

AUTOMOTIVE

Mercedes shows the dramatic power behind the waves of Portugal

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Mercedes' Source of Life film

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German automaker Mercedes-Benz is putting a poetic twist on branded films in its latest documentary that follows a professional surfer as he attempts to break a world record.

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Sebastian Steudtner, brand ambassador for Mercedes and professional surfer, is known for seeking out the traitorous surfs in hopes to hold the world record for the biggest wave. Mercedes' Source of Life film is docu-style video that follows the surfer for an entire year, but its cinematography and voice over makes the feature seem as if it were art.

"So, in this instance, Mercedes-Benz is not showcasing engineering excellence or panache and sophistication," said Bob Prosser, CEO of Auto World Marketing, San Diego, CA. "No, they are selling a rugged lifestyle targeting an age group and trying to associate adventure with one of their luxury SUVs.

"In my opinion, I don't think it will resonate," he said. "The backstory of the film is preparing to surf big waves a very risky business. I have lived most of my life in a small California surf town.

"In all my years I personally have never known or witnessed surfers the age of the man in the film with the money and the desire to drive something to identify themselves with a new, shiny Mercedes-Benz SUV. Not saying those people do not exist, perhaps the professionals surfers do, but most people I know that age would rather drive a vehicle that fits their lifestyle."

Mr. Prosser is not affiliated with Mercedes-Benz, but agreed to comment as an industry expert. Mercedes-Benz was reached for comment.

Surfing waves

Luxury brands are known for their connection and integration with art. Mercedes' latest film keeps its brand aligned with that concept through its artful approach.



Surfer Sebastian Steudtner trying to break a world record

Produced by photographer and filmmaker Alex Laurel and co-directors Michel and Nico, Source of Life follows the surfer throughout his training. Footage shows Mr. Steudner training in Hamburg, Germany and surfing some of the world's largest waves in Nazar, Portugal.

Throughout the film a voice can be heard that the audience can assume is Mr. Steudner. He discusses a dream he had about two waves crashing, spoken as if reading poetry.

Footage of powerful waves churning up the tide is shown as well as images of the surfer in the water and waking up in the morning. A Mercedes is shown driving through rainy streets.

It is quickly realized that water is a theme running through the film. More footage of Mr. Steudner is shown in the ocean as well as him in the shower.

As the footage goes on his commentary continues with phrases such as, "I need the love," until he repeats his opening line, "I dreamed I saw two giant waves exploding on the shore."



Mercedes source of life video

News reports of a hurricane are then played, interspersed with footage of high winds, massive waves crashing and a Mercedes driving through flooded water.

His poetic commentary starts again and we begin to see the surfers training journey.

Viewers can see Mr. Steudner running, training with ropes and other gym equipment and competing in martial arts.

The surfer can then be seen walking through an airport to Portugal and walking with his surfboard. The film ends with Mr. Steudner riding the world's biggest waves that would make a normal beachgoer terrified.

Mercedes' video

Mercedes marketing

The auto brand has worked with Mr. Steudner and other surfers in the past. Mercedes even created custom Mercedes-branded surfboards for Mr. Steudners.

Mercedes also previously shadowed pro surfer and filmmaker Mikey DeTemple for its video that showed its E-Class model in an active light and attract sporty urban consumers.

The video, from Mercedes's mb! magazine, was titled "Surf's Up: From NYC to Montauk with the E-Class," and followed Mr. DeTemple as he traveled from Manhattan to the Long Island coast, where he surfs. By showing its car in use, Mercedes is able to show potential consumers how the product would fit into their lifestyles ([see more](#)).

Surfing is not the only subject from Mercedes that strays away from automotive. The brand is often delving into fashion and other initiatives.

For instance, German automaker Mercedes-Benz continued its mission to align its brand with fashion, even after ending its New York Fashion Week sponsorship, with a new collective that taps a range of talented names for the sake of art.

The #MBCollective fashion story for 2017, titled "Generation Now, Generation Next," focuses on the differing generations as characters, instead of just themes. Mercedes' first chapter features music artists M.I.A. and Tommy Genesis alongside its Concept EQ vehicle in a film shot by Luke Gilford, modeling fashion from emerging talent in the industry ([see more](#)).

"It would seem in today's crowded luxury market, the marques that have enjoyed years of prosperity based on their quality and luxury attributes are no longer enough to keep the marketplace happy," said Steward Levine, automobile consultant at [Driveanything.com](#). "This is evidenced by sales data showing Tesla making large inroads into the luxury car segment because it's not only luxury, but nature friendly and offers performance as well.

"The audience once enjoyed by luxury car manufacturers is becoming younger," he said. "Younger buyers do not necessarily base their choice of vehicle on reputation alone.

"They are looking for more environmentally friendly cars, and cars that, while they are defined as luxury by their very nature, now have to fit into the younger buyer's lifestyle. They also value more free time to pursue active and environmentally friendly hobbies making it essential the car they drive does the same."

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