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Hollywood Product Placement, Circa 2054

Steven Spielberg's new *Minority Report* depicts the future – one that Lexus and Nokia paid big bucks to get some fictional goods into.

By Ron Grover in Los Angeles



Why would an advertiser pay \$5 million to put in a film a product it knows the public will never get a chance to buy? Well, ask Japanese auto maker Lexus, whose parent company, Toyota, is reported to have paid to place a snazzy, futuristic car in Steven Spielberg's *Minority Report*. Lexus helped design the vehicle for the film's take on 2054 - a car dubbed the Mag-Lev that's part roadster, part elevator, because it can climb the sides of buildings.

The car, and a host of other brands including American Express, Reebok, and Pepsi, appear in Spielberg's film, according to *Minority Report* producer Bonnie Curtis. Starring Tom Cruise, it's a futuristic tale of a police "pre-crime" unit that can look into the future and stop lawlessness before it happens.

Why would Lexus put all that money into helping Spielberg design a pair of cars that will never be sold? Explains Mike Wells, marketing vice-president for Lexus, "We wanted to show the world that Lexus as a brand will be standing tall in 50 years."

Lexus wasn't the only large advertiser to help Spielberg defray the costs of making his film, which is laden with special effects. Phonemaker Nokia spent an estimated \$2 million to design the futuristic handsets that Cruise and others use in the film, according to sources. Nokia also is running print and TV commercials to promote the film and its new 9290 Communicator, a \$599 phone that can send and receive images, sound, and video clips. In addition, Nokia is promoting *Minority Report* on its Web site, where users can see the phone it designed for the film.

Nokia, which has placed other handsets in TV's *Alias* and *24*, and movies like *Charlie's Angels* and *The Matrix*, is well versed in the Hollywood routine. It designed five different phones for Spielberg to shoot.