VALUES OF THE OLD WEST “RIDE AGAIN” IN NEW YELLAWOOD® “CLIFFHANGER” CAMPAIGN

Great Southern Wood Preserving, Inc. (Great Southern Wood), long recognized for its distinctive advertising, recently launched a unique advertising campaign designed as much to lift the spirits of consumers as to “sell” them on the benefits of the company’s YellaWood® brand pressure treated pine products.

The new campaign, reminiscent of Old Western movie serials of the 1950s and ‘60s, began an eight-week run in 32 markets across the South, parts of the Southwest and the Midwest on February 2.

If you didn’t know better, you might think the company is breaking every rule in the advertising book. But that’s what makes the campaign so different and why Great Southern Wood believes the campaign can be effective in its branding efforts at the same time conveying a message that goes way beyond just the brand message.

The Cliffhanger campaign consists of eight different spots that make up one big storyline unfolding weekly through the campaign.

Each spot ends with the message “To be continued…” and except for a graphic at the end of each spot, the name of the brand is not even mentioned until the final few episodes of the campaign.

It’s a story about the mythical old West town of “Rotwood,” where everything, including some of the characters and props on the set, are rotten.

But the bigger story is one of “good triumphing over evil.” It’s a brand message, but it’s also a larger message that the company and its CEO Jimmy Rane believe Americans need to hear right now.

“Everywhere you turn these days, there is gloom and doom about the economy,” Rane says. “People are just downright depressed. We set
out to create something that would be both entertaining and encouraging.”

Rane himself stars in the campaign as Yella Fella, the brave and whimsical cowboy hero who rides into town to save the day.

The campaign evokes the nostalgia and showcases the beauty of the old West while reinforcing The Code of the West, a set of values that helped shape the American frontier and the American spirit.

Great Southern Wood, Rane, and his team have gone to great lengths to make the Cliffhanger series as authentic as possible.

The spots were shot on location in Moab and Monument Valley, Utah and Mescal, Arizona. Moab was the site of many John Wayne classics as well as such recent movies as Geronimo, City Slickers II, Mission Impossible II and Thelma and Louise. Legendary Western movie director John Ford filmed numerous scenes at Monument Valley, which features some of the most panoramic and photogenic landscape in the world. John Ford Point, a well-known spot overlooking the majestic valley, is featured prominently in the YellaWood® Cliffhanger campaign. The Mescal Western Movie Set outside Tucson, site of many of the scenes in the ad series, was the backdrop for countless well-known Hollywood classics including The Quick and the Dead, Tombstone, The Outlaw Josie Wales, among others.

To ensure the series’ authenticity, Rane enlisted the help of a number of celebrated cowboys and acting professionals from the era of Old Western movies.

Veteran Western stuntman Dean Smith served as stunt coordinator for the campaign. Honored in 2007 by the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum for his lifetime of achievement and contributions to the nation’s Western heritage, Smith spent 50 years in the movie business appearing in big screen favorites like The Alamo, How the West Was Won, True Grit, and Jeremiah Johnson.

Legendary actor and Western icon Dale Robertson, who starred in 58 Western movies and television series such as Dynasty, Death Valley Days, Devil’s Canyon, The Roy Rogers & Dale Evans Show, and Sitting Bull, was a technical advisor and served as the voiceover talent for a previous Yella Fella commercial.
World Champion Bronc Rider and Rodeo Cowboy “Cody” Bill Smith, a member of the Pro Rodeo Hall of Fame whose life is chronicled in the book *Horses that Buck*, was also enlisted to collaborate in the project.

“We set out to do something that you don’t often see done with advertising budgets,” Rane said. “We wanted to reinforce the values that made America great and the Old West so significant. The Code of the West is all about principles like honesty, service, integrity, patriotism, strong work ethic, loyalty, and family.”

The company’s brand message takes care of itself, Rane believes, because the spots are cleverly crafted to demonstrate the importance of building with YellaWood® brand pressure treated pine.

Associations with the positive character and “good triumphing evil” messages fit nicely into the overall business goals Rane and his team at Great Southern Wood have always applied in their company.