

HUGS EAST

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2001

Volume 3, Issue 1

Is Gay Funny?

How do advertisers think of gays and lesbians? As valued consumers? Or do they just see homosexuality as a punch line? Or both? This installment of "Ad Report Card" deals with two spots that are informed by, or at least allude to, homosexuality: One is a spot for an online car-buying service called Giggo.com. The other ad, for Visa.

But these are by no means the only examples out there. A "Moneybox" correspondent, who first told me about both these commercials, also brought to my attention over the summer a couple of "trend" articles about gay- and lesbian-targeted marketing. In each article, the theme was vagueness: ads that deliver a subtle message that many straight consumers miss. A Washington Post story pointed to Subaru posters with the slogan, "It's Not A Choice. It's the Way We're Built." The New York Times referred to billboards for a trashcan that "Swings Both Ways" and to a Heineken TV spot in which two male sports fans briefly hold hands while handling beer bottles (more on this spot below). Before we draw any conclusions about whether any of this means that advertisers, or their audiences, are generally more enlightened than they used to be, let's consider the Giggo and Visa spots.

The ads: In the Giggo spot, a young man approaches his father, a Joe Six-pack type who seems to be painting war toys in the basement. "Dad, there's something I want to tell you," the kid begins. "Yeah, what?" Dad practically spits. "I'm gay," the kid says. Dad's eyes pop, the frame freezes, and a computer window opens. It's one of those little level adjusters, the kind of thing that comes up on your computer when you want to adjust the volume. It's labeled "Adjust Dad's Attitude," and while it is currently set off to one side at "Hostile," an arrow clicks and moves it the other way to "Supportive" before closing the window. The ad resumes, and instead of unleashing rage or disgust, Dad Six-pack mildly notes there's a guy at the plant with a gay son and maybe they would like each other. Punch line delivered, a voiceover bursts in to say, "Wow, that was painless. Like Giggo.com, where you take control of buying a car ..." The Visa ad takes place in a tattoo parlor. An unconvincing young tough is asked by his knockout girlfriend, Donna, if

Hugs - Hope * Understanding * Giving * Support
To the Gay & Lesbian Community of Lake, Geauga, and Ash-
tabula Counties.

he's sure about the tattoo he's getting. "I want everyone to know who I love," he says sweetly. But the tattoo costs \$50, and he only has \$41. Next thing you know Donna is stomping away mad, and the guy is promising, "I'll get it fixed!" Turns out he ended up getting "I Love Don" burned into his arm. If only he'd been carrying the Visa Check Card!

Offended? Let's start with the Visa spot. Like the aforementioned Heineken ad, this one bothers at least some viewers because the humor wouldn't work if it didn't assume homophobia--that is, if it didn't depend on the notion that it's a disaster for a straight to be mistaken for gay. These critics have a valid point. But there are at least two counter-points. One is that motivation matters, and I don't think you can make a convincing case that Visa is out to court bigots with this ad. Two is that I think you can make a reasonable case that it's homophobia that really gets mocked here, not homosexuality, and that the same is true in the Heineken ad. All of that said, I don't think the Visa spot is exactly gay-friendly or worthy of applause, either. It's kind of sophomoric. The Giggo.com ad is more intriguing and arguably more ground-breaking because a) the kid is actually gay, and b) it's Dad's bigotry that's out of step with the norm and needs to be brought into line.

The grades: Sexual orientation issues aside, do the spots work? The Giggo ad is in keeping with a campaign that emphasizes, through various situations in which an expected negative outcome is transformed to a positive, the general idea of control: Just as these characters control whatever pickle they're in, so can you control the process of buying a car. This is a weak gimmick, so despite its progressive worldview, the ad gets a C. The Visa spot I find slightly less funny and more ideologically suspect but more effective in making a point about the underlying product. So I give it a B. Now, what does all of this say about the relationship between gays and big advertisers? Obviously the days of simply ignoring gay and lesbian consumers have faded fast, and we'll continue to see advertisers stumble around the issue, sometimes more successfully, sometimes less so. To the extent that ad culture is a barometer of culture in general, this seems like a net plus: It's better than pretending homosexuality doesn't exist or is somehow too embarrassing or controversial to mention. Why has this change happened? Well,

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Contacting Hugs East

HUGS EAST

P.O. Box 253

Mentor, OH 44061-0253

(440) 974-8909

[HTTP://HUGSEAST.HOMEPAGE.COM](http://HUGSEAST.HOMEPAGE.COM)

E-mail your questions or comments to:

HUGSEAST@HOTMAIL.COM

Calendar of Events

January, 2001

- 01/04 Movie "Edge of Seventeen." — Mark
- 01/11 Board Game "Tri-Bond." — Mark
- 01/18 Board Meeting & Officer Elections. — Terry
Board members please arrive at 6:30 PM
- 01/25 Gay Book Reports. — Mary
Please bring in a book to talk about.

