

September 2011

nacsonline.com

NACS
50 years

NACS®

The Association for Convenience & Fuel Retailing

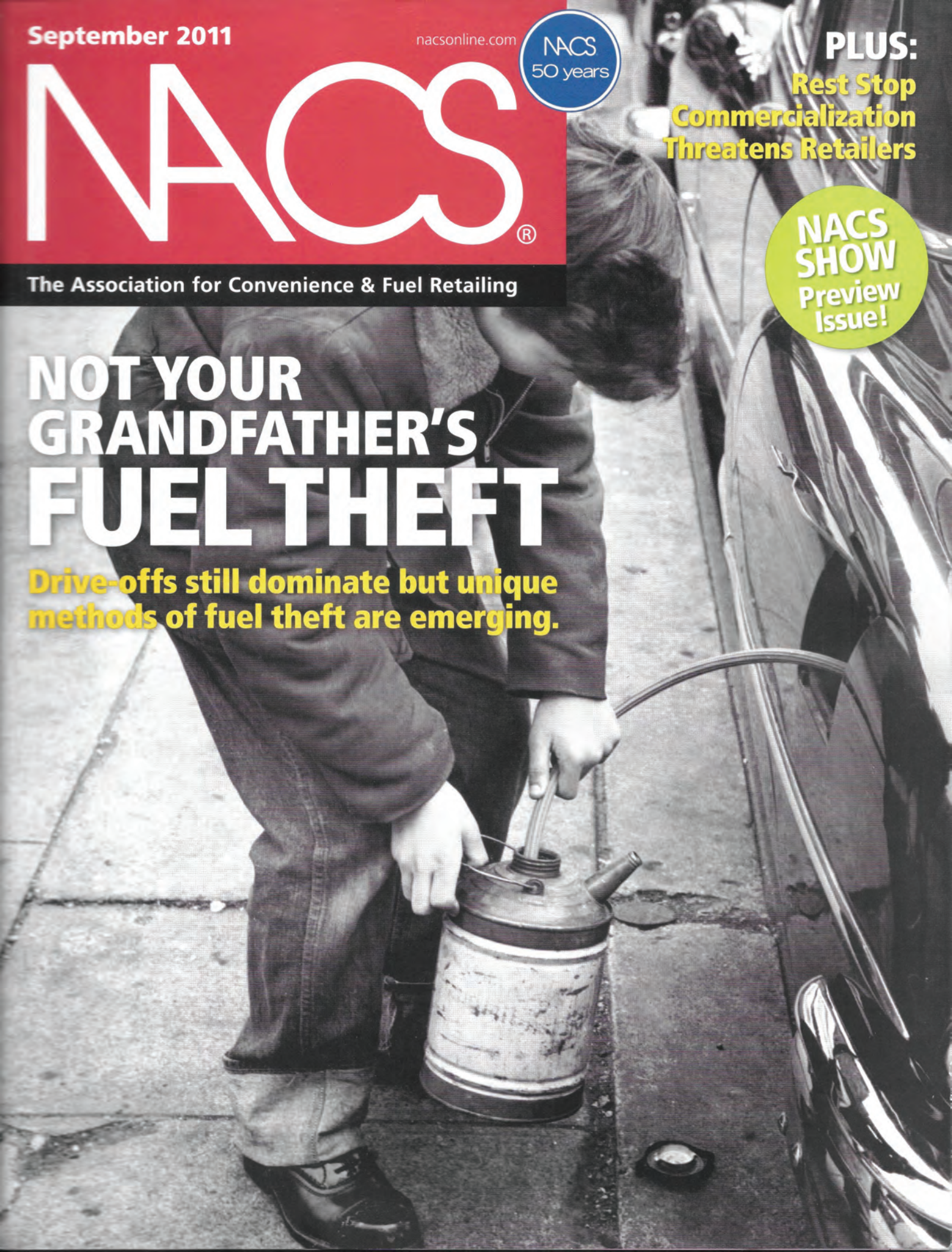
PLUS:

**Rest Stop
Commercialization
Threatens Retailers**

**NACS
SHOW
Preview
Issue!**

NOT YOUR GRANDFATHER'S FUEL THEFT

**Drive-offs still dominate but unique
methods of fuel theft are emerging.**



54 Commercializing rest areas could reduce nearby convenience store sales by as much as 46 percent.



FEATURES

38 Not Your Grandfather's Fuel Theft
Gas theft still plagues retailers but sophisticated new methods of stealing fuel bring additional threats.

