

## THIS JUST IN

WOULD THE (WRANGLER) SHIRT BE FREE? BY LEE PITTS

Every time my friend who works in TV comes to my house with all his techno-gadgetry he makes me feel like a cave dweller in the dark ages. So when he came by the last time I made sure the TV was turned to a video cattle sale.

"Pretty impressive the way we're using the latest technology, isn't it?" I asked.

"Not bad, but I can see how you could make it a whole lot better."

"How's that?" I asked, realizing too late I was in for more belittlement.

"It's called embedded advertising and it's all the rage in Hollywood."

"You want to make auctions better by having commercials?" I asked in horror.

"No, no. That's the beauty of product placement. People don't know they're watching an ad because the message is below the viewer's conscious perception. For example, you might see George Clooney holding a Coke can or Betty White wearing a PETA pin. The visual stimuli are so subtle the viewers don't even know they're being manipulated. It's also known as embedded advertising."

"It doesn't work on me 'cause I'm not joining PETA!"

"You see that windmill in the background there?" my friend said, ignoring me as he pointed to the TV. "You could put a toll free phone number on it to call for NFR tickets. Or you could have the Goodyear or MetLife blimp pass slowly by in the background."

"Next you'll want to plaster ads on the cattle like they do in NASCAR."

"Now you're getting the idea," said my buddy. "If that's too hard-sell you could just shave their hair so that it would faintly say Merial or Pfizer. And see that rancher in the background on the good horse? Why not have a set of LED lights on the saddle blinking 'AQHA' off and on? I'm telling you, there's a lot of money to be made here."

Next I went to my computer and the Livestock Marketing Association's website where each week they show the sales of more than 50 auction markets.

"What do you think of that?" I proudly

asked my friend.

"Wow! I had no idea auction markets were so progressive. And here too I see many places for product placement," he said as I tuned into an auction in progress. "The middle of that ring should have a logo on the floor, and see that guy in the ring? He could be wearing a shirt with 'Wrangler' written on it."

"Would the shirt be free?" I asked, becoming more interested by the minute in this new form of advertising.

"I can't understand the chant of the auctioneer either," said my friend. "He should slow it down and work the names of advertisers into his chant. Such as, 90 cents Dodge, who'll give me 91 cents Chevrolet, 92 cents Ford. Sold to Harris, try their new pot roast."

"Catchy. I see how that could be a whole new source of income for auctioneers. And during the dead space they could also read commercials," I said sarcastically.

Ignoring me, he said, "The front panels of the ring should have signs on them."

"But then how would the buyers see the cattle?"

"Yes, I see where that might be a problem. I notice in many of these auctions they show the crowd. See that guy in the front row when he crosses his legs and exposes the bottom of his boot? That's valuable ad space I'm sure Justin would buy." (For more on Justin Boots see the title of this essay.) "You know," continued my Hollywood friend, "embedded advertising cannot only be used in TV and movies, but you too could make this a new source of revenue by incorporating it into your writing."

"Heaven knows I could use the extra cash," I said. "But if you think I'm going to prostitute myself by mentioning COKE or PEPSI just to make an extra BUCK (knives) so that I can make my next payment on my BUICK automobile, well then, you can think again mister. I'm not that DESPERATE (Housewives this Fall on ABC)." ■

*Lee Pitts lives in Los Osos, Calif. Check p.5 for some of his books or [www.LeePittsbooks.com](http://www.LeePittsbooks.com).*

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