February, 2001

- 02/01 Terry's Shenanigans. — Terry
- 02/08 Planning Meeting. — Terry
- 02/15 Rekindling Romance. — Brenda
- 02/22 Show & Tell. — Virginia
Bring in something to show or a story to tell.

Hugs Social Activities for January & February

- 01/20 5:00 PM Dinner at Outback Steak House.
8595 Market Street, Mentor, OH 44060
- 02/17 5:00 PM Dinner at Imperial Dragon.
8310 Tyler Blvd., Mentor, OH 44060

Other Events for January & February

- 01/06 6 PM Medieval Dinner.
Riders Inn, 792 Mentor Ave., Painesville, OH 44077, (440) 354-8200 Cost \$26.00 per person
Call for reservations.
- 02/03 7 PM North Coast Men's Choir. "Hearts on Fire" a musical valentine. Enjoy a romantic cabaret during your dinner and then dance the night away. Cleveland Play House Club, 8501 Carnegie Ave. Cleveland, OH (216) 473-8919. Cost \$75.00 per person. Fund raiser for North Coast Men's choir.
- 02/24 Womyn's Variety Show and Party. (Women only)

For more details regarding any social event or meeting topic please call the information line at (440) 974-8909.

The Thursday evening meeting begins at 7:00 PM and is located at: 8521 East Ave., Mentor, OH 44060

Gay Men Better Known by a Different Name

1. Charles Peyton, porn star.....Jeff Stryker
 2. RuPaul Andre Charles, entertainer.....RuPaul
 3. George Alan O'Dowd, singer.....Boy George
 4. Touko Laaksonen, artist.....Tom of Finland
 5. Eugene Luther Vidal, author.....Gore Vidal
 6. Harris Glenn Milstead, actor.....Divine
 7. Wladziu Valentino Liberace, pianist.....Liberace
 8. Webb Parmelee Hollenbeck, actor.....Clifton Webb
 9. Roy Scherer Jr., actor.....Rock Hudson
 10. Nicholas Iacona, porn star.....Joey Stefano
 11. Reginald Dwight, singer.....Elton John
 12. Roy Halston Frowick, designer.....Halston
 13. Arthur Gelien, actor.....Tab Hunter
 14. Drew Okin, porn star.....Al Parker
 15. Eric Garber, author.....Andrew Holleran
 16. Romain de Tiroff, designer.....Erte
 17. Thomas Lanier Williams, playwright.....Tennessee Williams
 18. Andrew Warhola, artist.....Andy Warhol
 19. John Epperson, entertainer.....Lypsinka
- Rutledge, J. (1996). The new gay book of lists. Los Angeles: Alyson Publications Inc.

Did you know that...

There is a gay friendly restaurant in Lake County called "The Last Chance." It is located in the North Shore Mall in the city of Willowick on Lakeshore Blvd.

Thank You!

Peace and joy for your holidays and my continued thanks for all your efforts on behalf of my clients. The Xmas gifts were stupendous and appreciated more than you can ever know. Your help makes my job that much easier. May each of you enjoy a healthy, blessed year in 2001.

My many thanks to you each and everyone!

Gail Anderson

Membership Dues

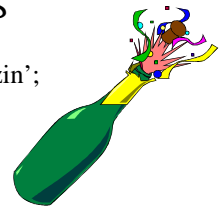
The New Year' here, no time for Snoozin';

Last years dues we've finished usin'.

If y'd like to keep perusin',

Grab your check book—get your dues in!

By Terry



FAVORITE POTLUCK RECIPES

SPANAKOPETA

Ingredients: 10 pounds fresh spinach (or 8 packages frozen leaf spinach. I used chopped)
 1 1/2 cups olive oil
 2 large onions, chopped
 1 bunch scallions, chopped
 1 bunch parsley, chopped
 1/2 cup freshly dried dill leaves
 1/4 cups freshly dried mint leaves
 1/4 cup oregano, crushed
 salt and pepper to taste
 1 1/2 pounds feta cheese, crumbled
 2 cups milk
 4 eggs, lightly beaten
 2 packages filo

