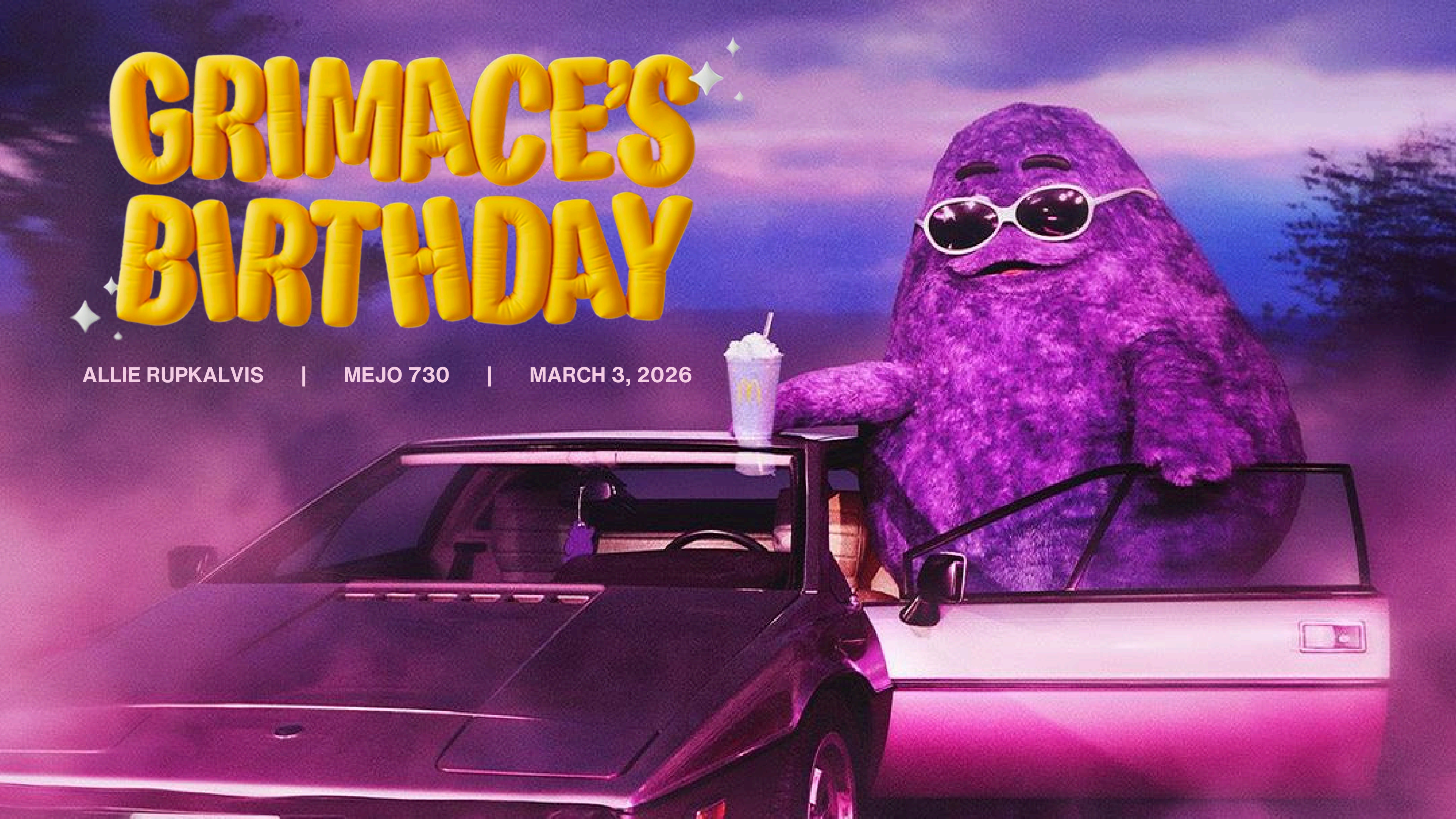


GRIMMACE'S BIRTHDAY

ALLIE RUPKALVIS | MEJO 730 | MARCH 3, 2026



Tf where we watching 2 years ago 🥺🙏...

