

grunt**media**

Pre-roll Concept Addendum

In 2005 podcasting was a new concept and an even newer industry. There were not many ways a podcast producer could generate revenue from their shows. After I published the first few episodes of videogrunt, I was approached by YouTube, then a brand-new startup company, who wanted me to post my shows with them, and they had this rev-share idea of a “pre-roll” ad that would play before it started. I didn’t want my audience to deal with interruptive advertising, so I didn’t take up their offer.

But from the onset of the company I was thinking how I could attract sponsorship, but on my own terms. Stand-alone ads were the old way of doing business, but I found it jarring to experience an ad with one kind of look and tone and then transition to the actual program. Audio podcasters took the cue from some radio programs, especially talk radio, where the on-air talent would make a mild shift in their program and then seamlessly read the ad in their same voice. The advertiser trusted the host to maintain a consistent brand image so that the association with the talent would remain a positive one. My question was how could I do something similar but with a video program?

As pre-roll advertising was such a drag, I decided to satirize this directly by putting a fake pre-roll ad baked into the intro of each show. From my digging around in material that was in the public domain (thank you, archive.org) I found this hilarious and cynical take on advertising that was produced by a subversive comedy group back in the early ‘60s. I ran this clip in full on episode one of videogrunt. Then for all subsequent shows, I used that same clip, keeping the same audio track and the same opening and closing shots, but changed up the video in between, making each fake ad different in some ways and consistent in others. It very quickly became a part of the vibe of videogrunt, and I opened every show with my own voice saying, “this program of videogrunt is sponsored by...” and then cut to the fake ad.



Program Format - Standard

Elapsed Time	Video	Audio
0:00	Public domain clip(s)	none
0:01	(cont.)	Craig “sponsored by” VO
0:03	“Your Product Here” card	Announcer 1 - “Your Product Here”
0:05	Various public domain clips	Announcer 2 - “Now for the first
0:16	“Your Name Here” card	Announcer 1 - “Your Name Here”
0:19	(cont.)	none
0:21	Craig standard camera*	Craig - “this is program x of vg, I’m
0:22	(cont. + MG rectangle - unique color)	(cont.)
0:23	(cont.)	Craig: scripted section A - opening
variable	Public domain clips & MG	Craig: scripted section B
variable	Craig standard camera	Craig: scripted section C
variable	Public domain clips & MG	Craig: scripted section D
variable	Craig standard camera	Craig: scripted section E - closing
variable	videogrunt.com closing MG	(cont. L-cut) + mouse click SF

- Craig standard camera - medium shot (1300mm), frontal, eyes on lens, no filters, full color (monochrome done in post.)

This was the format sheet that I created for the show. Note that I had about 19 seconds in the pre-roll section that was flexible for whatever imagery I wanted. There was no flexibility in the audio, which was always the uncut soundtrack from original satire.

This, I hoped, would give me a number of things. One, the fake ads were funny and short, so it wasn't a drag for my audience, it was a feature of the show. Two, they were fun to make. Three, my implying that videogrunts were sponsored by someone put out a subtle message that either I was good enough to have a sponsor, or certainly that I was willing to have one. Four, I wanted to create a rhythm in the format of show with an "ad" integrated into it, so when I started to get real sponsors, it wouldn't be too jarring to the audience.

Having established this format after a few shows, I then began to look for potential sponsors with the idea of "injecting" their logo and a product into my pre-roll. As the fake pre-roll was now a part of my branding, the deal I offered was that I would choose and edit the images of that pre-roll to thematically match what they were advertising, and replace the opening "Your Product Here" with an image of their product, and same at the end. This would all be subject to their approval before publishing. The advantage for the sponsor would be that they wouldn't have to produce anything, and if it fit their brand to align itself with such an unusual form of advertising, it would be appreciated by the audience.

In my production of videogrunts I used a set of new studio lights (the 'Ego') produced by the lighting company Lowell, and I really liked them. I thought this product would be a good fit for my audience, so I contacted Lowell and pitched this idea, and they agreed and asked for a mock-up. I chose footage that followed the theme of light and lighting, and they approved it.

A compilation of some of my published fake pre-roll ads, followed by the mock-up for Lowell, follows below on this website.