

# TV Ads with Balls!

Nothing beats watching a small spherical object bandied between sweat-soaked men to send testosterone levels into feverish highs. Such is the appeal of ball games that has naturally found its way into the world of male-targeted advertisements. *Asia Image* lines up two TVCs that are bound to score with the men out there.

By Danny Chan

**Who can forget the fancy** footwork of the 2002 Brazilian team in the Nike ad for their World Cup Finals campaign, or Maria Sharapova felling a billboard signage with her hard-hitting tennis balls – spelling the words 'Maria was here'?

The success of these TVCs can be seen writ large on the rising profile and celebrity status of their sports personalities, and of course, their fattened bank accounts. But lest you think sports ads depend solely on the strength of celebrity power, think again.

A recent Nokia ad campaign called "Defend Your Turf" – which comprises a series of soccer-themed ads to coincide with the highly anticipated World Cup 2006 event in June – had used virtual unknowns for the entire cast.

## Samba Soccer begins

The Nokia campaign was awarded to Spunk pictures, Shanghai from Bates Asia, Singapore. Conceived by art director Ko Min Jung and copywriter Lim Chiao Woon from Bates, the campaign presented a challenge for Spunk from the word 'go'.

For one, the film had to be shot on location in the major city area of Rio De Janeiro, Brazil. That means the entire



01-11: The Nokia ad is referenced to the look and feel of Brazilian film *City of God*

crew had to apply for visiting passes, which was a cumbersome exercise for the traveling party. They include Nokia and Bates personnel, as well as the key production team from Spunk. Since it was an international team, different visas had to be sought from the respective embassies in countries like Singapore, Argentina and Shanghai. To complicate matters, all foreign workers – which literally meant everyone – involved in the

production were required to bear their work visas while on the set, and these visas could only be obtained via the Brazilian work council, in application to the Brazilian embassy.

Unfortunately for the crew, the paperwork did not end there but awaited them at their destination. Strict union rules decreed that at least one week's advance application was required to secure filming permits. Moreover, every individual

tenant's permission must be sought prior to filming on his or her premises. For health reasons, and before the team was allowed to enter Brazil, they were required to take immunization jabs against yellow fever.

Apart from the form-filling and needle-sticking drudgery, the team was in high spirits and eager to settle down to work. Even as Rio, the world-renowned tourist spot beckoned – from the colorful

street culture to the beautiful beaches inhabited by gorgeous, sun-kissed bodies – the production crew was there for one reason and one reason only: Samba soccer!

## The Soccer Globetrotters are coming to town

True to its audacious slogan, "Defend Your Turf" is an ambitious campaign that would follow the exploits of six





01-09: Just short of a slam-dunk, the Holden Barina car makes a feisty "player" on the court.

uber-talented soccer players on a tour of five major Asian cities. These gladiator-like footballers will throw down the gauntlet to challenge their Asian peers on the pitch.

And where better than from the streets of Brazil to unearth these gifted purveyors of what is being hailed as 'The Beautiful Game'. This is, after all, a country that prides itself on its flamboyant brand of soccer, and whose defending champion status after the last outing of the World Cup Finals 2002 in Japan/Korea lends enough credence to their stake on the International footballing scene. Hence by virtue of their birthplace alone, these Brazilians will no doubt instill as much fear in, as they would command the respect of, their Asian opponents.

But before the brilliant concept can roll out on our own soccer pitches here in Asia, the Asian team at Spunk was out there in Rio De Janeiro, filming the commercial that would be aired in all five Asian cities, to be visited by these globe-trotting challengers. Although accompanied by print and online advertising, the TVC must necessarily serve as the most important medium format from which the challenge would be issued, as it can showcase the players' silky smooth ball skills in their full glory.

## City of Soccer Gods

Samba soccer originated in the back streets of the Brazilian slums, an unlikely haven in which the poor but inventive neighborhood children would hone and sharpen their unique style of ball control and deft dribbling techniques. Unable to afford a soccer ball, these impoverished kids would create their own source of entertainment by kicking and dribbling any conceivable object they could find on the streets – from empty soda cans to coconut husks – while mimicking their soccer heroes as seen on the telly.

In order to capture the essence of Samba soccer, the Nokia ad traced its humble beginnings to the back alleys and inner city dwellings in search of that gritty look.

Using the movie *City of God* as a reference, the TVC reshaped the opening sequence of the Oscar-winning movie, in which the characters were being introduced, one by one, via freeze frames. Composed by Mark Baptist, the twanging 70s-infused soundtrack played to good



effect here, and seemed to pay homage to an era when Brazilian soccer was at its heyday.

From the claustrophobic confines of the narrow hallways to the shaft of light passing through a cluttered room, Director Siraja J and DOP Jeffrey Ang took great pains to capture the mood and surroundings as faithfully as they could. The minimalist use of handheld cameras added to the flow of the moving cameras yet not jerky for the viewers.

The earthy and raw tones that gave *City of God* its look and feel, were invoked for this film. "All three cameras were formatted on 16 mm film stock, which offer a raw look that matches the tone of this film," executive producer Davis Koh reveals, adding that two Arri SR3 and one Bolex camera were used for the shoot.

"Other benefits of these cameras include longer capture duration for each roll of film and hand-held portability. As a result of shorter set-up time with these cameras, we are able to speed up the production process."

However, Koh commented on one drawback for the Bolex camera – the 100 ft film stock that it uses was not available in Brazil. "We had to bring along Bolex film spools provided by FTS Singapore. The spools were later sent to the lab in Sao Paulo for splicing 400 ft film stock onto each 100 ft spool."

Obviously, even the best cameras and DOP in the world would fail to deliver if the actors do not. In this case, if the Samba boys failed to dish out the Samba soccer, no camera would be able to produce the goods. Luckily for the crew, the boys were in top form and made all the right moves.

In fact, the director was so mesmerized by their gravity defying ball control skills that on many occasions, they



ended up with more footage than was required. "The amount of footages we shot was enough for a feature length film," Koh exclaimed.

True to their pedigree and form, the boys were caught on reel juggling with their feet all kinds of objects, including an alarm clock, eggs, a basket and tin cans.

Surprisingly, no post compositing work was necessary, which goes to show that the cast did not depend on digital trickery to flesh out their roles as top-class soccer players, but were simply playing themselves on camera. The only effect required for the shots were the grading of the processed negatives, which was carried out at D-link post production in Brazil. The rushes were transported back to Singapore's Infinite Frameworks for offline edit.

The telecine tape grades were later done on the Da Vinci 2K color corrector, which was also responsible for polishing up the shots. Final online edit was completed on the Inferno suite by artist Colin Foo. Sound was mixed down at AMX Audiophiles Singapore.

## Michael Jordan on Wheels

When marketers talk about allowing the product 'more room to shine', it isn't meant to be taken literally, as did Cutting Edge VFX, for their funky new car ad for Holden Barina. In the ad that turns the spotlight on basketball, the automobile itself takes on the leading role, as well as a street corner team for a game of hoops. Displaying nifty albeit outlandish skills – all thanks to painstaking compositing work – the car had to earn its street cred the hard way, which means kicking ass on the basketball court.

Commissioned by Cummins and Partners, Melbourne, the TVC was helmed by Mark Toia of Zoom Film and Television. The TVC is set on a basketball court that has been converted from a rooftop car park in Brisbane. Adding a sporting twist to Disney's *Herbie Fully Loaded*, the ball-playing Holden Barina is pit against an all-street cast in a basketball match of imaginative proportions.

Toia worked closely with the art department to recreate the basketball court, complete with high wire fencing,