

Behind the Work

Walmart and Creative License Take Holiday Campaigns to the Next Level with Iconic IPs and Star-Studded Talent

Creative License
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The leading global entertainment licensing firm reveals how they combined pop culture nostalgia with cutting-edge branded entertainment for new Walmart holiday campaigns



*It's no secret that Walmart likes to go big for the holiday season. Last year, the retail giant made headlines for **reuniting the cast of Mean Girls for an iconic Black Friday campaign**. This creative would not have been possible without the help of global entertainment licensing firm, Creative License, who facilitated the license of not only the film's IP but also the leading talent in the spot (Lindsay Lohan, Amanda Seyfried, Lacey Chabert, Missy Elliott) and music (Missy Elliott's "Pass That Dutch").*

This year, for Christmas, Walmart has upped the ante with multiple storylines across two campaigns: 'Deals of Desire' and 'OMG Moments'. These campaigns are redefining branded entertainment, with IP licenses from iconic shows and films like Gilmore Girls, Crazy Rich Asians, Love Jones, and SpongeBob.

Speaking with Creative License founder Kevin McKiernan, president Aatish Patel, SVP Graham Micone and director of music and talent Leah Kahan, LBB finds out about the dynamic strategy behind licensing these properties, and what went into negotiating multiple talent deals for festive moments inspired by iconic entertainment copyright.

LBB> What did you learn from last year's hugely successful Mean Girls campaign, and how did those lessons inform the strategies for 'Deals of Desire' and 'OMG Moments'?

Graham> With other "Mean Girls" size campaigns under our belts we have become more efficient with time and process, while keeping our eyes on the creative and budget. There's always a solution to every problem and logistic if you are relentless in turning over every stone on the hunt for a creative and economic solution. Last year's Mean Girls' holiday campaign was so well received that Walmart knew they had to go even bigger.



LBB> Creative collaboration is the key to campaigns like these. How does Creative License work alongside Walmart's internal creative teams and other partners to ensure the licensing elements, talent, and overall vision come together seamlessly?

Leah> Constant strategic communication is key. We integrate at the beginning, making sure we understand the creative vision and strategies for multiple paths to success. Every project runs differently – creative flexibility and responsiveness allows us to overdeliver for our agency/brand clients.

LBB> How does Creative License approach the process of licensing such well-known IPs?

Aatish> We set out to create an environment where the IP partners become invested in the success of the campaign vision. We turn our IP and studio licensors into partners by developing creative alternatives that the clients resonate with. This allows us to have choices and leverage.

LBB> The Gilmore Girls spot seems to be a standout in the campaign. Can you share some of the key creative decisions that brought this iconic spot to life in a way that would resonate with both long-time fans and new audiences?

Leah> The Gilmore Girls spot was a standout, and for good reason! Our brand and agency partners knew that creative decisions like reuniting beloved characters Luke and Lorelai would evoke a massive reaction from longtime fans. Walmart are incredibly inspiring clients and while they often charge us with delivering the impossible, the collective brand/agency/Creative License team work seamlessly from that creative inception through ink on contracts and successful production shoots.

The agency creatives have a knack for tapping into popular culture. This scene in particular was crafted to celebrate the show's timeless appeal, ensuring it connected with die-hard fans while also engaging new audiences.



LBB> In addition to licensing IP, talent negotiation plays a major role in campaigns like this. Can you walk us through your process of securing talent like Lauren Graham and Walton Goggins, and what makes these partnerships special for the brand?

Aatish> Many factors come into play like talent availability, fee, and market value. It's our job to manage all that in such a manner so the creative is paramount and yet there are backups at every step of the process. We have 10K hours under our collective belts and have a massive array of tools for solving every imaginable problem for everyone from procurement, to agency creatives, to C suite.

LBB> And finally, how does Creative License's unique position as an independent firm give you the flexibility to approach these campaigns differently than larger, more traditional agencies?

Kevin> We are seen as "best in class" in our realm of celebrity, popular music, and IP. We believe being the best at what we do translates to the level of success, successful projects and clients who choose to work with us. By not only working harder on our specific focused marketing services, we work smarter too. It's a natural byproduct of the collective 10,000 hours each member of the team has accumulated over the past 25 years.

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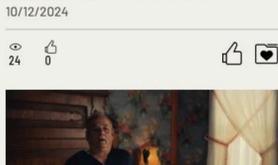
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