

## **Theme: NEW BOY ON THE RAINBOW BLOCK**

Television and cinema advert. Client: Castrol Motor Oils.

Agency: Network Advertising. From **Prime Time South Africa**

**TOPICS:** Intercultural Relations

**USES:** H, U, G and A

### **SYNOPSIS**

One of an ongoing series of adverts based on the comic condition of two typically South African white men who run an isolated service station alongside a road which is hardly distinguishable from a dry riverbed. The two regular characters have acquired an affirmative action partner, a leathery, weathered African man. One of the white men is unaware of this new development, and initially feigns surprise, then bewilderment, as the black partner joins them on the porch of their station. The white characters are perfectly cast as the kind of men whose lives consist of rugby and beer. The new partner is, ambiguously, obviously both out of place and quite at home in the new setup.

### **CRITIQUE**

The advert's ongoing storyline brings a combination of both **Priscilla, Queen of the Desert** and **Thelma and Louise** to the outback gas station: a restored 1960s type American convertible (Cadillac?) with two outrageously dressed white transvestites stops to buy a 'can of the best' - the client's motor oil. While the two white protagonists flirt outrageously with the car's passengers - indeed, they use every male-chauvinist act in the 'hubba-hubba' handbook - the new black partner watches with a very experienced eye and sees through the sexy finery.

As the automobile drives away, the partner who has been grabbing most of the attention begins a typically male sexual conquest display. He makes the most of the fact that his partner, the rugged manly pipe-smoking type, has missed out on the game. The advert fades out on the white partners' realization that they have been taken as suckers, after their new affirmative action partner has quietly pointed out some of the facts of life.

The advert draws on and subverts the white Afrikaner myth of 'man' as the master of his own farm. The whole series of Castrol adverts plays on the innocence of the rural Afrikaner male, with his know-all and conquer-all attitude, who takes on a sort of God's-eye view of the rest of creation from the impregnable fortress of his front porch. Indeed, that all three partners sit

uneasily on the same porch in this version suggests that those who are beginning to occupy front porches in their own right have an uncomfortably more balanced view of the world.

The storyline in the review develops relations that only appeared in fringe dramatic film images before 1994. Perhaps one could say that making typical white males into the butt of a thinly-disguised sexual joke is some kind of crude inversion of previous relationships. However, the whole play on the urban-rural divide - allusions to film images which city-dwellers take for granted in contrast with the straight-arrow heterosexuality of the *boer* - points to the fact that there is a rather comic anachronism about white people's world view which the new dispensation is forcing them to confront.

*(Written by Arnold Shepperson, 1997).*