

# O<sub>2</sub> “CHICKEN”

by JAKE SZYMANSKI



**CAVIAR**

# INTRODUCTION

Wow! I love this idea and the world you set up here. It's pretty brilliant to follow up the Be More Dog stuff you did with the tale of a chicken becoming less... chicken. It'll be a lot of fun coming up with this unlikely road trip and doing everything we can using the power of filmmaking to get the audience on the side of a real-life chicken.





# MESSAGE & STORY

When it comes to mobile phones, travellers like you and me constantly have to be aware of incurring obscene International Roaming charges everywhere. With O2's Travel Smart, there's a new digital service that gives you the freedom to go wherever you want with your phone.

That's a big deal, and you came up with a great story to communicate the message. It's the classic "hero's journey"; it's about going from a boring life of being timid and living within boundaries to brave and uninhibited and seeing the world. It's because the story is so simple that we're allowed so much freedom to put our twist on it.

Our twist is, of course, that our hero is a chicken.





# TONE

This twist creates a wonderfully irreverent tone for the spot, but I like how restrained you've written the script. A chicken on a road trip could go pretty broad – but what's cool here is that it's not a Pixar chicken, or a Muppet chicken – this is a real live, clucking and pecking chicken.

What I loved about our conversation was your adherence to there being “rules” for the chicken – it's not that the chicken all of a sudden anthropomorphizes and we're seeing him run around and do a bunch of human things; and it's not that he suddenly can fly, or has opposable thumbs, or has learned how to text. No, he's just a chicken that we really feel for, a chicken that's really seized the day and is getting a new perspective on life by getting out and about.

That's a nice dry and confident way to approach this, and the result will be a tone that is clever and witty without underlining and putting exclamation points all over the place.

# THE CHICKEN

My first preference is that this is a real live chicken (or, more likely, a few that look the same) that we film with an amazing wrangler. Chickens have such distinct ways of walking and looking and pecking, that it'd be hard to fake that. And I don't want the audience to have an out. If this looks faked, then we're going to lose some of the humor. We're trying to portray these unlikely things casually and dryly – if it looks digital, it makes it harder to achieve that charm. We've already approached Hollywood Animals, and they have a brood of chickens and a team of pro chicken wranglers ready and eager to 'shoo' and go roaming for us.

Now here's the rub: Chicken's brains are not large. Look, I'm not anti-chicken, I'm not trying to diminish chickens or hurt anyone's feelings... but they are not known for being able to grasp complex concepts like, "you're just so excited to see the world, your whole life has changed, isn't that awesome?" In other words, I'm not super certain we're going to be able to direct these chickens too well. So I'd look into an animatronic lead chicken, at least for a few key close-ups in our story. I've worked with this company called Legacy and they are pretty amazing, and their animals are almost creepy in how real-life they look. We'll be able to control things a lot better, obviously, with someone steering around our bird. My guess, subject to some pre-production tests, is that our answer is somewhere in between, using both an animatronic chicken and a real-life hero chicken. And, of course, there'll have to be some CGI stuff, some comps, some touch-ups, to polish it all up – but the more practical, the better. As we discussed on the phone, I'm leaning towards a white chicken.

I think it'd be good to distinguish him in some way from the pack, so if we open up in a coop, I might want him to be the only white chicken in a handful of tan ones, or have him be the one that's got spots – just something that makes him visually stand out just a little; I have this iconic image of a crisp white chicken against a beautiful blue sky in my head and it feels legendary. Obviously what's important is that we identify with him. With cats or dogs, this might be easier, as their personalities tend to pop out a little more. (For the record, I love the cat you cast in the first BE MORE DOG spot – he had the perfect amount of ennui) I think it's going to be hard to get that same instant connection with the chicken, so it becomes so much more important to film









# THE LOOK



We could shoot this by finding a lot of funny angles and laugh at a chicken being in a bunch of un-chicken situations, but I think what brings this to the next level, what makes it clever and worthy of buzz and what makes it stand out, is if the audience really feels for him. So what I'd like to do is blend in some subjective shots where we're more at his level and feeling what he feels. This is a hero's journey, our hero is a chicken, so we need to feel the journey on his level. Human beings are secondary characters, so most of the time we'll just see their feet. Obviously, we're not going overboard, this isn't a searing drama from the point of view of a chicken. The two key elements throughout are the close-ups of the Chicken contrasted with the wide shots that show his epic journey. In the edit, we'll be finding that perfect balance between so it's not a cheap joke -- so it's earned and unusual and unexpected. Throughout the spot, production value needs to be sky high. The locations need to be real and need to make us feel like we're there, the lighting and cinematography need to be cinematic and beautiful. Every angle, every move of the camera needs to be carefully considered.

I'd like to start the spot off with a muted color palette, reflecting the mundane, day in and day out life at the chicken coop; as he makes his change and journeys out and about, I'd like to subtly expand our frames progressively over the story, transporting us from bland claustrophobia to a wide open, awe inspiring world of bold images and experiences. Along the way, I want our color palette to subtly "graduate" to a brighter, more dynamic, more saturated feel – there'll always be a beautiful blue sky in this new world, the trees will be green, the water will be inviting, the sun will always be shining. I'm not talking about Dorothy going from black and white canvas to color Oz; this transformation will be something you feel more than notice. But I want to do everything we can with the powers of filmmaking to show the "arc" of our hero through this journey.

