Designing More Aesthetic Movie Promotional Material

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DESIGNING MORE AESTHETIC MOVIE PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the use of creative design in the development of publicity for the motion picture while (at the same time) not sacrificing the billing of performers credits and "star appeal" which are necessary to sell the motion picture to the American public. In this project I have taken the film "Ocean's 11" and re-designed the poster, the pressbook (the book containing photos and spot ads for news media, etc.) and three lobby displays, which demonstrate that the motion picture can be sold to the public by using creative design and good taste, as stated in my original thesis proposal of March 6th, 1967.
Calendar of Work (research).

Proposal submitted
March 6, 1967 approved March 13, 1967

March 17 - Began design of poster after securing material from Warner Brothers

April 20 - Design of poster completed

April 23 - Started pressbook design

May 15 - Completed pressbook

May 18 - Started work on display unit for lobby (model)

May 25 - Completed work on three lobby displays
SYNOPSIS

It is the week before Christmas and a strangely assorted group of men are being called together in a daring plan for a wholesale holdup of five Las Vegas gambling casinos on New Year's Eve. Originator of the plan is Spyros Acebos (AKIM TAMIROFF), a racketeer, who is a man of ideas. The man he has picked to carry out the Las Vegas job is Danny Ocean (FRANK SINATRA). Danny lives by his wits. In World War II he was a sergeant in charge of a battalion of Commandos in the 82nd Airborne Division. He rounds up ten of his former war buddies to help pull the caper. These are: Sam Harmon (DEAN MARTIN), who plays the piano and sings in cocktail lounges for a living; "Curly" Steffens (RICHARD BENEDICT), a former racing car driver; Jimmy Foster (PETER LAWFORD), a playboy who lives like a millionaire on his mother's money; Tony Bergdorf (RICHARD CONTE), a master electrician just released from a short prison term; Josh Howard (SAMMY DAVIS, JR.), a former professional baseball player who has lost all but a few dollars of his barrowed money; "Mushy" O'Connors (JOEY BISHOP), an ex-prize fighter; Roger Corneal (HENRY SILVA), a former circus pitchman; Vince Messler (BUDDY LESTER), a motion picture stuntman; Peter Rheimer (NORMAN FELL), an explosive expert, and Louis Jackson (CLEM HARVEY), a rodeo rider.

Danny outlines the plan. They will hit five casinos simultaneously—The Sahara, Riviera, Desert Inn, Sands and Flamingo—exactly at midnight, New Year's Eve. There will be no gunplay. Everything will be done with military precision. A power tower will be blown up to black out the city. The emergency light circuits in the casinos will be short-circuited so that the doors to the money vaults will be opened when the switches are thrown. The loot will be stashed in garbage cans outside the casinos and picked up by Josh, who has a job driving a disposal truck. Danny sends a wire to his estranged wife, Bea (ANGIE DICKINSON), pretending he is seriously ill. Although she is afraid it is another of his many ruses to try to get them together again, she realizes she still loves him and comes to see him. They are reconciled but Adele Ekstrom (PATRICE WYMORE), one of Danny's former friends, shows up and accuses him of running out on her. To get even, she telephones Bea, who gives Danny an ultimatum—go with her to New York now, or stay out of her life forever. Danny can't divulge his plans to her, so Bea leaves him.

The group's plans are threatened when Foster's mother (ILKA CHASE) arrives with Duke Santos (CESAR ROMERO), a clever playboy-racketeer who is about to become her sixth husband. Santos suspects that Foster is involved in a secret plot. But the holdup comes off without a hitch. A few minutes later, however, with police closing in, Bergdorf suffers a heart attack, collapses and dies on the street in front of the Riviera. The men know that the police can seal off every avenue of escape from Las Vegas in less than three minutes. So they can do nothing but lie low and wait for a chance to get the loot out of town. Meanwhile, Santos has put two and two together and threatens to betray Danny and his men unless he is cut in. As the suspense mounts, an unexpected turn of events provides a most unusual ending to the story.
My main aim in producing a poster a pressbook and a lobby display for a motion picture is to show how attractive design can be used to attract the public eye and sell the movie. Actually this dressing up is not the main thing that sells a film, but star appeal. The names of the actors on the poster are of course of greatest interest to the moviegoer.

