T-Mobile Auditions Common and Jennifer Hudson for Bradley Cooper's Job in Super Bowl Ad

Announcing! Brandweek is headed to Phoenix, Arizona this September 23–26. Join us there to explore the future of marketing, discover cutting-edge strategies and network with the best in the business.

For their third ad of Super Bowl 58, T-Mobile has the the kings of streaming, four Oscar winners (including an EGOT)—and Donald Faison—auditioning for the right to pitch the company's Magenta Status customer appreciation program.

T-Mobile and their partners at Panay Films—already running a Super Bowl ad with Faison, Zach Braff, Jason Momoa and Jennifer Beals during the Super Bowl's CBS broadcast and a Metro by T-Mobile spot with Luis Guzman during TelevisaUnivison's presentation—sought strength in numbers by bringing in as many big names as their ad could hold.

The 60-second ad slated for the game's second quarter features Academy Award winners Braff, Laura Dern, Common and Jennifer Hudson (who also has a Grammy, Emmy and Tony on her shelf) joining last year's T-Mobile incumbents—Oscar-nominated actor and director Bradley Cooper and his mother, Gloria Campano—as well as Faison and Suits stars Gabriel Macht and Patrick J. Adams as a steady stream of auditioning VIPs pitching T-Mobile's everyday VIP service.

"When you're part of the magenta family, we want to ensure you feel like the VIP you are," said Mike Katz, President of Marketing, Strategy and Products at T-Mobile. "With Magenta

Status, we're going beyond all the things our customers already enjoy – unbeatable travel benefits, weekly T-Mobile Tuesdays thankings, the best streaming services for free and more – and cranking up our appreciation even further to give our customers the VIP vibes they deserve from day one."

This spot follows up last year's T-Mobile ad featuring Cooper and Campano's unsuccessful attempt at filming a Super Bowl ad as scripted. The banter between the Maestro actor/director and his mom placed the ad No. 26 out of 51 spots on last year's USA TODAY Ad Meter and inspired Panay Film's Brian Klugman to go out on the road and conduct individual shoots with subjects that captured Dern crying on cue, Hudson's attempts at whistling and both Macht and Adams riffing just after their five-years dead show conquered Netflix and they'd charmed the Golden Globes.

Supporting cast

Peter DeLuca, T-Mobile's chief creative officer, noted that bringing back favorites like Cooper and Braff didn't just add to the spot's familiar faces or strengthen T-Mobile's Super Bowl brand. Cooper and Braff's skills as actors, directors and writers allow them to pitch in on the editing process and make them more deeply involved in the final product.

"It's the bond of trust that we've been able to create with people versus people just for hire," DeLuca said. "Actors for hire versus actors who are participating in our creative process is the unlock to making brilliant work."

That spirit of cooperation extends to more recent additions to T-Mobile's celebrity circle as well. Common first worked with Panay Films on voiceovers for Microsoft Super Bowl ads in 2015 before eventually getting on camera for the company's spots.

He said his work with Klugman as a director at the time showed him where there was room within marketing for what he was already doing artistically.

Common was introduced to T-Mobile through Panay last year and produced ad for Apple's iPhone 15 Pro. After that commercial released, Common noticed an uptick in people approaching in him public—including parents with young kids—and was receptive when T-Mobile sought him out for their latest Super Bowl work with Panay. This time around, he was able to improvise an audition using lines (and costume) from Denzel Washington's crooked cop character Alonzo in 2001's Training Day.

"I was excited, because most of the work that I've done for marketing and commercials was really statesmanlike and more on a serious note—talking about things that could affect the society," he said. "People sometimes assume that I think I'm just the coolest guy, but I don't—I feel like I'm an authentic person and a true person, but I tell dad jokes, I say goofy things and corny things."

Selling the bit

In what's become a collaborative staple of T-Mobile and Panay's Super Bowl spots, the celebrities involved often suggest or improvise their mix of quips and brand facts. In each musical ad that T-Mobile and Panay Films have done with Braff and Faison, for example, features of T-Mobile's 5G home internet product are rewritten into the lyrics of Steven Sondheim's "I Feel Pretty" from West Side Story, "Summer Nights" from Grease or Irene Cara's Flashdance…What a Feeling" from Flashdance.

"The Panay team brought this concept to us and we loved it, but we said, 'Okay, how do you go about executing something this big was so many celebrities and do it on such a fast timeline, and also deliver the message?' DeLuca said.

Filmed on a short timetable—in some cases, at the actors' homes—the ad features Macht and Adams explaining how T-Mobile's program prevents customers from having to fill up or charge their rental vehicle when dropping it off at Dollar. Cooper's observation that Magenta Status members get a $5 movie coupon every month elicits a "that's why we belong to T-Mobile" from Campano and a raised-eyebrow retort from her son.

If none of that—or Macht and Adams' brief song and dance about discounted Hilton stays—lands with the audience, viewers are directed to Tmobile.com/Status at the end of the ad to figure it out for themselves.

"This commercial is so different creatively from our musical, but also very similar in one way: both seek to strike a balance between entertaining and selling," said Andrew Panay, CEO of Panay Films. "Here, we tried to unlock the personalities of these stars while still driving home the benefits of Magenta Status in a way that is still very funny and watchable."

For his part, Common shouts the praises of Magenta Status in his best Denzel and seems bent on nailing his audition. An actor since the late '90s, Common went on one of his first auditions in Los Angeles for the part of a coach feeling extremely nervous in "a whistle and corny, cheesy coach's shorts" Unable to relax, take it all in and be present, he was told he was green and was sent on his way.

Taking it as motivation to work harder on his next outing, he auditioned for the 2006 ensemble action thriller Smokin' Aces, got two callbacks, flew in from China for the second and landed what was ultimately his first film role. Now an Oscar,

Emmy and three-time Grammy winner, Common still considers his role in pitching T-Mobile's Magenta Status to more than 100 million people at the Super Bowl "very, very high" on his list of achievements.

"The people they choose for Super Bowl commercials mean something to the zeitgeist in some way or another," he said. "Even if you throw somebody a blast from the past that they still bring up now, for a brand to say 'We want this person to be a part of a Super Bowl commercial with our brand' is like a big, big notch."

For the latest Super Bowl 58 advertising news—who's in, who's out, teasers, full ads and more—check out Adweek's Super Bowl 2024 Ad Tracker and the rest of our stories here. And join us on the evening of Feb. 11 for the best in-game coverage of the commercials.

CREDITS

Agency: Panay Films

Creative Team: Andrew Panay, Brian Klugman, Nate Tuck

Director: Brian Klugman

Editor: Kevin Anderson

Recommended articles
https://www.adweek.com/brand-marketing/t-mobile-common-jennifer-hudson-bradley-cooper-super-bowl-ad/