



The Brand Revolution: How Lexus has Delivered Invention, Innovation and Fun

11 November 2019

Lexus is about luxury and amazing experiences, well beyond the world of cars.

With a sense of adventure, it has applied the skills of its engineers, designers and craftspeople to a wide spectrum of challenges. Some have obvious real life application, others display vivid imagination or are just made for fun.

Here are some examples of how Lexus has taken its creativity, innovation and brand values into new territories, from science fact to science fiction, from the ocean wave to the movie screen.

THE LEXUS HOVERBOARD

Making the impossible possible

Once the idea of surfing on air down the street was the stuff of movie fantasy. For Lexus it became a real-world challenge.

Proving that *Amazing in Motion* was more than just a marketing phrase, it set out to design, build and fly a working hoverboard. And a hoverboard that was distinctively a Lexus product in every aspect.

Working in collaboration with a team of expert magnetic levitation scientists from IFW Dresden and Evico GmbH, it took 18 months of dedicated and sometimes frustrating research to produce a hoverboard that not only floated above the ground, but which could be ridden by a full-grown adult.

The hoverboard revealed

The finished hoverboard was revealed in June 2015. It was a sleek machine that echoed Lexus design cues, such as the famous spindle grille, and was made from some of the same high-quality materials found in Lexus cars.

Concealed within its slim and sleek dimensions were permanent magnets and superconductors cooled to -197°C by liquid nitrogen – the technical wizardry that made it possible to move with zero friction through the air.

Building the track

To demonstrate the amazing qualities of the hoverboard, Lexus had a specially designed track built near Barcelona. The hoverpark looked like a conventional skate venue, but beneath the surface there were 200 metres of magnetic track. The magnetic field from the track was effectively “frozen” into the superconductors in the hoverboard, maintaining a constant distance between the board and track, thus keeping the board in a permanent hover.

A star rider

It was going to take someone with very special skills to master the hoverboard and Lexus turned to world-famous pro-skating star Ross McGouran to do the job. Even with his experience, it was a big challenge: “I’ve spent 20 years skateboarding, but without friction, it feels like I’ve had to learn a whole new skill,” he said.

Making the film

Weeks of testing culminated in a live shoot for *SLIDE*, a short film released as part of the *Amazing in Motion* campaign, featuring both the hoverboard and the Lexus GS F performance saloon. The footage followed the hoverboard as McGouran steered over land and water and climaxed with a leap across the roof of a moving car. Working with partners who shared its passion for creating enjoyment out of motion, Lexus pushed the boundaries of technology, design and innovation.

THE EXCITEMENT OF SPACE AND THE BIG SCREEN

Flights of fantasy

Lexus designers have worked on major international movies to help create futuristic spacecraft that, although the stuff of fantasy, still bear hallmarks of Lexus quality and innovation. The Lexus Skyjet for *Valerian and City of a Thousand Planets* and the Lexus QZ Galactic Enforcer Jet, inspired by *Men in Black: International*, have taken the Lexus brand far beyond the everyday into imagined worlds and fast-paced adventure

Lexus Skyjet

As part of its creative partnership with the film studio EuropaCorp, Lexus worked with the creative team behind the 2016 science fiction blockbuster *Valerian and the City of a Thousand Planets* to bring to life their vision for the Skyjet. This was a single-seater pursuit craft piloted by Valerian, the movie’s hero played by Hollywood star Dane DeHaan.

Although the action takes place 700 years in the future, Lexus’s Chief Engineer Takeaki Kato and his team wanted to incorporate believable technologies and contemporary design cues into the machine.

The result was a compact, highly aerodynamic solo craft with Lexus details such a reference to the spindle grille and a headlight design like that for the LC coupe.

Lexus QZ 618 Galactic Enforcer

Lexus designers turned to futuristic means of flight again in 2019, releasing details of the first member of its new jet-class fleet, the Lexus QZ 618 Galactic Enforcer Jet. The tongue-in-cheek publicity revealed the jet was only available to *Men in Black* agents for use in their fight against alien forces.

A press of a button in a Lexus RC F sports coupe instantly transformed the car into the flying machine, promoted as the “most powerful IFO (Identified Flying Object) ever engineered by Lexus.”

The list of on-board technology included an Inter-Galactic Positioning System, an Amazon Alexa assistant that understands seven trillion alien languages, Lexus-developed Quasar Power Source Technology and 122mpg – 112 millennia per gallon of fuel.

Of course, it was equipped with Lexus Safety System+, including a force field, and was capable of travelling at the speed of light.

THE LEXUS LY 650 LUXURY YACHT

Crafted in the spirit of amazing

In 2018, Lexus turned its attention from the road to the high seas, announcing a project to build an ocean-going yacht. The Lexus Luxury Yacht – LY 650 – may require very different engineering from an automobile, but in terms of styling, it’s a genuine interpretation of the company’s L-finesse design language.