# THOUGHTS FOR THE SCRIPT



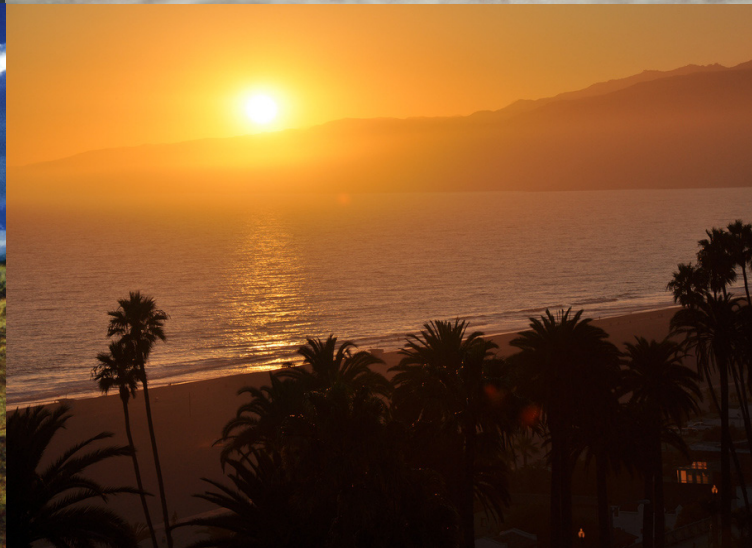
I really like what you guys have written. It totally works. I think there are so many possibilities with this material, so it's going to come down to us collaborating on a shopping list of things we'd like to get, then cross-referencing with our chicken wrangler/animatronic team, then cross-referencing with production, on what we can actually achieve and reworking the script from there to put us in the best position to succeed. Of course, it makes sense to have more vignettes and scenarios than we need, so I'll throw a couple of ideas into that hat now and I'm sure you guys probably have a ton, too. The other thing to consider is doing a couple of more locations without the chicken, just inferring that it's things he's seeing on his route – mountains, rivers, cityscapes shot from way down low, cut together in a quick little series of shots? Who knows! I think at this point we should put all our brainstorm on the table, because no one is saying no... yet.

In the beginning of the spot, I'd like to establish this guy as that "one in a generation" that's a little different, that's thinking outside the coop a little. To do this, it'd be great to spend a little time in his routine – sitting, pecking, sitting, pecking, squabbling, etc. Then there's one shot I have in my head that's ground level on this bunch of chickens just pecking at the ground, and we find our hero in the background, the only one not pecking. Instead, he's just staring up at the open sky through a hole in the roof of the coop. This would be nice to counter with a reverse down angle from outside, where we see him, framed through the hole, looking up, dreaming of flying. This little sequence might serve perfectly for his "Zen moment of realization" as you put it.

As he's building up to the moment he's about to fly, it'd be great (if possible!) to have him walking by all of his peers, who all have their heads down and find some little chicks, who watch him go in awe. I like the idea of implying some future "adventurers" that our guy has inspired. The misdirect that he's about to fly is great. I think it'd be funny to just see him have that big moment, that big first step off and then just cut out to see him drop out of frame and play the ground impact off screen. Then we could cut to an overhead shot of him lying in a cloud of dust – these kind of shots are sort of iconic to me in the lexicon of those "hero's journey" films; we need to really feel his frustration at not being able to be who (what) he wants to be.

"I can walk" feels like a great beginning for a little music change, something that gets us tapping our foot. We might want to do a brief series of shots to show him getting further and further away from farm and country, before we enter the heightened world of things he does; this could be done quite simply by composing a few beauty landscape road shots where he's smaller and smaller in the frame as the day gets later and later.









The bits you guys have are great. Like I said on the phone, I think it'd be funny to infer him living things up without actually showing him doing something that just would not happen because people wouldn't help him in real life. It might be funny to think he's done something human at first, then reveal there's an explanation for it. Like I said on the phone, it'd be a WTF moment to see him eating popcorn at the zoo – but if we cut wide to reveal it's out of someone's discarded bag of popcorn, that makes sense. (And it'd be great to see him looking through the glass at a red fox...)

Following our rules/logic, for the girls dancing with him at Carnival scene, it shouldn't feel like he's won them over by talking them into it like some Rico Suave chicken -- but that they saw him, thought he was funny, and decided to have a little bit of fun with this strange chicken. For the beach scene, again, I don't want to see a little feathery hand holding the drink and him sipping through a straw; the drink just happens to be there. But it's still funny to frame it all up like one of those typical vacation pictures that people bomb all over Facebook with the sand and the drink and the sun beating down.

It's a shame we've got a running time to adhere to, because it'd be hilarious to do a little FERRIS BUELLER homage in the art gallery scene, seeing him pondering over several different paintings in a sequence of artfully composed shots; failing that, I think it's all about what he's looking at – it might be really funny if it's just one of those really abstract pieces, like a Jackson Pollock, something that we feel like chickens looking at. In this case, the chicken might be getting just as much out of it as we are. I love the big finale in the script with the Statue of Liberty but we should probably have a more LA moment to end on. To me, that's the Hollywood sign. Maybe this chicken is going to put his reel together and get repped, maybe he's going to be a star. Who knows.

I definitely want to end it with something that shows how far he's come, something that suggests he's going to keep on going now that he's unrestricted and unencumbered. This chicken is going to keep on dreaming!



# IN CONCLUSION

That's all I could think for now! I really look forward to hearing your thoughts and tackling this crazy, fun project. Thanks again for your consideration.

*Jake Szymanski*