

That's Product Placement!

As Advertisers Look for More Impact, They Look West to Hollywood. Lights, camera, [your product here]!

By Scott Hays

Everybody's doing it. Visa, Polo, Amstel Light, Baskin-Robbins, Hostess, Bacardi, Kraft Foods, the American Heart Association, Campbell Soup Company, Hallmark, Mercedes-Benz, Gate-way Computers, Burger King, Doritos, BMW, Laurent-Perrier Champagne, Coffee Beanery, and the Office of National Drug Control Policy. Yes, all of those brands have participated in product placement deals in recent years.

REVLON

And now there's Revlon.



The cosmetics maker paid ABC a reported "several million dollars" to be featured for 13 weeks in the daytime serial *All My Children*. For this storyline integrated placement, Susan Lucci's character, Erica Kane (who owns a cosmetics company, Enchantment) engages in a corporate battle with Revlon after the real-life cosmetics company tried to "hire away one of her top employees."

In what can only be described as the biggest TV story line tie-in to date, Revlon was also given exclusive rights to advertise its cosmetics products during the show's commercial time.

"Instead of creating a fictitious cosmetics company, we used a real-life company as part of the storyline," said Angeles Shapiro, president of ABC daytime programming. "It was a win for Revlon because it received extraordinary exposure."

With the ever-increasing fusion of television and advertising, and the advent of TiVo and other services that make it easier for viewers to skip commercials, advertisers and television tight market.

If the advertiser is looking to get true bang for the buck, its goal is to achieve an

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integrated form of advertising by showing its products in a seemingly non-commercial context.

Often, product placements are part of a larger marketing tie-in, in which a company agrees to create an ad campaign, a sweepstakes, or some other promotional campaign that complements the studio's own marketing efforts for the film.

What makes a good product placement deal?

"First and foremost, you must have your audience in mind," says ABC's Shapiro. "If you do something that's wrong for the audience, ultimately you lose that audience, ratings go down, and the advertiser's not happy."

"The value of the deal is in what happens in the plot," says Peter Gardiner, partner/chief media officer for Deutsch, Inc. "Because this particular deal was organically grown by the writers, we just thought it was a natural fit for Revlon."

And how did Revlon go about measuring the brand impact of such a deal? "You've got to weigh the intangibles," says Gardiner. "How valuable is the story line to your brand? The PR we received was extraordinary."