

Product Placement Problems

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Product placement has a long history in the highly commercial world of cinema film making where brand owners will pay handsomely for their products to appear prominently in a favourable light.

Most likely, the first example was the presence of a Red Crown Gasoline logo in the silent film *The Garage*, which was released in 1920 starring Buster Keaton. That film also included a sign for Firestone Tires on the wall in the background, but what differentiated the two uses was the prominence (the former), rather than the incidental nature (the latter), accorded to the signs. Another, infamous, early example was when a Hershey's chocolate bar gratuitously appeared on a camp bed in *Wings* (1927) in a scene that was completely unnecessary for the plot.

Traditionally, there are three types of product placement: screen, script and plot. (However, I think that there is a fourth type, namely cameo appearances of people closely associated with a particular brand, eg Sir Richard Branson being frisked in Miami airport in *Casino Royale* (2006).) The current record for screen placements is 55 examples in *Transformers: Age of Extinction* (2014). Classic plot placements include Astin Martin cars, which were then replaced by BMW cars, in the *James Bond* franchise.

There can be glorious complications, though, in what ought to be a simple matter. An example involving script placement occurred in *Casino Royale* (2006) when Vesper queried Bond about his wristwear: "... former

SAS types with easy smiles and expensive watches, Rolex? – Omega – Beautiful!". Ian Fleming had Bond wearing a Rolex (in the second Bond book, *Live and Let Die* (1954)), but for *GoldenEye* (1995), Omega secured the placement of the Seamaster, reportedly for a mere \$2million. Apparently, Rolex had never sought to place its watches in the films, it had just occurred naturally: in the first film, *Doctor No* (1962), Sean Connery had worn his own Rolex Submariner. All that exposure for free – wouldn't happen nowadays.

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