48 Sole Proprietor
Don Sammons owns and operates a convenience store and gas station in Buford, Wyoming, the nation's smallest town, with Sammons as its sole resident.

54 Rest Area Monopoly
Commercialization of Interstate rest stops could lead to a domination by businesses located there.

64 The Greatest Movie Ever Sold
Sheetz took a risk pairing up with documentary filmmaker Morgan Spurlock and enjoyed unparalleled positive brand exposure.

70 Billboards
Reach on-the-go customers.

74 Create a NACS Show Playbook
A bit of strategic thinking and a few key onsite moves will take you and your team to NACS Show victory.

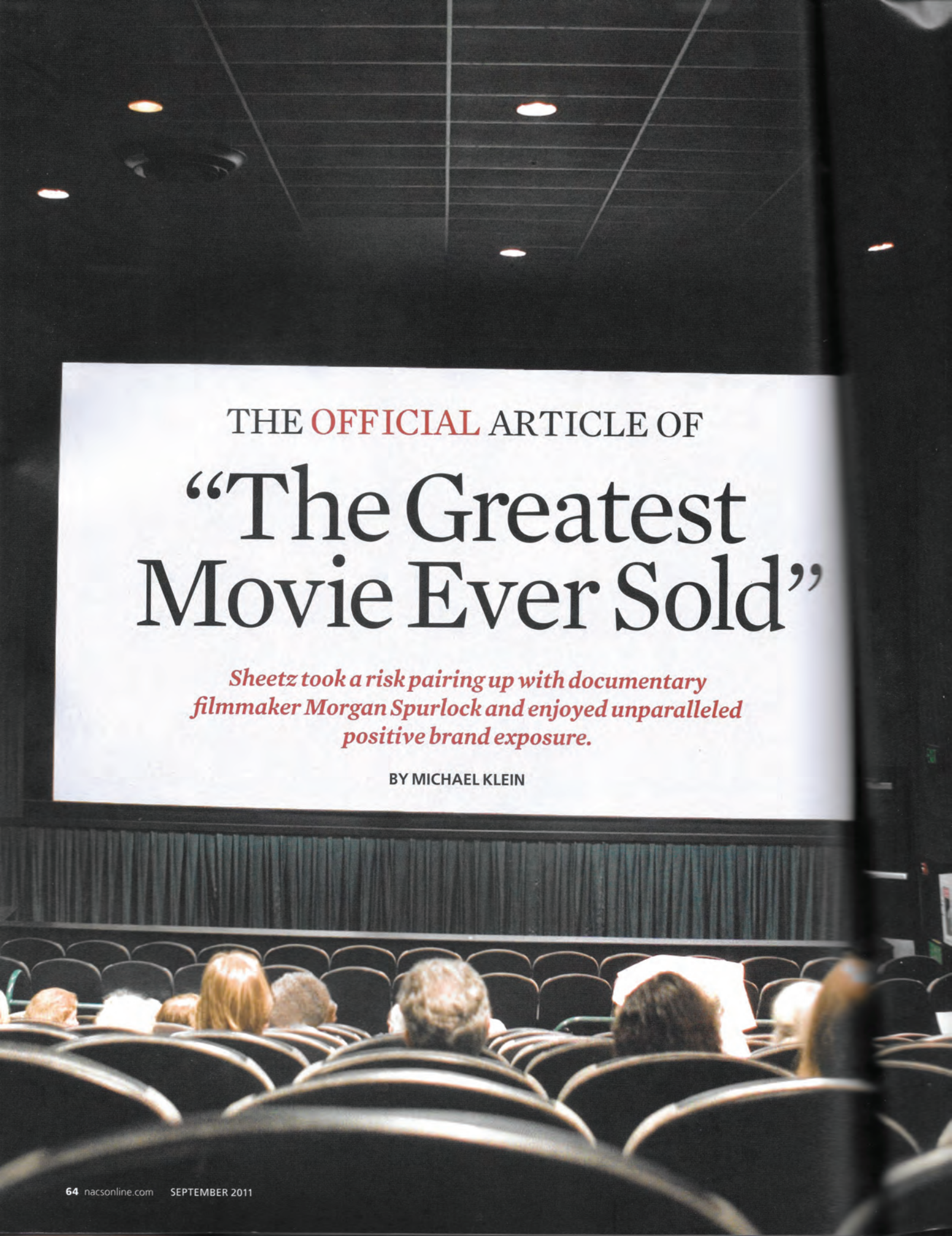
**NACS
SHOW
Preview**

ON THE COVER: GETTY IMAGES



PLEASE RECYCLE THIS MAGAZINE

The presence of an article in our magazine should not be permitted to constitute an expression of the association's view.



THE **OFFICIAL** ARTICLE OF

“The Greatest Movie Ever Sold”

Sheetz took a risk pairing up with documentary filmmaker Morgan Spurlock and enjoyed unparalleled positive brand exposure.

BY MICHAEL KLEIN



As consumers get bombarded with more and more advertisements — and to some extent become desensitized to them — advertisers are constantly seeking new, innovative and clever ways to make us think about their brands, without making us think about them trying to make us think about their brands. Enter the high stakes world of product placement and brand integration, and while the game is most often played in Hollywood, there's a new east coast c-store player: Sheetz. >>

ABOVE: A cutout of filmmaker Morgan Spurlock jazzes up one Sheetz location.



Top to bottom: Director Morgan Spurlock in his jacket (note Sheetz logo on left breast); Rock group OK Go penned the movie's theme song; Spurlock talks to music producer L.A. Reid about product placement; Sheetz branding features prominently in the movie.

Product placement is the practice of putting real products in films and television shows — sometimes quite prominently. There's always a Coke within easy reach of "American Idol" judges, and sometimes more subtly, the characters on "Fringe" all drive Fords.

Brand integration tends to be a little more aggressive — the products can become a part of the story and the product and movie will cross-promote each other. Sometimes it's such a perfect fit we don't notice or care — when an entire plotline on an episode of ABC's "Modern Family" revolved around characters attempting to get an iPad on the day they were released it worked because these characters absolutely would be geeked out about getting the new device.