The decision to enter the marine market is in line with Lexus’s strategy to explore luxury beyond automotive, as with its ventures in fine cuisine, film-making and design.

Sport Yacht Concept

A few years ago, TMC President Akio Toyoda spent several days on the water driving the new Ponam range of premium yachts soon to be launched in Japan. As a master driver, he was inspired by the power of the marine engines and the handling and stability of the advanced hull designs; as the Chief Branding Officer of Lexus International, he also appreciated the potential of a stylish premium performance yacht to complement the Lexus lifestyle.

This led the Marine Department to reimagine how a premium performance yacht might expand the Lexus brand into new areas of lifestyle and recreation. In January 2017, Lexus revealed the result of this project: a running proof-of-concept for a Lexus Sport Yacht, in Miami Beach, Florida.

Partnership with Marquis-Larson

Encouraged by the warm reception for the Sport Yacht Concept, Lexus decided to proceed with plans to develop a production vessel. In the words of Executive Vice President Shigeki Tomoyama, “to present a dream-like vision of the luxury lifestyle; one where the Lexus Yacht expands the potential of Lexus mobility to the ocean.”

To secure the high standards it sought, Lexus turned to the Marquis-Larson Boat Group to build, sell and service the Lexus yacht. This Wisconsin-based business has a fine heritage of bespoke boat-building with attention to detail that is perfectly in tune with Lexus’s own *takumi* craftsmanship.

Luxury specifications

Lexus has retained several of the most attractive features of its original 42-foot concept yacht. The LY 650 is longer, measuring 65 feet long and has a 19-foot beam. It cuts a distinctive figure with a strong, pronounced bow, curved accents to the deck, accentuated aft hips and a distinctly “Lexus” flowing

roofline.

Official launch

The official global launch of the Lexus LY 650 took place in September 2019 in Miami.

THE 60,000-HOUR MOVIE

The secrets of the takumi

The skills of *takumi* craftspeople are central to Lexus's brand-defining luxury, following in the finest traditions of Japanese artisans. Lexus commissioned a documentary film to reveal the dedication required to become a *takumi*, looking at the experience of its own workers and the achievements of those working in other fields. It also explores and how they can continue to exist in a world where so many human tasks are now performed by robots and the application of Artificial Intelligence.

In western culture, it's considered typical for someone to spend 10,000 hours of study to become an expert in their field. But in Japan, you're not considered a master of your craft until you have spent 60,000 hours refining your skills – the equivalent of eight hours a day, 250 days a year, for 30 years.

A film like no other

Clay Jeter, famous in the movie industry as the director of *Chef's Table*, was commissioned to create a documentary looking into the world of the *takumi*, focusing on four artisans who have dedicated their lives to their craft. They include a double-Michelin-starred chef, a traditional paper-cutting artist, a Lexus master craftsman and a carpenter working for one of the oldest construction companies in the world.

As well as a 54-minute feature-length version, Jeter created a special 60,000-hour cut, which loops scenes of *takumi*'s skills, repeated over and over again to express the hours, days and years of practice required to achieve perfection.

The movie is available on various streaming platforms, and on this dedicated site:

<https://takumi-craft.com/gb/en-gb>

DRIVEN BY INTUITION

Car by Lexus, story by Artificial Intelligence, camera by an Oscar-winning director

How far can Artificial Intelligence go when it comes to artistic creativity? Lexus tested the potential of AI with a unique project to create the world's first advertising film for which the script was produced entirely by a "thinking" machine.

Driven by Intuition was shot by the Oscar-winning director Kevin MacDonald, whose past credits include *The Last King of Scotland* and the Whitney Houston biopic *Whitney*. Making the movie was a ground-breaking collaboration between AI and a renowned craftsman, aimed at testing the boundaries of how humans and machines can work together.

The production

Lexus worked with technical partner Visual Voice to create an AI scriptwriter, using IBM Watson to analyse a range of audio, text and visual data and gain an understanding of what makes great content. The AI could then use this to create an original script outline that would be emotionally intelligent and entertaining to watch.

The AI was “trained” with car and luxury goods adverts that have won prestigious international awards over the past 15 years. It was also primed with emotional intelligence data by video marketplace Unruly to learn which moments connected most strongly with viewers, and how different combinations and sequences best communicated the advertisers’ key messages. To ensure originality and avoid a mass-market feel, additional data on the Lexus brand and the project – the launch of the new ES saloon – were input into the AI.

To focus on the intuitive aspect of the story, the AI was further coached with intelligence from a bespoke experiment carried out for the project by MindX, the applied science division of the University of New South Wales. This explored what makes someone intuitive, and how people with a high level of intuition respond to car adverts.

The story

The minute-long drama tells the story of a Lexus *takumi* master craftsman who completes his work on a new Lexus ES saloon and releases it into the world, only to see it snatched away and threatened with destruction. At the crucial moment, the car is saved by its automatic emergency braking system.

The script is rich in genuine human emotion and indistinguishable from one written by a human.

ENDS.