In doing this thesis I have merely tried to give motion picture promotional material a better look. The majority of material actually produced is aesthetically poor or barren. In America it seems that the graphics used in such areas as theatre are of a heavy handed nature and confusing to the viewer not only from a distance but up close as well. Movie posters and lobby displays seem, for the most part to have a dated look to them. I have tried to use a pure graphic symbol, in this case a roulette wheel, because the story takes place in Las Vegas. I have done the pressbook in black and white rather than color because most pressbooks are printed in black and white and are used by film companies to sell ads to newspapers and magazines. The symbol of the roulette wheel and the eleven hands around it symbolize the eleven men in the story “all together - loyalty among theives”, (see synopsis on page three). I chose green for the poster because that is the color of the roulette table. I changed the color for the lobby display to red white and black, because I felt that because of its size red white and black
would have a stronger impact on the viewer and more pulling power than green black and white, and red. I have also made sure that my designs don't sacrifice or overlap the necessary billing and credits.
A. SKETCHES FOR THE POSTER DESIGN
B. SKETCHES FOR THE LOBBY DISPLAY
C. PHOTOGRAPH OF THE POSTER
FRANK SINATRA
DEAN MARTIN
SAMMY DAVIS JR.
PETER LAWFORD

OCEAN'S 11
A LEWIS MILESTONE PRODUCTION
WITH ANGIE DICKINSON
JOEY BISHOP CESAR ROMERO
RICHARD CONTE PATRICE WYMORE
AKIM TAMIROFF ILKA CHASE
AND GUEST STARS
RED SKELTON AND GEORGE RAFT
MUSIC BY NELSON RIDDLE
PRODUCED AND DIRECTED BY LEWIS MILESTONE
PANAVISION 70°
TECHNICOLOR®

A SUPERB
ENTERTAINMENT
FEATURE
FROM
WARNER BROS.
Bibliography

1. Paul B. Ross publicity department WARNER BROTHERS. PICTURES for help in securing information and publicity materials.

2. Charles Glenn publicity and exploitation department 20th Century Fox Film Corporation for help in securing publicity materials.
Dear Mr. Crothers:

The film "Ocean's 11" is now in use for television and we are unable to provide you with a pressbook as requested in your letter of April 2. However, I am enclosing a television fact sheet which may serve your purposes.

If you require the full pressbook, I would suggest that you try the Library of the Performing Arts, New York Public Library, on Amsterdam and 66th Street. The Library of Performing Arts customarily microfilms many kinds of motion picture material, and may have just what you need.

Yours truly,

Paul B. Ross

Mr. David G. Crothers

PBR:vt
enc.
ELEVEN pals prepare to carry out what they consider a fool-proof plan to rob five Las Vegas gambling casinos at midnight on New Year's Eve.

THE CAST

FRANK SINATRA,.................. Danny Ocean
DEAN MARTIN,...................... Sam Harmon
SAMMY DAVIS, JR................... Josh Howard
PETER LAWFDORF,................... Jimmy Foster
ANGIE DI\'-DON,..................... Beatrice Ocean
Richard C\'-te..................... Anthony Bergdorf
Cesar Romero...................... Duke Santos
Patrice Wymore.................... Adele Ekstrom
"Mushy" O\'-Connors.............. Spyros Acebos
Henry Silva....................... Roger Corneal
Ilka Chase......................... Mrs. Restes
Buddy Lester...................... "Curly" Steffens
Richard Benedict................ "Curly" Massler
Jean Willes....................... Mrs. Bergdorf
and guest stars
Red Skelton....................... Himself
George Raft....................... Himself


Reviews: "...a fun picture...smooth, sure acting of the redoubtable pros and a surprise ending that is outlandishly funny...a deluxe production." (N.Y. Daily News ***\frac{1}{2}) -- "...slick entertainment. The story is ingenious, the actual locales provide colorful atmosphere and the cast, which consists not only of numerous principals but guest stars as well, is an imposing one." (N.Y. Journal-American) -- "...generally amusing -- indeed, very funny in spots -- the dialogue is cleverly written and the roles are deftly and colorfully played." (N.Y. Times) -- "...a film bursting with both laughter and dramatic tension." (N.Y. World-Telegram & Sun) -- "...one of the most engrossing, tastefully handled and colorfully photographed suspense pictures that ever had us glued to the seat." (Hy Gardner, N.Y. Herald-Tribune).

Released: 1960 Running time: 127 minutes TV status: Off-network