

## DENIRO, HOFFMAN AND JERICHO 'WAG THE DOG'

Tommy Hilfiger with Jericho Communications

Category 90: Video, Non-Broadcast

Does art imitate life, or life mimic art? In 1998, a series of political, social and advertising-related events blurred the lines so much that no one can tell for sure. We'll leave the decision up to you...

### THE CHALLENGE:

Tommy Hilfiger's advertising agency, the Arnell Group, launched a campaign for the retail trendsetter that captured the undivided attention of consumers, but also ruffled the feathers of several White House representatives in the process. The ads pictured Tyra Banks and Rebecca Romijn dressed in corporate attire and perched seductively atop a desk that looked like it was in the Oval Office. Considering the already tense political/social climate in America, given the Monica Lewinsky and other similar high-profile scandals, the Presidential-themed campaign faced intense controversy. Ultimately, Hilfiger was forced to pull the ads because the White House said it has a long-standing policy against allowing neither it or the President to be used in advertising campaigns. Press coverage of the decision surged through the consumer press like a tidal wave, resulting in over a billion media impressions nationwide through print and broadcast placements.

The Arnell Group then invited Jericho to produce a video showing how advertising and public relations are inter-related. The piece would be presented during a meeting of Tommy Hilfiger's internal marketing and advertising departments.

### AN INGENIOUS SOLUTION:

The video opened in silence to a black screen, with the following superimposed:

Why does a dog wag its tail?

Because a dog is smarter than its tail.

If the tail were smarter, the tail would wag the dog.

Sound familiar? The riddle is from the almost-too-hip-for-words, also controversial hit movie, "Wag the Dog." The film relayed the story of a group of presidential consultants who deflected the news media's attention off of a presidential sex scandal by faking a war with a third-world country. (Just to keep things straight, we're still talking about the movie, here.)

Jericho identified that there was a general parallel between the theme of the movie and the message that Hilfiger was trying to communicate to his audience. So, for Hilfiger's internal marketing video, Jericho cleverly used oh-so-

appropriate clips of Wag the Dog stars Robert DeNiro and Dustin Hoffman (along with the rest of the cast) to tell the Tommy Hilfiger story. For instance, a clip from the movie shows the group of consultants popping a video into their VCR to review an ad relating to the movie, and the magic of editing allows them to actually see and discuss the Presidential Hilfiger campaign. Snippets of the movie are used throughout the video to comment on the Hilfiger ad campaign and the resulting publicity. Hoffman, for example, quips, "You talk about enlarging the market!" (which is exactly what Hilfiger's controversial ad campaign did); and DeNiro remarks, "As Plato said, 'It doesn't matter how you get there, as long as you get there.'" The marketing video includes a fast-moving montage of actual Hilfiger coverage, shown to the Wag the Dog theme song. And, the video concludes with a list of placements scrolling over Rebecca Romijn's photo while a patriotic song pipes along in the background about the American spirit and fighting to keep the country free.

The video conveyed an original Hilfiger story in an equally inventive way to a packed house of creative thinkers. It played to a standing ovation.