

Response

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DRTV SETS OFF AN AVALANCHE

Script to Screen Hits the Slopes with Dynastar

Script to Screen producer Ken Kerry takes Skis Dynastar on an uphill run with a lead generating show that focuses on its new ski technology

By Jay M. Winchester, Special to Response

Producing a ski show seems easy enough. Throw together shots of beautiful mountain scenery with footage of extreme ski action, add a punk rock score, and you're done.

While that approach might work for some, it doesn't work for Ken Kerry, executive producer and creative director for Script to Screen, a direct response company headquartered in Santa Ana, Calif. He was tasked with producing a show for Skis Dynastar that focused on the company's new pintail technology designed to make skiing easier and safer, even for novices. A secondary goal was explaining how the company's three product lines—Dynastar Skis, Lange Boots and Look Bindings—worked together to enhance the skiing experience. The overall objective: lead generation. With that charter, Kerry and crew set off for Lake Tahoe, where two days of location shooting began in earnest.

Demonstrating the benefits

Kerry saw the chance to do something different. "This industry has been sedated by the tendency to combine real edgy punk rock music videos with ski footage as a way to sell product," he says. "They've been doing that for years now and it's no longer working. I don't care if you're trying to generate a lead or trying to make a sale, the bottom line is demonstrating the benefits of the product."

For example, the Look Pivot Bindings work when a skier is moving back and forth. "In order to capture that, we had to mount a cigar camera onto a ski, and then ski down the slope to actually film the pivot binding in action," Kerry says. "Simply animating the binding's movements wouldn't accurately portray how it works." Complex animations complemented what the cigar cams captured. "Animation was the tool we used to make good television," he says. "It helped us entertain and inform in ways beyond what the cameras captured."

Skiing with the stars

As a draw, Skis Dynastar enlisted some of the most well-known names in Olympic skiing: Picabo Street, Tommy Moe and Italy's Alberto Tomba. While each brought a singular perspective and attitude to the show, Kerry was most impressed with Tomba—to the point where he was willing to take some risks.

"Working with Tomba, who speaks English with a thick Italian accent, was interesting," Kerry says. "He has such great passion for the sport. But we found that having him try to communicate his love for skiing in English negated that passion." Kerry's solution: subtitles. "It was an edgy approach, but it worked," he says.

With such impressive experts, hosts needed to be both knowledgeable and credible. Kerry chose Bob Beattie,



Dynastar's lead generating show was produced by Script to Screen to show the company's new pintail technology as well as explain the company's three product lines: Dynastar Skis, Lange Boots and Look Pivot Bindings.

veteran sportscaster for both ABC and ESPN, and six-time U.S. National Ski Champion and network analyst Pam Fletcher. Why these two? "Beattie's arguably the most established ski announcer in the business," says Kerry. "He is very active in World Cup coverage for the networks, and even produces his own ski show." And Fletcher? "We picked Pam because she's TV savvy," he says. "She can read off the prompter, and she can play off the host. Those aren't the kinds of things you want to be teaching during a two-day shoot."

Rising to the challenge

The new technology was a key selling point. To reinforce that in consumers' minds, Kerry built a set that functioned as a technology center. Dynastar's R&D personnel answered technical questions put to them by Beattie. "Fitting all this into a long form format was a challenge," says Kerry. "We not only had to explain the features and benefits of the system, we also had to break down the quality and history of the three product lines. On top of all that, we had great experts to talk to and to talk about."

Because of the complexity of the show, Kerry took a different tack with the CTA. "When a consumer walks into a retail store, they find experts there to help in their shopping," Kerry says. "We wanted to portray that same feeling in our CTA. We used an on-camera presenter to reinforce the features and benefits of the Dynastar system in an authoritative and cordial manner. The aim was to make viewers feel as if a Dynastar representative was guiding them. We took another whole day just to shoot the CTA in order to achieve that effect."

With such wide-ranging content, scoring the show became a challenge. "We weren't out to make a 28-minute rock video," says Kerry. "But there were certain segments where we did use that approach." In the consumer education segments, Kerry chose a musical style he thought would enhance the learning process. "We ended up with a very complex music track, probably the most complex score we've ever had in an infomercial," he says.

The weather factor

The Tahoe weather also proved to be less than cooperative. "When we first started planning, we knew we had to factor in the weather," says Kerry. Weather was projected out two weeks in advance, and once the shoot moved outside, Kerry received hourly updates. "We still took some scheduling hits," he says. "We lost complete days to snowstorms. Fortunately, we were prepared with a tight script that helped us get exactly what we needed from the outdoor shoots."

Did all the hard work pay off? The show was released Nov. 1, and has seen its in-bound call volume run 30 percent to 40 percent higher than initial estimates. In an industry forecasting a 10 percent downturn in orders, Dynastar's fortunes are taking an uphill run.