Directions: Prepare the fresh spinach by removing the coarse stems and washing it well in cool water. Set aside for 10 minutes. Pat all the leaves dry with paper towels. If frozen spinach is used thaw it completely and squeeze out all the moisture.
 In a large skillet, heat the olive oil. Add onion, scallions, parsley, dill, mint, oregano, salt and pepper. Cook 5 minutes over low heat, stirring constantly. In a bowl, crumble the cheese. Mix in the milk and eggs. Add the spinach and mix. Add the cooked herbs and mix well. Adjust the seasonings. Oil an 18 x 12 inch baking pan. Line the bottom of the pan with 10 layers of filo, brushing each layer with oil before adding the next. After the last layer has been oiled spread the spinach mixture evenly over the surface. Cover with the remaining filo, oiling each layer. With a sharp knife cut the topmost layers into squares. Bake at 350 for 30 minutes. Turn oven to 275 and bake an additional 30 minutes. Cool. Cut through to separate each piece. Serve as a main course or as an appetizer. Makes 20 to 50 pieces depending on the size of the serving. Note: I did not use all of the 2 packages of filo only about 1 1/2, I had no mint so I omitted that and added crushed garlic for more flavor.

Submitted by Virginia

Sauerbraten with Sour Cream

Marinade: 1-cup wine vinegar
 1-cup water
 1 large onion, peeled & sliced

1 bay leaf
 3 whole cloves
 1 tsp. dry mustard
 1/2 tsp. dried thyme
 2 tsp. Salt

Directions: Make a marinade by combining the above ingredients and simmering for 15 minutes. Then cool and pour over a **4-5 pound beef chuck roast**. Marinate the beef in the refrigerator for 48 hours, turning it every 12 hours.

Sauerbraten: 1/4 cup vegetable shortening
 2 onions, peeled and sliced
 2 tomatoes, peeled and sliced
 2 good sized carrots
 3 Tbs. Flour
 1/4 cup red wine
 1 cup sour cream
 Salt and pepper to taste
 Sugar (a good pinch)

Directions: **First:** Drain the meat but reserve the marinade. Melt 1/4 cup of vegetable shortening in a heavy frying pan. When well heated, brown the beef on all sides. Add onions, carrots, tomatoes and 2 cups of marinade. Cover pot and simmer for 2 hours (or 25 minutes to the pound).

Second: Remove the meat, carve and place on a heated platter. Make a sauce by adding the remaining marinade to the pan along with 3 Tbs. Flour. Stir this into the sauce until the sauce thickens. Add 1/4 cup red wine, 1 cup sour cream, salt, pepper and sugar to taste. Heat but do not boil. Serve sauce in a gravy boat along with the meat and buttered noodles.

Submitted by Virginia

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this isn't really the right place to take up the argument about whether the popular notion of the affluent gay is true or a myth, but earlier this year a friend of mine forwarded to me an interesting letter she'd gotten from a public relations person: The pitch was for a story about the effectiveness of advertising on demographically targeted portal sites, such as one site frequented by gays and lesbian consumers--who, the letter noted in passing, are "known for loyalty and excessive spending." Ah well, so much for the notion of a new enlightenment in the marketing community.

By Rob Walker, Copyright MSN.com

Be a part of HUGS EAST

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Due to the increased cost of the mailing of our newsletter we can no longer afford to continue our current mailing to non-paying members. This will be the last to those not currently with paid dues or who do not mail their dues prior to the next newsletter mailing in March.

Please send your dues to Hugs East P.O. Box 253, Mentor, Ohio 44060. If your not currently paid and would like to remain on the mailing list, please submit your dues by the next scheduled newsletter. Current newsletters will still be available on Thursday nights at the Mentor site for those who are not on the mailing list.

2001 HUGS EAST MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

NAME:_____	<u>Membership</u>	
ADDRESS:_____	Individual:	\$8.00
CITY & STATE_____	Student:	\$5.00
ZIP CODE:_____	Household:	\$10.00
PHONE #(optional)_____	Supporter:	\$25.00
EMAIL (optional) _____	Contributor:	\$50.00
	Benefactor:	\$100.00
AMOUNT ENCLOSED:_____		

*Dues run from January thru December.

To update our membership list we ask that you complete the above information. Even if you were a current member, we would like to update our records to show current information. This will ensure your copy of the newsletter. Membership dues are suggested amounts. Please feel free to pay more if you can, less if you cannot. All members share the same privileges. Make check or money order payable to: HUGS EAST P.O. Box 253 Mentor, Ohio 44061-0253, or bring to the Mentor site any Thursday evening (7pm to 9pm).

_____ Do not send HUGS EAST newsletter to my home.

**\$8.00-\$10.00 dues are not tax deductible; amounts paid over said dues are considered contributions and are tax deductible.