WHO PUT THE AMERICAN SPIRIT CIGARETTES IN WARNER BROS.? HE'S JUST NOT THAT INTO YOU?

WARNER BROS. DOESN'T SAY. As of March 4, the studio had yet to go on the record to explain repeated close-ups of American Spirits (British American Tobacco) in its PG-13 movie.

The New York Times and L.A. Times cite unnamed sources suggesting Warner Bros. overlooked the American Spirits as it unified Warner and New Line, the film's distributor. But wouldn't the reorganization mean Warner Bros. would pay more attention to New Line's projects, not less?

Least plausible suggestion: “[S]tudio policemen not being the hippest people in the room...may have thought that American Spirit was an invented product, not an actual brand.”*

Implicit in these alibis is that Warner Bros. would have stopped the branding if it had known about it. Why not say so? Why not simply state that this problem won't happen again because Warner Bros. won't display tobacco brands again?

Warner Bros. isn't the only studio to feature tobacco brands. Since 1998, when a legal agreement with state Attorneys General barred domestic tobacco subsidiaries from paying for product placement, at least 117 U.S. films have featured tobacco brand imagery, presumably for free. In 2008, eleven films, three of them youth-rated, showed branding.

Among media corporations that so generously include tobacco brands appealing to young people: Disney, DreamWorks, GE, Lionsgate, News Corp., Sony, Time Warner, Viacom and Weinstein.

Do media companies want people to believe they don't engage in tobacco product placement?

Then they should stop making films that look just like films with tobacco product placement.

SMOKE FREE MOVIES

For some tobacco brand appearances since 1990, go to smokefremovies.ucsf.edu/problem/brand_id

SMOKING IN MOVIES KILLS IN REAL LIFE. Smoke Free Movie policies—the R-rating; certification of no payoffs, anti-tobacco spots; and an end to brand display—are endorsed by: the World Health Organization, American Medical Association, AMA Alliance, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Heart Association, American Lung Association, American Public Health Association, Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, L.A. County Dept. of Health Services, New York State Dept. of Health, New York State PTA, and many others. Visit our website or write: Smoke Free Movies, UCSF School of Medicine, San Francisco, CA 94143-1390.  