But when I heard this past summer that Acura was the official car of "Thor," I couldn't help but wonder why the Thunder God, who can fly, would need an Acura — fuel injection or not. (As it turns out, Thor doesn't need an Acura, but the government agents who pursue him and his hammer do.)

Sheetz "Got It"

Product placement isn't new even for our industry. Some film historians claim the 1920 Buster Keaton short, "The Garage," featured Red Crown Gasoline because Standard Oil paid for the placement. Whether that's true or not, you can make the case that product placement and brand integration, when done right, creates "win-win" situations.

Advertisers create a commercial, or more accurately, a media impression, the viewer can't fast forward through; it's a part of the story or the setting. Budget-conscious filmmakers appreciate the props they get for free — and are usually even paid to use — and writers and actors have even said real products can help audiences connect with characters quickly.

Academy Award nominated documentary filmmaker Morgan Spurlock ("Super Size Me") decided to take a look at product placement and brand integration by making a movie that was completely funded by product placement and brand integration. The film, "Pom Won-

derful Presents: The Greatest Movie Ever Sold" is a funny, sobering, sometimes irreverent look behind the curtain and it features Sheetz early and often.

Spurlock says he approached about 500 companies to participate in the film. The proposal was simple: "Pay us and we'll feature your company or product in the film and we won't show any of your competitors."

Car companies and beverages seemed a natural fit for the movie. But a convenience store and gas station?

"We let big blockbusters like 'Iron Man' serve as our guide and so we knew we needed a collector's cup — we thought a convenience store would be perfect — people go there for everything," said Jeremy Chilnick, who wrote and produced the film with Spurlock.

Though Spurlock remembers going to Sheetz as a kid growing up in West Virginia he fully admits approaching other companies in the sector. But Sheetz "got it" first. "We approached many companies simultaneously," explained Chilnick. "But Sheetz stepped up and saw the opportunity where others did not."

