

AUTOMOTIVE

Mercedes empowers drivers with voice command ahead of the Big Game

February 1, 2019



Mercedes brings its A-Class to Atlanta for the Super Bowl. Image credit: Mercedes-Benz

By SARAH RAMIREZ

German automaker Mercedes-Benz is enlisting some famous faces for its upcoming spot during the Super Bowl.

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With an audience of hundreds of millions expected to tune in to the event, Mercedes is capitalizing on the reach by featuring its most accessible offering, the A-Class sedan. Taking place on Feb. 3, this year's national championship game is of extra importance for the automaker since it is the title sponsor for the host stadium in Atlanta.

"This is only the fifth Super Bowl ad we've ever done as a brand," said Mark Aikman, general manager of marketing services at [Mercedes-Benz USA](#), Atlanta. "[The A-Class] is also the gateway to the brand."

"This is an incredibly important product for us [and] the timing of the Super Bowl seemed to work perfectly," he said. "It is one of the mega-moments to get out this super important message that we have a new gateway to the brand."

Voice command

Mercedes' "Say The Word" campaign focuses on the A-Class and its in-vehicle command center, Mercedes-Benz User Experience (MBUX). The voice-activated artificial intelligence technology allows drivers to give the vehicle demands using the words "Hey Mercedes."

The film begins with a male protagonist at a restaurant watching PGA champion Rickie Fowler compete in a golf tournament. He whispers, "Make the putt," and Mr. Fowler's swing is successful.

A man discovers his affinity for voice command with the help of Mercedes in the automaker's Super Bowl ad

As the man leaves the restaurant, he successfully instructs a crossing signal to turn.

Embracing his new powers of voice control, he passes a policewoman leaving a parking ticket and wishes for the ticket to be torn up. The wind complies with his command.

The protagonist continues to use his powers for good, reuniting a lost cat with its family and having an ATM "make it rain" cash for pedestrians.

At an opera production, he says, "Change the music," and the singer transforms into Atlanta-born rapper Ludacris, who begins to perform his classic "Stand Up."

Born Christopher Bridges, Ludacris and Mr. Fowler both have longstanding relationships with Mercedes.

Other fixtures of popular culture make appearances, such as film's Lassie and famous whale Free Willy that appeal to different generations. In one scene, an animated Wile E. Coyote rides a rocket into the man's living room after he suggests he uses the rocket while watching the iconic cartoon.



Atlanta-born rapper Ludacris makes a cameo in the new ad. Image credit: Mercedes-Benz

"If only everything in life listened to you like your new A-Class," a voiceover says as the man steps into a sleek red sedan.

Inside the car, the protagonist asks the Mercedes to change the color of the dashboard lights and make the car cooler. He then asks the A-Class to play his music, and Ludacris' "Stand Up" begins again as he drives through downtown Atlanta.

"Mercedes needs drivers to take a second look at the brand and take the vehicle for a drive and see how it can make life less stressful," said Lauren Fix, automotive expert, the [Car Coach](#), Lancaster, NY. "This commercial says that the brand is up with technology and current culture."

A-Class and Atlanta

Mercedes has been touting both its entry-level A-Class and its connection to Atlanta in its recent efforts.

The automaker is inviting consumers to explore its latest models in an Atlanta experience center. The center will be open during the Super Bowl festivities.

Located at Phipps Plaza, the Brand Center will offer consumers the chance to virtually test-drive vehicles and interact with Mercedes' newest in-car technology. This most recent opening follows a series of Brand Centers in other markets, which have helped to drive traffic to dealerships.

While consumers cannot buy vehicles from the store, previous pop-ups in markets such as Chicago, Miami and Philadelphia have led to more than 600 eventual purchases based on referrals from Brand Centers ([see story](#)).

Mercedes has also partnered with ESPN reporter Maria Taylor to host a mini-series on the sports network's YouTube channel, titled "A-Class Bucket List." The series will travel the country to give sports fans an in-depth look at its A-Class model and how driving can lead to fun opportunities.

By choosing to partner with Ms. Taylor, who primarily covers college football, Mercedes is bringing its A-Class model to regions many luxury brands neglect ([see story](#)).

"The Super Bowl is going to be inside the Mercedes-Benz Stadium here in Atlanta so we wanted something that's pretty incredible," Mercedes' Mr. Aikman said. "Everyone knows Atlanta is [Ludacris's] town and we felt that would be a really extra special wink to the Super Bowl being inside Mercedes-Benz Stadium."