

Cadillac campaign based on need for speed

By Theresa Howard
USA TODAY

1 - NEW YORK — Cadillac is about to bet big-time that in five seconds, it can convince consumers of one unlikely selling point: Its cars are darned fast.

5 - The General Motors division today will announce plans to broadcast a series of five-second TV spots that show vehicles from its new lineup accelerating from zero to 60 miles per hour. An off-camera announcer will remark: "How fast? That fast!"

While speed isn't new to automotive advertising, it's a new wrinkle for Cadillac, which is working overtime to embrace a younger audience. The ads will begin to air during the National Football League playoffs on Jan. 15 and continue into the Super Bowl on Feb. 6. They also will air during the Academy Awards on Feb. 27.

10 - Five-second ads are somewhat of a novelty.

While sponsors have used them before — particularly during broadcasts such as football bowl games — they're usually static shots of product logos with a voice-over uttering a company slogan.

These Cadillac ads will be anything but static.

15 - "The whole idea is to attract the attention of those who hadn't considered Cadillac until this point," Spenchian says. "This is a dramatic way of getting their attention."

But critics say that speed doesn't just sell — it also can kill.

20 - "They are speed demons," says Joan Claybrook, president of Public Citizen, one of seven groups that in the fall pushed General Motors to pull a Corvette ad that showed a boy joy riding in New York City. "These companies think they have to advertise speed to sell vehicles. Middle-aged people don't need it, and younger people can't afford these cars," she says.

Advertising experts say five seconds is a very short sales window, even to the MTV generation.

25 - "It's such a short time that if you don't have a name and brand, it could go over people's heads or they could just miss it," says media buyer Andy Donchin, director of national broadcast for buying agency Carat. "Cadillac does have those two things, so it could work for them."

30 - General Motors, which spent \$2.4 billion on ads in 2003, is spending 20% of Cadillac's annual marketing budget to roll out the souped-up vehicles, in dealerships this fall. Just one five-second spot during the football playoffs could fetch about \$133,000.

But GM expects to get its money's worth. Its new vehicles aren't cheap. The CTS-V is already out with a base sticker price of \$49,995.

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