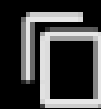


TikTok

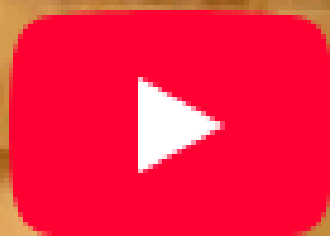
@blum...
© blum...



Grimace's Birthday Milkshake - McDonald's commercial



Copy link



Watch on  YouTube

WHO IS GRIMACE?

- Debuted 1971 as “Evil Grimace”
 - Rebrand 1972 as lovable Grimace
- Original member of the McDonaldland Adventure Crew
- Loves milkshakes, skateboarding, and throwing parties
- True Gemini (born June 12th)
- New York Mets fan



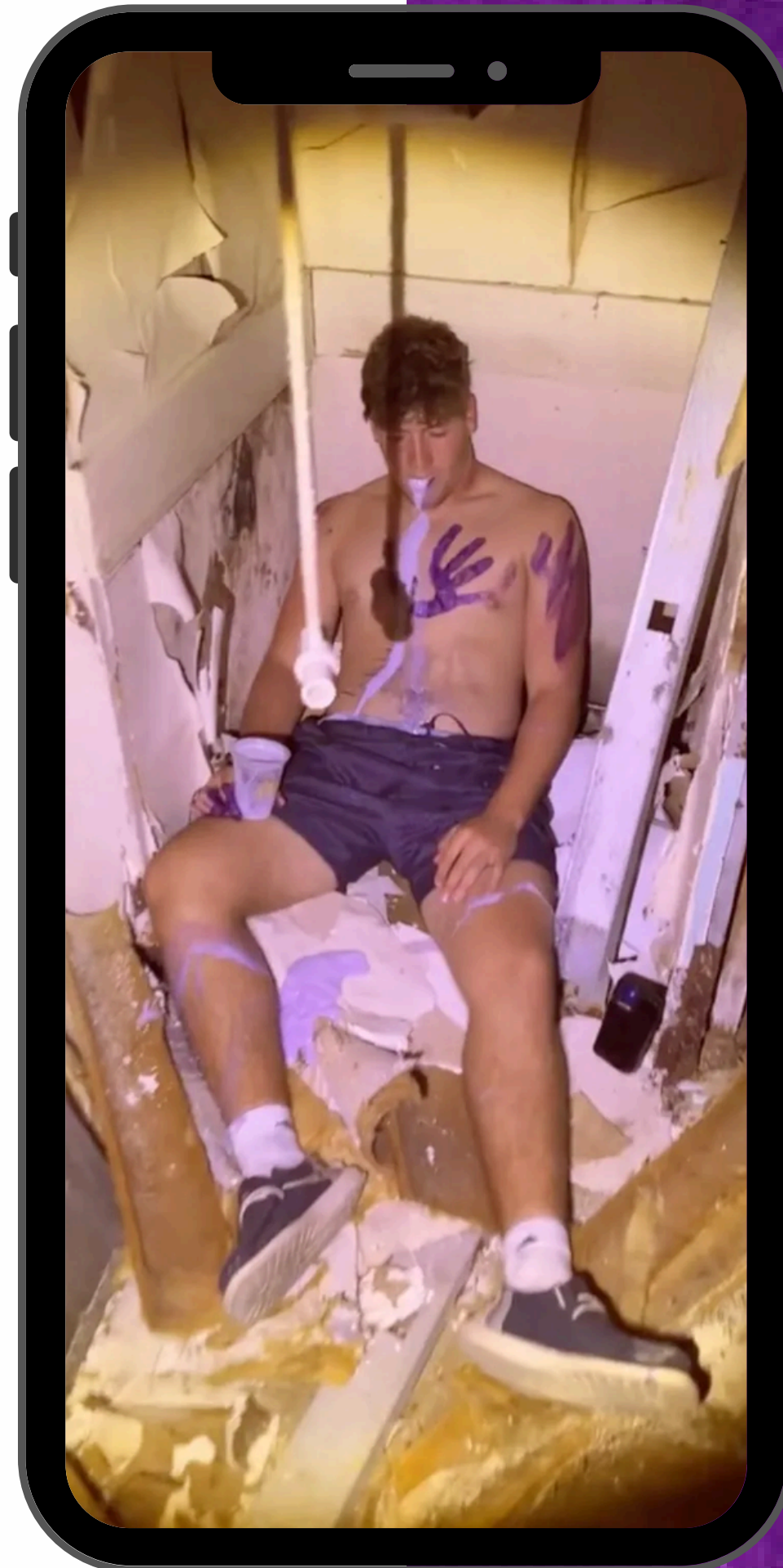
GRIMACE'S BIRTHDAY 2023

To celebrate Grimace's 52nd birthday, McDonald's and Wieden+Kennedy launched a limited-time Grimace Birthday Meal in early summer 2023.

The key feature of his meal was the bright purple Grimace Shake. It was visually new, bold, immediately recognizable, and easy to photograph and share.

Despite their initial efforts before Grimace's birthday, views were low. However, by June 19, 2023, the numbers spiked, and the Grimace Challenge was born.





THE GRIMACE CHALLENGE TREND

* WHAT WAS IT?

People on TikTok filmed themselves drinking the shake and then pretending to collapse in dramatic, horror-style scenes. This generated over 3.1 billion views under #grimaceshake and 856 million views under #grimacebirthday.

* WHY IT WORKED?

- The idea was very simple
- It left room for creativity
- It matched Gen Z and TikTok humor
- **McDonald's played into it**



McDonald's 
@McDonalds



meee pretending i don't see the grimace shake trendd



BUSINESS RESULTS

The campaign drove:

- **90%** brand lift
- **14%** revenue increase
- **11%** increase in global sales
- **17%** increase in customer spend vs regular McDonald's visitors

Additional consumer data showed:

- **22%** of buyers had not purchased McDonald's in the previous three months
- **63%** were new to frozen desserts at McDonald's
- **29.5%** said the Grimace Shake was their favorite McDonald's shake flavor



TARGETING EACH AUDIENCE

- **Segmented Platform Strategy:**
 - Lean into humor and trend participation on TikTok and Instagram while maintaining a warmer, family-centered tone on Facebook, in-store signage, and traditional media.
- **Reinforce Core Brand Values:**
 - Pair playful content with messaging that highlights quality, community, and shared experiences to reassure parents and long-time customers.
- **Multi-Generational Storytelling:**
 - Use nostalgia to connect with Gen X and Millennials while adapting tone and format to resonate with Gen Z, creating a campaign ecosystem where each audience feels seen.





MESSAGING CONSIDERATIONS

* **MAINTAIN BRAND IDENTITY**

Ensure that nostalgic humor does not undermine McDonald's long-standing family-friendly positioning. Messaging should reinforce warmth, familiarity, and inclusivity even when engaging in internet-driven trends.

* **BALANCE CONTROL AND RELEVANCE**

Allow space for user-generated content and platform-native humor while maintaining clear brand guardrails to avoid reputational risk.

* **LONG-TERM CHARACTER STRATEGY**

Position nostalgic mascots like Grimace as enduring brand assets, ensuring messaging extends beyond a single viral moment and supports sustained brand equity.

DISCUSS ME



Do you think the campaign would have worked as well without TikTok, or was social media the real driver of its success?

If the meme trend had taken a more negative turn, how quickly should McDonald's have stepped in? Where is the line between letting consumers participate and protecting the brand?

Do you think brands today need to give up some control in order to stay culturally relevant? Or is there a point where too much flexibility hurts brand consistency?

If you were on the McDonald's team, would you try to recreate something like this the next year, or would you let it stand as a one-time moment?

GRIMACE IN 2026

Grimace didn't disappear after the 2023 campaign.

