

# RIGHT outta LEFT FIELD

by J Jones

This week -- Me and Stupid Consumerism

There is a fine line between advertising and propaganda. As a normal, TV-obsessed consumer, I am more than qualified to comment on this phenomenon of Western culture. I believe (as I imagine most of those who read this column will agree) that most advertising is a complete and utter waste of time and money. I don't need celebrity spokespeople to tell me what to drink; nor do I need throbbing music, catchy jingles, or scantily-clad women to sell me something that I don't need or want. Ads would be more productive if they said "Buy this product. It is good."

Yes, I admit to being an advertiser's worst nightmare -- one who buys what he wants and wants what he buys. Commercials serve no purpose to me, except for possibly telling me of new products I might consider buying or giving me enough time to run to the fridge. I figure that I believe too much of what I see on TV anyway, so I treat all commercials as if they were spoken by liars (not too far from the truth, if I say so myself).

There's another point to this column this week: clerks that work in stores. I know that it is hard work for little pay, and that their job rarely gets any good press, but I have a slight gripe against many of these walking commercials. Here is an example: this summer I bought a new pair of shoes. Nothing special, they just had to be light and comfortable. As the clerk returned with the proper size, I simply stated that I would take them. Then, as the clerk seemed to be congratulating himself on a well-made sale, he said to me "These shoes are guaranteed to attract babes." Yep, he said it. I don't find my shoes especially attractive, and I doubt if any member of the female persuasion would find them otherwise. But he said it. I figure there were a few reasons he said this silly sexist statement. 1) He thought I was some impressionable young adult that seriously believes that a foot covering will make me more attractive; 2) He just wanted to do an impromptu male-bonding thing, despite the fact I knew only his first name (from his nametag) and that we had

been acquaintances for about 3 minutes; or 3) He was just an idiot who thought that shoes can make you more attractive.

Another incident similar to this happened to me in Moncton. An incident so powerful and profound that I will never shop there again. I was simply browsing the new arrivals and latest trends in overpriced fashions when a clerk ambushed me from behind a rack of brand-name socks. "So how are ya? Nice weather, eh? How 'bout them Hawks? Beat the Habs last night, yeah, it was a pretty good game. They won't take the Cup though. Not enough depth up front. My money's on the Leafs, just because of that hotshot Potvin..." I could go on with his unsolicited monologue, but it would probably fill the rest of the page. If you are wondering what I might have done to provoke his friend-inducing spiel, I merely made eye contact. A simple, trusting glance that was meant to be interpreted as "I'm a good guy that won't steal from your store, and I acknowledge your presence as a human being." Apparently, this overtly friendly person decided that I wanted to make friends with him, so off he went on his sporting tangent. I really hate when clerks try to make friends with me before they sell me something. Afterwards, fine, but when I'm making my decision about whether or not to blow fifty bucks on a piece of clothing, I don't need to consider the feelings of my new "friend." On major purchases, such as a car or a computer, clerks tend to use this ploy in order to ease purchasers into a larger than intended purpose. I don't like that at all. Sure, I'm on a first-name basis with my computer dealer, but that's a different story all together.

On a positive note, the best possible advice I have ever received after buying something occurred very recently. After buying my new favourite CD (far be it from me to name it directly, but let's say it's very melancholy), the clerk simply stated: "Thank you, and I hope you enjoy it." No ploy to start a relationship; no need to plug other more expensive products I don't want. Just a simple, casual remark that was both polite and functional. This clerk has a lot to teach others in her field. As always, keep your eyes on the ground and your head in the clouds.



by Jonathan Davis

Internet email is wonderful for providing quick and easy communication. Unfortunately, this written form of communication has its limits. One of its biggest problems is the lack of expressional clues that can indicate sarcasm or emotion. To overcome this, people developed what have become known as **smilies** or **emoticons**. These are little faces that can be made to indicate anything you desire, assuming you have the imagination. I have a paper due this coming week, so I'll just dump a selection of them on you, and let you have fun.

:-) Your basic smiley. This smiley is used to inflect a sarcastic or joking statement.

;-) Winky smiley. User just made a flirtatious and/or sarcastic remark. Sort of a "don't hit me for what I just said" smiley.

:( Frowning smiley. User did not like that last statement or is upset or depressed about something.

:-I Indifferent smiley. Better than a frowning smiley but not quite as good as a happy smiley

:-> User just made a really biting sarcastic remark. Worse than a :-).

==> User just made a really devilish remark.

;-> Winky and devil combined. A very lewd remark was just made.

Those are the basic ones. Here are some somewhat less common ones:

(- User is left handed  
%- User has been staring at a screen for 15 hours straight  
:\* User is drunk  
[:] User is a robot  
8-) User is wearing sunglasses  
B:-) Sunglasses on head  
::-) User wears normal glasses  
B-) User wears horn-rimmed glasses

:-} User has a mustache  
:-} User wears lipstick  
{-) User wears a toupee  
}:-( Toupee in an updraft  
:-[ User is a Vampire  
:-E Bucktoothed vampire

## The Nicer Side of the Net

:-F Bucktoothed vampire with one tooth missing

:-7 User just made a wry statement

:-\* User just ate something sour

:-)ss User drools

:-ss) User has a cold

:'-( User is crying

:'-) User is so happy, he or she is

crying

:-@ User is screaming

:-# User wears braces

:-^ User has a broken nose

:-v) User has a broken nose, but it's

the other way

:-<) User is from an Ivy League

School

:-& User is tongue tied

=-:-) User is a hosehead

:-) User is a punk rocker

:-(- (real punk rockers don't smile)

+:-) User is the Pope or holds some other religious office

':-) User shaved one of his eyebrows off this morning

;-) Same thing...other side

|-I User is asleep

|-O User is yawning/snoring

:-Q User is a smoker

:-? User smokes a pipe

O-) Megaton Man On Patrol! (or else, user is a scuba diver)

O :-) User is an angel (at heart, at least)

:-P User sticking out tongue

:-S User just made an incoherent statement

:-D User is laughing (at you!)

:-X User's lips are sealed

:-C User is really bummed

<:-) User is Chinese

<:-(- User is Chinese and doesn't like these kind of jokes

:-/ User is skeptical

C=-:-) User is a chef

:-& User is tongue-tied

