

# The power of FREE Mad Men product placement: Koss headphones' eureka after hit show uses brand in season premiere

By [Daily Mail Reporter](#)

**PUBLISHED:**14:12 EST, 11 April 2013| **UPDATED:**15:34 EST, 11 April 2013

Many brands would pay top dollar to have their products featured in an episode of Mad Men - and the likes of Johnnie Walker shelled out big bucks for commercial spots during the AMC hit show.

But for Koss headphones, which played a star campaign role in Sunday night's season six premiere, not only was the privilege was absolutely free - the company had no idea it was written into the script.

Koss executives revealed they had no input into the storyline, and only saw the episode along with the other 3.4million Americans who tuned in to watch the episode.



Priceless product placement: Koss headphones played a star campaign role in Mad Men's season six premiere - and not only was the privilege absolutely free, the company had no idea it was written into the script

A decade after inventing the first stereo headphones, Koss unleashed the first U.S. made electrostatic model in 1968 with its own ad campaign.

In the first episode of Mad Men, set on New Years Eve entering 1968, Peggy Olsen shows off her creative and crisis-management chops, creating an Koss' first Super Bowl ad campaign.

CEO Michael Koss, a former New York ad agency executive himself, got wind of the brand's cameo a couple of weeks before the premiere aired, thanks to a spoiler newspaper article.

But Mr Koss, who had no idea whether the appearance would be a positive or negative one for the brand, said there were some real-life coincidences mentioned in the article that were slightly unnerving.

'I thought: "Is a writer on the show someone that I knew back then?"' he recalled in a recent interview with [Ad Age](#). "'Oh my gosh, did I do something that somebody wrote me into the story?" We were really curious.'

The show's producers confirmed to Mr Koss that the brand had a role, but refused to preview the episode for the company or reveal how it was going to be used.



Historical advertising: In the premiere episode of Mad Men season six, Peggy Olsen creates a 1968 ad for the first U.S.-made electrostatic Koss headphones with the controversial line 'Lend me your ears'

# just why do you suppose your customers all want koss?

Even if you try selling them some other headset, they usually want no part of it. Even if you put on your best salesmanship, they still prefer Koss Stereophones. Let's look at some of the reasons.

Most important is the sound of Koss. You see Koss Stereophones are designed to reproduce stereo sound pleasing to people, not just measuring equipment. When people compare headphones, they choose Koss almost every time.

Then there's the fit and construction. People call it comfort. Koss Stereophones are light weight, snug fitting, and comfortable over long listening periods. They feel better. Ask your customers if they don't think so too.

Finally, the most interesting reason of all. Everybody else has Koss Stereophones. And just what do you think are the reasons for that?



**KOSS** Koss Electronics Inc.

2227 N. 31st Street/Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53208/Export Cable: STEREOFONE/2 Via Berna/Lugano, Switzerland

Real deal: A decade after introducing the first stereo headphones, Koss unleashed the first U.S.-made electrostatic model in 1968 with this ad campaign

With just days to go until the premiere, Koss' marketing team did their best to seize the moment, filling the company's Facebook page and Twitter feed with 'retro' content.

They opened a Legacy Sweep-stakes giveaway with prizes of Koss headphones and retro posters signed by John Koss, who founded the company in 1953 and introduced the first stereo headphones designed for music in 1958.

Though the Mad Men Koss campaign storyline is fictional, Mr Koss praised the show for its authenticity.

Just weeks before Koss plans to use Peggy's Super Bowl commercial with the tagline 'Lend Us Your Ears,' the episode depicts executives getting nervous over a Tonight Show skit showing U.S. soldiers making necklaces from Viet Cong ears.

Peggy is forced to work through New Years Eve to come up with a new tagline: 'Sounds so sharp and clear you can actually see it.'

While in real-life Koss has never advertised in the Super Bowl, the company did create television ads in 1968, including a campaign starring former Tonight Show bandleader Doc Severinsen.



Late night: Peggy is forced to work through New Years Eve to come up with a new Koss tagline: 'Sounds so sharp and clear you can actually see it'



Art imitating life: Just weeks before Koss planned to use Peggy's Super Bowl commercial with the tagline 'Lend Us Your Ears,' executives get nervous over a controversial Tonight Show skit

Mr Koss said that that ad actually aired on the Johnny Carson-hosted show.

Last season British automaker Jaguar enjoyed a similar spotlight and free product placement.

Jaguar was part of the storyline on AMC's Mad Men as the Sterling Cooper Draper Pryce agency pitched for its first car account.

David Pryor, VP-brand development for JaguarUSA, said he had no control over the script and that he, like everybody else, saw the latest episode when it aired.

'I'm a big fan of the show and it was gratifying to see our brand portrayed,' Mr. Pryor told Ad Age, before adding that Mad Men researchers had briefly reached out to Jaguar's archivist to ask questions about its Sixties advertising - and what a typical dealership and showroom might have looked like.