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MIRANDA LAMBERT COTTONS TO COTTON CAMPAIGN

Rising country star Miranda Lambert, who has sold millions of albums on the success of in-your-face songs "Kerosene" and "Gunpowder & Lead," has gone cottony soft.

Lambert, along with R&B star Jazmine Sullivan and singer/actress Zoëy Deschanel, has become the face of Cotton Inc.'s revival of its "The Touch, The Feel of Cotton" campaign, originally launched in 1989. The melody, which was popularized by Richie Havens and Aaron Neville and retired in 2001, has been resurrected to reach an audience of 18- to 24-year-old women.

According to **Kevin McKiernan**, president/CEO of the agency **Creative License**, the 25-year-old Lambert's image as a sort-of bad girl—in "Kerosene" she burns down a cheating boyfriend's house and in "Gunpowder & Lead" she waits for an abusive mate with a loaded gun—is just fine with Cotton, the research and promotion company for U.S. cotton growers and importers. "It's nice that Miranda has some edges," he says. "She is so down to earth and fashionable and cool."

Separate TV commercials, created by DDB New York, began airing in April as part of the "Fabric of My Life" campaign, which includes print and Internet components. The one-year deal with a second-year option was negotiated by Endeavor, Lambert's commercial agency for brand partnerships.

Lambert admits to being a bit anxious about recording such a well-known song. "I wanted it to be great because Aaron Neville's work was amazing," she says, "and you're going to be com-

pared whether you like it or not."

Lambert's version of the song, along with Sullivan's and Deschanel's, can be heard on the Web site thefabricofourlives.com, which includes artist bios, album artwork and links to iTunes. "It's as much of a showcase for the artist as it is for cotton," says **Aatish Patel**, director of music and talent at **Creative License**. The site also has free downloads of full-length versions of the cotton song.

The campaign's digital component interested Marion Kraft, Lambert's manager at Strategic Artist Management. "Miranda's fans and contemporaries are women 18-34 and they are really active on the Internet," she says.

Lambert, who has sold 1.7 million copies combined of her first two albums, according to Nielsen SoundScan, is working on her third set, tentatively scheduled for a September release. The first single, "Dead Flowers," is No. 46 on Billboard's Hot Country Songs chart. She's currently touring with superstar Kenny Chesney.

Kraft also likes the fact that Lambert's deal doesn't restrict what she can and can't wear. "They understand that a girl from Texas is going to wear a leather belt and leather cowboy boots from time to time," Kraft says. "They didn't tell her, 'You have to wear cotton socks from now on.' The deal is easy for her because she already wears cotton."

Lambert agrees. "Cotton stands for everything I stand for," she says. "It's home-grown, it's real. A large percentage of cotton is grown in my home state, Texas."

Both Kraft and Lambert were impressed with Cotton's interest in authenticity. "We didn't



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have to make Miranda something that she wasn't," Kraft says. "They built the ads and the creative around her."

According to **Patel**, "We didn't want anyone to look like they were shilling for cotton. It was about a more natural, organic fit with the brand."

Kraft believes that deals with a strong promotional component are becoming more important. "Ideally you want to say, 'It's a great song and everybody should love it,' but these days you need a little more oomph to get to the masses," she says. "We all need a little help from brand partners that have deeper pockets."

—Ken Tucker, Nashville