

H&R Block Super Bowl XXXVI Commercial Features Coen Brothers Directing, Beatles Soundtrack

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KANSAS CITY, Mo., Jan. 14 /PRNewswire/ -- There will be no wood-chipper murders in North Dakota, not even a George Clooney bluegrass sing-along, but H&R Block has tapped film directors extraordinaire, the Coen brothers, along with a tax tune from the Beatles, to deliver a powerful message to consumers about monumental changes to the country's tax laws. The ad marks the first- ever Super Bowl commercial and sponsorship for the nation's leading tax and financial services firm and helps heighten the awareness of its brand transformation symbolized with the addition of financial and mortgage services, a new logo and updated offices.

"This year kicks off nearly a decade of tax law changes that will be phased in each year. With more than 400 changes, many taxpayers will need assistance understanding how they will be affected," said David Byers, H&R Block senior vice president and chief marketing officer. "The timing of the Super Bowl aligns with the tax season. In addition, the Super Bowl is the pinnacle of sporting events -- a high profile opportunity to grab the attention of one of the largest TV audiences and remind them H&R Block is ready to assist with their tax and financial needs. "

The renowned Coen brothers, Joel and Ethan, directed such box office favorites as Raising Arizona, Fargo, The Big Lebowski, and Oh Brother, Where Art Thou? The H&R Block Super Bowl XXXVI commercial is their first foray into Super Bowl advertising.

"We felt this commercial was relevant to our filmmaking style," said the Coen brothers. "We liked the simple and smart idea and were delighted to be a part of it. We have always been fascinated with the mysteries of the tax code and with the people who struggle so mightily to plumb its depths."

Adding to the ambience of the commercial is the Beatles' song, "Tax Man." H&R Block is the first company to ever use a tune from the Beatles in a Super Bowl advertisement, and just the third to use a Beatles song in a television commercial.

"Having the Coen brothers and the Beatles' music involved makes our message memorable and exciting. The Coens' reputation speaks for itself, and 'Tax Man' is a perfect fit," Byers said. "Our objective is to let every taxpayer know they can count on H&R Block for professional tax and financial services, particularly in this year of significant changes to the tax code."

The commercial, the biggest advertising production ever for H&R Block, is a 30-second look at the confusing world of new tax laws to be rolled out over the next decade. The ad, shot in Los Angeles, communicates that turning to H&R Block for answers is "just plain smart." Production of the advertisement included 97 actors, 60 crew members, and more than 8,000 feet of film that was edited to 45 feet for the final spot.

"The concept illustrates how confusing the new tax laws can be -- but not for H&R Block," said George Halverson, the ad's creative director at Campbell Mithun. "The Coen brothers' unique style and creativity cuts through the clutter and brings the rather complicated subject of taxes to life in an understandable manner."

Although Super Bowl ads are fun, Byers says the real focus of the company's efforts is raising awareness of the tax and financial services H&R Block offers taxpayers at all income levels. In addition to the Super Bowl commercial, the company's sponsorship includes five spots in the pre-game show, and sole sponsorship of the 4:00-4:30 p.m. pre-game show which features the "H&R Block of the Season."

The commercial is one of several high profile media sponsorships planned by H&R Block in 2002 and is another step in positioning H&R Block as the tax and financial advisor to mainstream America, according to Byers. The company introduced a new slate of products and services in 2000 to position H&R Block as America's tax and financial partner and introduced more financial products and services in 2001.

About H&R Block

H&R Block Inc. is a diversified company with subsidiaries providing a wide range of financial products and services. In 2001, H&R Block served 19.2 million taxpayers -- more than any tax or accounting firm -- through its more than 10,400 offices located

in the United States, Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom. H&R Block served another 2.3 million tax clients through its award-winning TaxCut(R) software program and through its online tax preparation services. Investment services and securities products are offered through H&R Block Financial Advisors Inc., member NYSE, SIPC. H&R Block Inc. is not a registered broker-dealer. H&R Block Mortgage Corporation and Option One Mortgage Corporation offer a wide range of home mortgage products. RSM McGladrey Inc. is a national accounting, tax and consulting firm with more than 100 offices nationwide, as well as an affiliation with 550 offices in 75 countries as the U.S. member of RSM International. Quarterly results and other information are available on the company's Web site at www.hrblock.com .

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