Like all opportunities, it contained a fair amount of risk. Spurlock was asking for \$100,000 — not a small sum — but the real risk was to the Sheetz brand. "What if people say, 'Spurlock's an idiot, he thinks all Americans are idiots, and all the people who sponsored his film are idiots too'; what does that do to our brand?" asked Sheetz CEO Stan Sheetz during the pitch meeting that's in the documentary.

Of course all Spurlock could promise was that he wouldn't try to make them look stupid, and he hoped that by bringing the viewers in on it, they'd appreciate Sheetz and the other sponsors for being upfront about paying to get into the film. "We just decided, 'no guts, no glory,'" said Fred McConnell, director of brand development for Sheetz.

"You Can't Buy Publicity Like That"

The film, like most documentaries and independent films, grew quickly, adding theaters and markets as positive word-of-mouth spread. And the gamble has paid



“And while he was on the Kimmel show, Morgan reached behind him and put one of our collector’s cups right on Jimmy’s desk — and there it was on national TV.”

off. Amid a sea of big national brands such as Hyatt, JetBlue, Old Navy and Mini — there’s regional powerhouse Sheetz, attracting national attention specifically because they are not like the others.

Spurlock promoted the film wearing a custom-made suit jacket covered with the logos of the film’s 17 sponsors. And there’s Sheetz below his right lapel — next to Hyatt. Spurlock wore the jacket on Comedy Central’s “The Colbert Report” and ABC’s “Jimmy Kimmel Live.”

“And while he was on the Kimmel show, Morgan reached behind him and put one of our collector’s cups right on Jimmy’s desk — and there it was on national TV,” said McConnell. “Someone said to me, ‘You can’t buy publicity like that,’ and I said, ‘We just did.’”

The Sheetz logo was displayed for the entire segment — about five minutes — and considering the average cost of a national 30-second spot on Kimmel’s program is about \$15,000, Sheetz seems to be making money on the deal.

Sheetz’s participation in the film has also gotten the brand mentioned on National Public Radio; they’ve been in *The New York Times* four times and *The Wall Street Journal* twice — once with a photo of a giant banner with the Sheetz logo McConnell had made for the East Coast premiere. A premiere Spurlock agreed to hold in Altoona, Pennsylvania — Sheetz’s home city.

McConnell says other film companies

have since come knocking, and while he believes the company’s inclusion in “Pom Wonderful” is the best money they’ve ever spent, Sheetz will proceed carefully.

“It’s not just about the initial investment,” he said. “You need to make sure you have the resources — and the fortitude — to leverage your investment through additional marketing.”

They’ll also be mindful of protecting their brand. “A good opportunity is a good opportunity,” offered Chilnick. “But you need to make sure the project aligns with your brand.”

You do need to proceed carefully — product placement means giving up some control — it’s not a traditional ad where you dictate every aspect of it.

Sheetz lucked out pairing with Spurlock. They’re a good fit because they both have a reputation for confronting the unknown head-on and looking for opportunities in unexpected places.

But product placement isn’t for everyone. Two of the biggest laughs — and the single most memorable moment in the documentary — come at the expense of companies and people who just don’t get it. Both moments happen to have been filmed at a Sheetz, further elevating their ROI. One is an ironic man-on-the-street interview with a Sheetz customer standing in front of a pump; the other is a stinging barb from Spurlock aimed at a company that turned him down, delivered while he fills up his official car at a Sheetz.

I’d close by saying that’s publicity you can’t buy, but somehow, Sheetz bought it. **NACS**

Michael Klein is a freelance writer in Virginia and he would drink Coke even if the “American Idol” judges didn’t. “Pom Wonderful Presents: The Greatest Movie Ever Sold” is now available on DVD.



Top to bottom: For 60 days, Sheetz’ hometown of Altoona, PA, changed its name to the movie title — and received \$25,000 for doing so; filmmaker Spurlock and Sheetz President and CEO Stan Sheetz; the movie premiere.

Watch the Movie Preview!

To view a brief preview of “Pom Wonderful Presents: The Greatest Movie Ever Sold,” highlighting several memorable moments with Sheetz, scan the QR code:



Get the free mobile app at <http://gettag.mobi>