



From the Vault #4: Sammy Davis Jnr advertising Japanese whiskey in the 70â??s is as insane as you think

Description



When Suntory whiskey featured American entertainer and “rat pack” member Sammy Davis Jr in their 1970 campaign, they were one of the first Japanese companies to use an American celebrity in their advertising. The ad was not only a great success, but it became a blueprint for the company, cultivating almost their entire brand off the back of these TV spots.

These ads are now universally known, with American director Sofia Coppola even using it as a plot device in her 2003 film “Lost in Translation”. This early incarnation of the ad sees a clearly inebriated Sammy Davis Jr sitting at a lone table adorned by nothing more than a bottle of Suntory, a bucket of ice and a high ball. The one shot take is an incredible performance by Davis Jr and really

shows what a natural entertainer he was.

What makes this ad so special and perhaps most memorable is the lack of “traditional” music. While there is no actual song playing during the spot, it is still an incredibly musical ad. Throughout the ad Sammy Davis Jnr sings scat along with what can only be described as an early, primitive form of beat-boxing. The entertainer starts to fix himself a glass of the whiskey, accentuating the rhythm of his scat vocals with little taps on the bottle and the rattling of ice cubes. What it creates is an incredibly rhythmic set of sounds that are both engaging and sensory-pleasing. The choice of going with something different to a pre existing song is what stood this ad apart and a huge part of what makes it so memorable.

Watch here: