

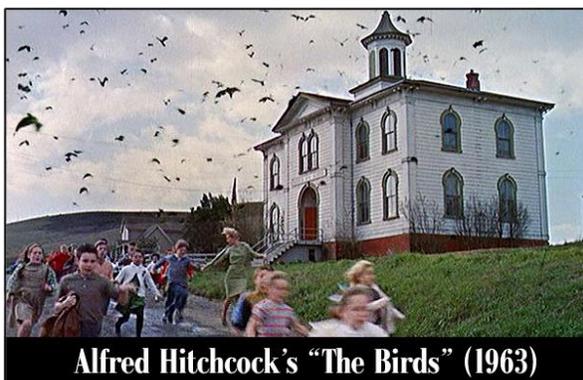
# The Audi Drone Ad — For The Birds?

By Chip Hartman



Who can forget those chilling attack scenes from Alfred Hitchcock's 1963 horror film, "The Birds?" Surely Audi didn't, and one of their ads from March, 2015, "The Drones," proves it.

In case you haven't seen the unedited version of the ad, [here it is](#). It's a clever spoof of Hitchcock's thriller in which a peaceful seaside town is invaded by flocks of malevolent birds.



Alfred Hitchcock's "The Birds" (1963)



Audi S6: "The Drones" (2015)

In the 63-second spot, there is a faithful adherence to some of the movie's more thrilling moments:

- In the ad, a huge swarm of rogue delivery drones hovers menacingly outside a corporate office building; nervous employees waiting to go home gather in the lobby as they are warned to walk slowly and quietly out to their cars.

- In the movie, it's a classroom of schoolchildren getting similar instructions from their teacher — while thousands of gulls and crows remain ominously perched on the telephone wires, the jungle gym and the picket fence.

The frenzy begins when humans disrupt the uneasy stillness of their winged visitors — with predictable results: Employees watch helplessly as drones dive-bomb their cars and crash into windshields. The kids in Hitchcock's film fare much worse as they get pecked and bitten relentlessly while running away in pure terror.

Of special interest in the ad is the Audi A6 driver who smugly watches his colleagues struggle with violent drone strikes then calmly evades attack by engaging Audi's advanced driving technologies.

In a near-slapstick escape scene, our hero outwits one hapless drone, causing it to collide with a highway overpass. Several others get out-maneuvered directly into a row of power lines. Just picture Wile E. Coyote in any of his most inglorious moments.

The premise of the Audi ad is: "Advanced technology doesn't have to be intimidating." The creative agency that designed the spot was [Venables Bell & Partners](#). It's clear that they wanted to communicate a subliminal-type, "what if?" message playfully suggesting that technology might someday run amok ... just as nature did in Hitchcock's film ... but Audi S6 technology will rise to the challenge.

What makes the storyline a bit more unsettling, however, is that "The Birds" was based on a true story that occurred not far from San Francisco just a few years before it was released. For a period of several weeks, terrified residents of Monterey Bay, CA watched seabirds crashing into buildings, cars and people. It was later discovered that the birds had ingested toxins from contaminated plankton causing intense disorientation and hallucinations.

Regardless of your beliefs about deviant wildlife or rogue technology, it's hard to dispute that the Audi S6 spot is a winner. It's light-hearted, thought-provoking and tells a good story, all in one tidy package. At the very least, it serves up the notion that Audi's advanced driving technologies might just offer a safer highway driving experience.

So is it necessary to have seen the movie to appreciate the ad? Not really, but it probably makes the spot more enjoyable when you can mentally associate the propellers of panic with the feathers of fear. It's a rare combination of storyline ingenuity, message impact, and upbeat fun that gives it the staying power of a standalone performance.

What are your thoughts about the Audi S6 ad? Agreements, disagreements and comments are welcome. If you choose to comment, please let me know if you have or have not seen the movie "The Birds."

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