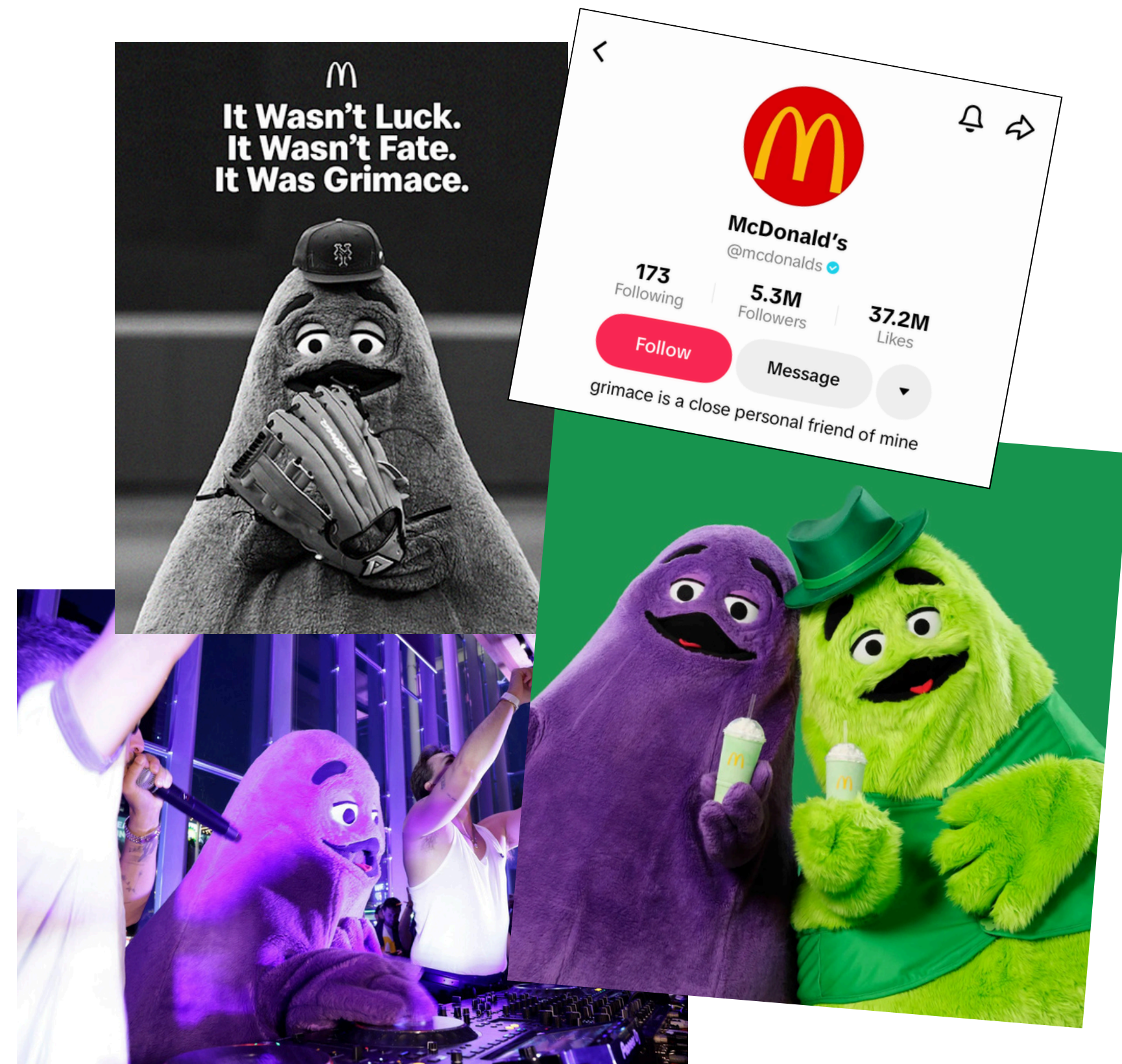
In 2024, he threw out the first pitch at a New York Mets game and quickly became an internet good luck symbol during their winning streak.

McDonald's also brought back Uncle O'Grimacey to promote the Shamrock Shake, marking his first appearance since the mid-1980s.

Grimace is now a regular presence on McDonald's social media. He appears in posts, replies, and seasonal content, functioning as an active brand personality.

He also DJs.

The birthday campaign may have sparked it, but Grimace is now part of McDonald's ongoing strategy.



**THANK
YOU**

