

IN-STORE

Four Seasons Budapest channels charm of Melissa McCarthy, Jude Law

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Scene of Melissa McCarthy before a scene from Spy

By JOE MCCARTHY

Four Seasons Hotel Gresham Palace in Budapest, Hungary, is leveraging the excitement surrounding the upcoming action-comedy movie "Spy" through a themed package that includes scene reenactments.

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Luxury Daily

Spy features Melissa McCarthy and Jude Law in what some critics hail as Ms. McCarthy's breakout role. For the same reason that countries solicit director Woody Allen to shoot a film in their cities or New York subsidizes the film and television industries, being featured in this film can cast an enduring charm over Four Seasons Budapest, drawing tourists from all over.

"Much of the movie takes place in Budapest as well as many scenes within and around the hotel," said Drew Clarke, director of sales at **Four Seasons Grisham Palace**, Budapest. "So we are aligning with the movie because our hotel is one of the characters so to speak.

"We have reviewed the footage of the hotel and believe that the production company has portrayed the beauty of the hotel very well and we want people to know which hotel it is in Budapest," he said.

"Tourists in general like to visit places with which they may be familiar, whether they've read about it or have seen in on the big screen. Similar to why people visit Universal Studios in Hollywood, there is a general interest to visit locations where well-known movies have been filmed. As we expect this movie to be a summer blockbuster, we're inviting guests to a little more than just staying in the hotel. We'd like to invite them to learn more about the process, see the suites that not very many people see, and even receive a little extra amenity that only those booking the package can receive."

Undercover

Spy was directed by Paul Feig, who also directed "Bridesmaids," "Freaks and Geeks" and the upcoming "Ghostbusters III" movie.

Mr. Feig resided at Gresham Palace for six months while shooting the film and situated a good portion of the scenes on the property's premises or nearby.



Szechenyi Bath in Budapest

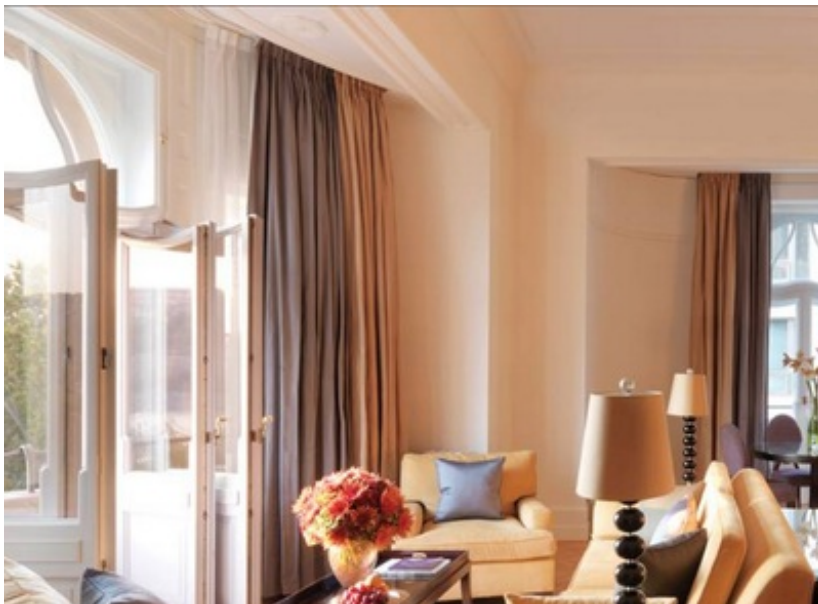
In a statement, Mr. Feig said, "My wife and I are avid readers of travel magazines and in every magazine they are constantly doing the 100 best hotels in the world lists and consistently the Gresham Palace is always in the top five of so many lists, so it was always on our radar for that."

In fact, Spy was the first movie to receive permission to film in the palace after it opened in 2004.



From movie poster for Spy

The lobby, Park Suite, Royal Suite and driveway all receive exposure in the film.



Park Suite at Four Seasons Budapest

Movie lovers and all interested guests can now reserve the "Spy in Budapest" package to learn more about the film and do spy-like activities.

The package features a spy-themed welcome activity, a behind-the-scenes tour of the property and several locations where the film takes place and daily American breakfast.

Employees privy to the film's development will be able to point out and explain how various scenes manifested.

An "escape room" experience can be added to the package for additional charges.

"Since the package is related specifically to this movie, it stands out," Mr. Clarke said. "There aren't many movie related packages out there and especially within Budapest.

"So just by design, it definitely stands out compared to packages that offer 3rd night free or breakfast included," he said.

Favorite pastime

Luxury brands are likely to benefit more from increased exposure created by product placement in feature films than from brand sponsored events that reach a narrow number of consumers.

Branded sponsorships are common among luxury brands looking to attract consumers through a shared hobby or cause. Product placement in feature films, on the other hand, allows the brand to be viewed on a platform likely to resonate with more prospective consumers ([see story](#)).

Some brands recognize the huge boosts such partnerships can provide.

For instance, German automaker Audi is highlighting its superhuman capabilities by partnering with Marvel Studios for the release of the new "Avengers: Age of Ultron" film.

The highly anticipated film is the sequel to "The Avengers," which topped box office charts in 2012 with the highest grossing opening weekend ever, and is expected to do as well, if not better than its predecessor. The Avengers: Age of Ultron will feature a number of different Audi vehicles, giving the brand an incredible amount of exposure among a diverse consumer base ([see story](#)).

However, as Mr. Rains points out, alignment with a film can be tricky because reception is always uncertain.

"Film-based promotions are definitely a gamble for hotels," said Taylor Rains, managing partner of [Flugel Consulting](#), Charleston, SC. "So much of the promotion's success hinges on factors outside of the brand's control. The pre-promotion of the film, general reception and interest, popularity, etc.

"In order to capitalize on a promotion like this, a brand needs to make it broad enough to function independent of the film itself," he said. "For the Spy in Budapest package, for example, the property could structure the package as more film based, focusing on the industry as a whole in Budapest and highlighting this most recent film.

"Or they could go more thematic in nature, using the film to structure a fun spy-related experience for guests."

Final Take

Joe McCarthy, staff reporter on Luxury Daily, New York

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