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Disappointed with this year's Super Bowl ads?

Blame AI.

by Gianna Cassino

WEEKLY COLUMNIST

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Music fans have the Grammys, film buffs have the Emmys and advertising geeks have the Super Bowl. On advertising's biggest night of the year, companies pay millions for a single thirty-second spot and spend months perfecting their campaigns. Viewers come in expecting innovative, memorable commercials. This year's lineup, however, fell flat. Who's to blame? Artificial intelligence.

At its core, the Super Bowl is a display of human excellence. The big game demonstrates athleticism, the halftime show flaunts musicality and the advertisements showcase creativity. Unlike Bad Bunny's halftime performance, Sunday's commercial breaks were a clear disappointment. As a Communications major who's spent years analyzing Super Bowl commercials, I always come away with favorites. This year, I don't remember the content of any of the ads aside from the one where Benson Boone showed up. The root cause of such lackluster advertising is none other than the increasing presence of artificial intelligence in their content and creation.

Super Bowl commercials usually publicize a healthy mix of services, PSAs and product promotion across a variety of industries. This year, artificial intelligence dominated. Out of the 66 commercials, 15 of them

(that's 23%) either advertised AI services or used AI in their creation. By the end of the game, the only thing my friends and I were booing more than the Patriots' offensive line was the multitude of nearly identical campaigns.

If you're a frequent reader of this column, you're aware of my thoughts on generative AI. If not, here's the run-down: I hate what it's doing to the environment, our critical thinking skills, human connection and creativity. Using AI in advertising reads as pure laziness. Brainstorming and executing ad campaigns isn't an impossible process. If hundreds of tired, busy college students can pull it off every finals week, there's absolutely no excuse for teams with the resources and pay grades to slack.

One brand in particular

dropped the ball horrifically. Svedka had the opportunity to make history under the headline "first vodka brand to take Super Bowl spot in over 30 years". Instead, according to

their advertising department (or lack thereof) as well as any confidence in their product. It promotes perceived "progress" rather than the product itself. The ad itself makes relatively

no sense: a pair of robots drink Svedka to "let loose" while clubbing, but one of them short-circuits after drinking. Svedka claims that the malfunction is intentional, despite speculation that it's merely an error output by whatever system generated it. Even if the short-circuit approach is intended, the implication that one's product causes harm to the consumer is a strange approach. Whatever the reasoning, Svedka's commercial should be a clear cautionary tale for advertising agencies considering cutting corners.

We can't discuss AI ads without mentioning the spots dedi-

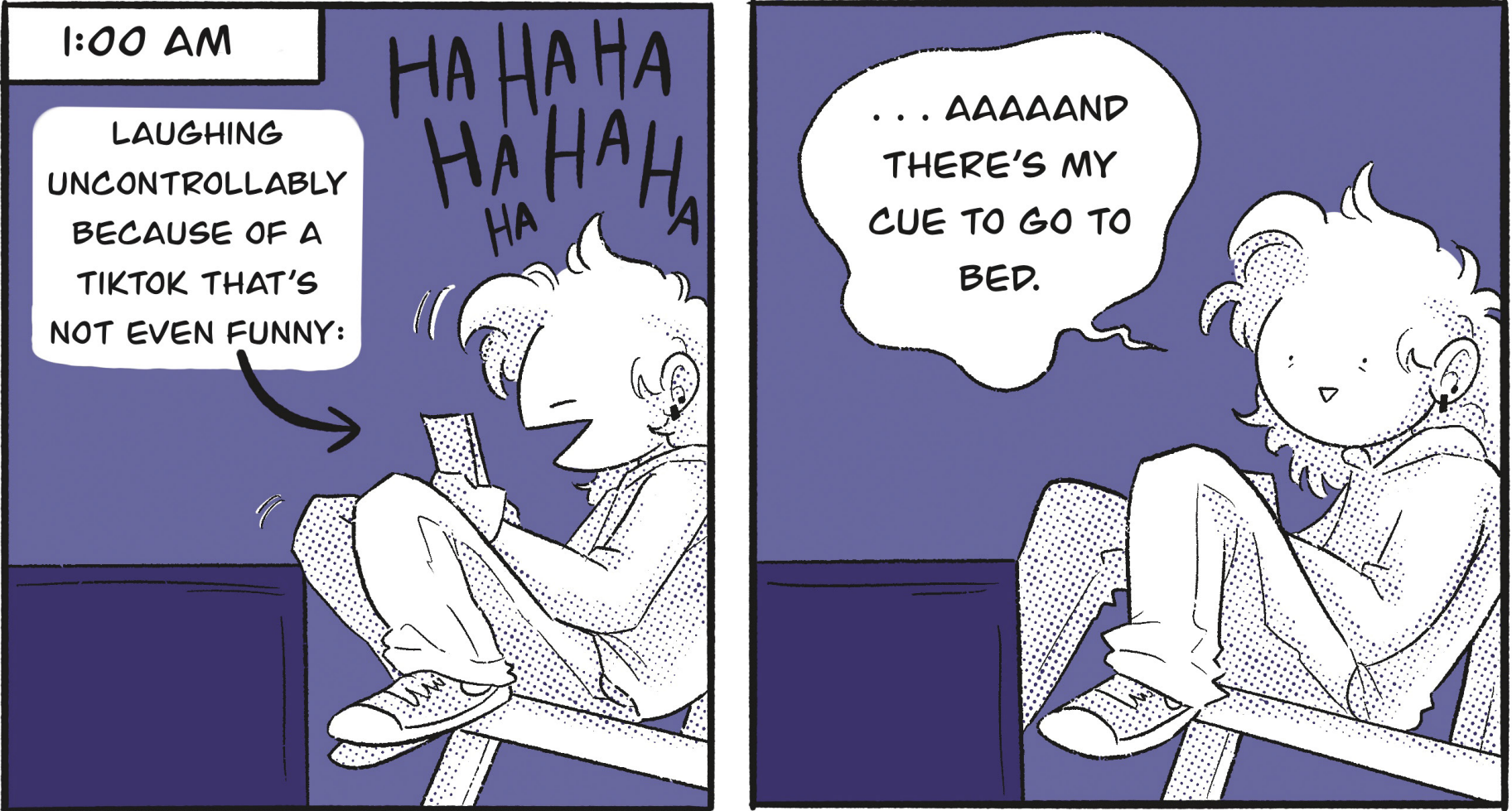
cated to artificial intelligence companies. Quite frankly, I have little to say about any of these commercials individually because they all blended into an amalgamation of utter slop. My main takeaway was that the ads contradict the product. Thematically, they seem rooted in the human experience (showcasing tender family moments and scientific discoveries) despite the services they promote actively robbing us of it. If anything, these commercials spoke more to the indomitable human spirit and caused me to question why someone would feel the need to use AI platforms at all.

On a positive note, Pepsi used an outright rejection of AI to make a statement. Their top competitor, Coca-Cola, came under fire for including AI-generated polar bears in a series of recent ads (ironic for a brand whose sustainability program highlights water replenishment). In response, Pepsi's commercial featured CGI polar bears and a deliberately human touch. It's a clever dig at their competitors, but it should be the bare minimum (no pun intended).

Overall, this year's Super Bowl commercials come as a cheap imitation of past years' hits. The nagging presence of AI in advertising is killing creativity and generating nothing more than nonsense. If next year's Super Bowl commercials don't get their acts together, they'll be receiving a scathing letter from yours, truly.



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