



BMW GETS ITS OWN TV CHANNEL

Upscale Carmaker to Run Latest Short-Film Series on DirecTV

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By [David Goetzl](#)

NEW YORK (AdAge.com) -- BMW is getting its own TV channel. The car marketer has a deal with DirecTV for a channel on the satellite system to run its much-talked-about BMW film series and related conte



The film productions that began with 'The Hire' will now be expanded to fill a TV channel with product-related content.

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So somewhere within DirecTV's offering of financial networks like Bloomberg TV and CNBC will be what could be called the BMW Films Channel. It will start in late November and run for five weeks. The financial locale in the DirecTV constellation is intentional: BMW hopes to target males with the income levels to afford its new Z4 roadster. DirecTV sells itself as an option to reach upscale audiences, touting some 79% of subscribers as homeowners with household incomes higher than network and cable viewers.

Three new films

The BMW channel, which is expected to be available during weekend prime-time hours, will offer a half-hour loop that will include the three new films in the BMW series called "The Hire" and extra content such as behind-the-scenes footage. The film series was created by Publicis Groupe's Fallon Worldwide. The second season of the films launches on the web Oct. 24 and will be promoted by a national ad campaign.

The creation of the channel is part of a broader, integrated deal between BMW (represented by Optimedia International) and newly named Sony Pictures Television, which sells nationally the time on DirecTV that cable systems sell locally.

BMW has purchased on DirecTV a run

of 30-second spots in those slots on more than 23 channels such as ESPN and Discovery, and will use them to direct people to the dedicated channel. The BMW channel will also be included in DirecTV's interactive program guide.

Fighting the clutter

The deal is a natural for DirecTV since it has unused channel capacity at times. And the satellite provider is likely to pursue similar deals as advertisers increasingly follow the BMW example and create compelling content as a way to emerge from the clutter. DirecTV, owned by General Motors Corp.'s Hughes unit, has used the open channel space to plug its own service and ventures where it's held an equity stake, such as XM Radio and Microsoft's Ultimate TV, but this marks the first time it's turned the space over to an

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advertiser.

"I'm hoping it's the tip of the iceberg," says Kirk Kopic, vice president of ad sales for DirecTV. "It's something we can do that NBC can't do and the cable networks largely can't do."

Wider distribution

For BMW, its own channel could go a way toward its goal of increasing visibility of this year's films -- and thus the new Z4. Even though bmwfirms.com saw some 13 million downloads last year, and the shorts were seen on networks such as Bravo and the Speed Channel, BMW executives seemed to feel distribution could have been wider.

"One of the mantras on the new series of films was to expose them to more people," says Mike McHale, senior principal at Optimedia.

Besides DirecTV -- which reaches 11.5 million homes -- movie theaters that are part of a project with Microsoft and free video-on-demand content areas on the Cablevision and Cox cable systems will be used.

Star-studded series

Last year, BMW used the film series with a star-studded roster of directors and actors as a branding effort to pump its whole fleet of cars, and the marketing vehicle was widely hailed.

"It's one of the most well-recognized branded entertainment projects on both Madison Avenue and in Hollywood in the last couple of years," says Seth Bedell, a partner in a Los Angeles firm that tries to meld content and commerce.

This year, the focus is on the Z4. And celebs are back. In one film called *Beat the Devil*, singer James Brown plays himself. As a young man, he sold his soul to the devil and now the devil is tired of waiting. The devil offers to race for it and Brown hires a driver, played by British actor Clive Owen. The other two films star Don Cheadle (*Traffic*) and Kathryn Morris (*Minority Report*). The series' executive producer is director Ridley Scott, a man renowned for his stylish commercials (Apple's 1984) and movies (*Blade Runner*).

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Jean Halliday, Wayne Friedman and Kate MacArthur contributed to this report.