Creatives React: OpenAI's Super Bowl Ad Dumbs Down AI for Average Joes

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OpenAI made a last-minute Super Bowl debut, pitching its flagship product, ChatGPT, as humanity's latest breakthrough innovation.

Framing the ad as the dawn of "The Intelligence Age," OpenAI's 30-second spot takes viewers on a journey through humanity's greatest inventions—fire, airplanes, television—culminating in ChatGPT, which it presents as the next disruptive technology.

The AI giant strayed from the usual Super Bowl formula of humorous, celebrity-driven ads. Instead, OpenAI embraced its brand identity with a pointillism-inspired animation style, where abstract dots transform into iconic symbols—from DNA sequences to airplanes—creating a futuristic visual narrative.

Notably, the ad was crafted by human creative professionals, with OpenAI's Sora tool serving as a brainstorming and exploration resource during the creative process. The collaboration highlights OpenAI's commitment to blending human creativity with advanced AI capabilities.

ADWEEK asked creatives to weigh in on the ad and share what works and doesn't. Here's what they said.

Debra Aho Williamson, founder and chief analyst, Sonata Insights

[The ad] was eye-catching and creatively very different from other ads that typically appear in the Super Bowl. [OpenAI] did a beautiful job of demonstrating the promise and future of AI without making it seem out of reach for the average person. I'm also glad the brand used AI to develop the ad, but involved humans in the production process. That demonstrates a key best practice of AI in advertising: AI is a partner to humans, not a replacement.

I don't think we know exactly what makes an ad created with AI "work" yet. But this ad had a lot going for it. It was unique, on-brand, and had a powerful message. Whether the ad is created with AI or not, those three qualities are still important.

Ian Baer, founder and CEO, Sooth

If the goal of the spot was to demystify AI for the less sophisticated user, then I'd say mission accomplished—especially for those who visited the website and could start creating with ChatGPT within seconds.

I can't wait to see how many new users the spot generated and what people were searching for and creating during the Super Bowl, as we know about 80% of viewers are using at least one device besides their TV while watching the game. People will make natural comparisons to Google's AI spot, which made its AI tool seem vague and cumbersome by comparison. ChatGPT, in comparison, made AI seem so accessible.

Joe Parrish, co-founder, The Variable

When I heard OpenAI was doing an ad, I was curious. I thought about being the strategist on that job. What would I want to communicate? I thought about being the creative on that job. How would I make it interesting and different? As incredible as the underlying technology?

The style was compelling, but the strategy could have been more discerning. With so much money spent, I wish the brand had done more work around defining what makes it so amazing.

Kumi Croom, managing director, Duncan Channon

It makes sense to have Open AI show itself as the next big innovation, and with the core message that everything has a starting point. It felt humble, and the fact that the animated spot was made by humans is very grounding to how we all need to approach AI. Humans must stay at the center of the technology to try and keep it grounded.

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