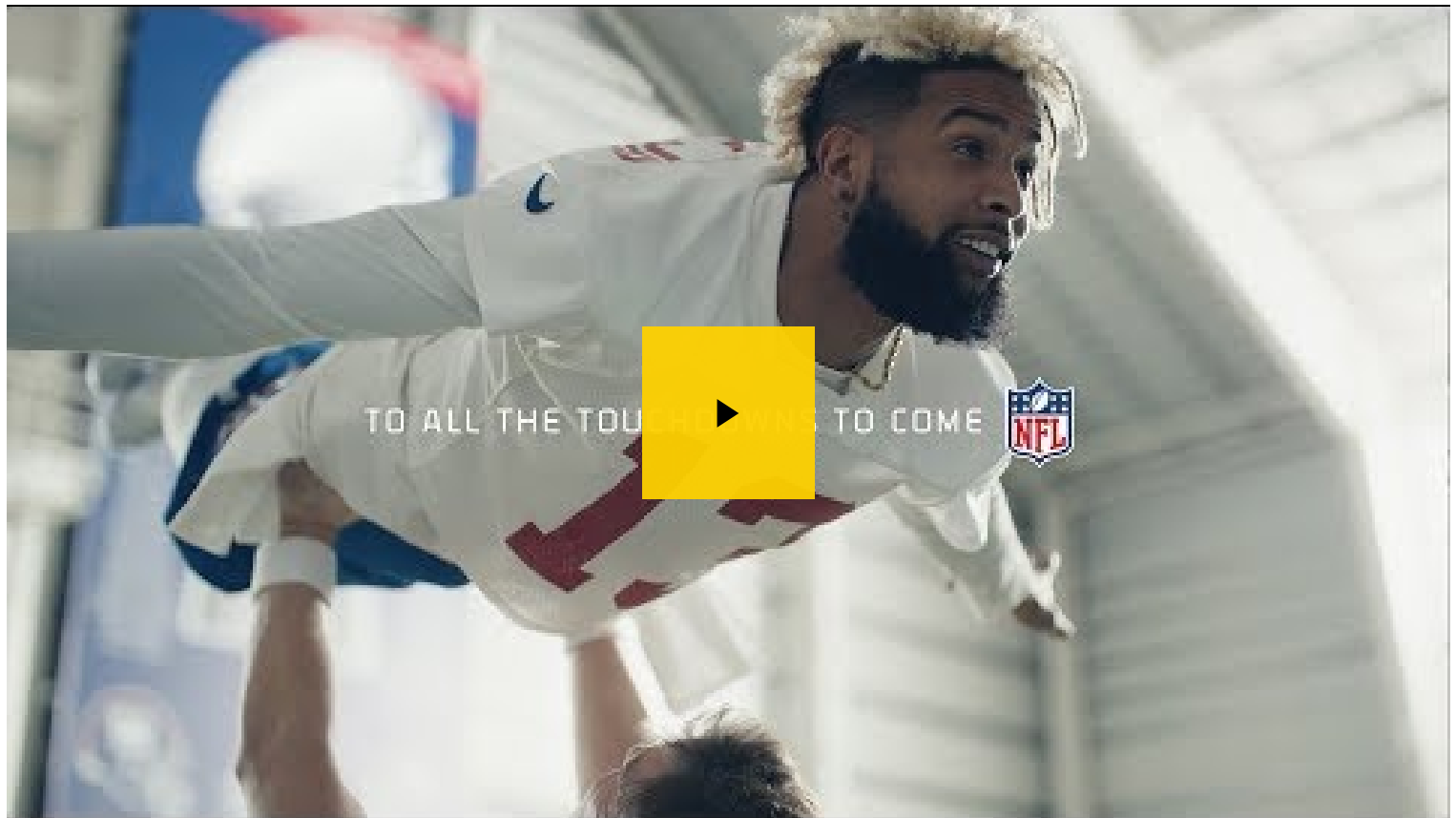
As expected during the Super Bowl, there was a lot of beer on display. In the run-up to the game, Bud Light seemed to be leading the pack, with consumers expecting a continuation of its viral Dilly Dilly campaign. Although Bud Light's ad was enjoyable, Budweiser was the brand that really ran it home. Its emotional, patriotic spot united viewers and offered a message of support, while finding a natural way to show how it's giving back to those in need. Interestingly, Budweiser wasn't the only brand to focus on doing good through water (here's looking at you, Stella), but by using everyday people and a strong storyline, Budweiser took its narrative to a completely new height.

## 8. Fan favorite



Toyota brought it home with its emotional and inspiring Paralympics ad. By using a countdown ticker to make the stakes perpetually higher, the ad built to a crescendo that got viewers believing in Lauren Woolstencroft—and in Toyota. Though there was a potential disconnect between Toyota’s core product—cars—and an ad about powering mobility, the spot was instantly memorable, and likely foretells where the Toyota brand is headed.

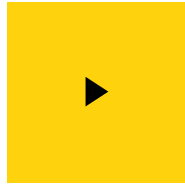
## 9. Extra point



The NFL nailed it with its Dirty Dancing parody, which featured Eli Manning lifting Odell Beckham Jr. into the classic Jennifer Grey-Patrick Swayze overhead swan pose. This was a fun and hilarious way to remind us why we enjoy watching the Super Bowl.

## The penalty box:

### 10. Offside



Oh, Ram, how did you not see this coming? Usurping a speech by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to sell trucks was a major misstep, and an unexpected one given how well Ram's first Viking-inspired spot came off. This seemed to be an attempt to align Ram with today's social and political conversations, but it came off as a tone-deaf and highly self-serving move.

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