

# Amex launches Blue Card in UK

By Clare Conley

American Express is launching a new credit card in the UK, called the American Express Blue Card, after testing the concept in other countries.

It is understood that a major advertising push by Ogilvy & Mather will be used to raise the profile of Amex in the UK where it is under attack from new US entrants to the market, including MBNA and Capital One.

The campaign will also seek to attract a younger market to Amex, which is traditionally used by business people aged over 35.

The Blue Card, which is tailored to suit different markets, will be a straightforward credit card in the UK and emphasis will be on strong



Amex: Attempting to attract a younger market with its new Blue Card

branding. "Brand is more and more important in the UK. As new players flood the market, consumers

don't know what each brand stands for," says Amex Europe director of public affairs Doug Smith.

Amex is testing the Blue Card in Italy in the form of a deferred debit card.

It has already launched the Blue Card, in various forms tailored to suit individual markets, in Germany, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Canada, Australia and Japan.

UK advertising will follow the pattern of international campaigns in an attempt to present a more upbeat image.

Smith claims there is still a large untapped market in the UK. "Only 50 per cent of consumers have a credit card – there is still tremendous potential," he says.

American Express Europe spent over £20m on advertising in the UK 1997, according to ACNielsen-MEAL.

## ASA dragged into Shell UK Smart battle

The Advertising Standards Authority has been dragged into the legal fight between Shell UK and the sales promotion agency Don Marketing.

The agency issued a High Court writ against Shell at Easter alleging a copyright infringement over ownership of the Smart card concept.

But now it is alleging that in 1995 Shell deliberately misled the ASA, which was investigating complaints about its Make Money promotion. As part of it, envelopes were given away with petrol purchases, containing two pieces of paper which had to match to qualify for a prize. Players complained that the envelopes were not secure.

The allegation about Shell misleading the ASA is made on a spe-

cially created Website, which discusses Don Marketing's relationship with Shell over the past ten years.

Don Marketing managing director John Donovan claims Shell lawyers asked his company to withhold additional information which it wanted to pass to the ASA as part of a complaint it had also made.

At the time of the ASA investigation, in July and August 1995, Don Marketing was negotiating to resolve an outstanding legal claim with Shell over ownership of the Make Money promotion idea.

"Shell torpedoed that (ASA) investigation and stopped important information going to the ASA," says Donovan. "We had further information that would've changed what the ASA said in its report."

The ASA dismissed the complaint. ASA spokesman Bill Lennon says: "I cannot see it is in anybody's interest to reopen the claim."

Shell adds: "Shell did not mislead the ASA. It had all the information it needed to make its decision."

## AA ditches 'cowboy' tradesmen scheme

The Automobile Association has axed its service which helped members to vet cowboy tradesmen.

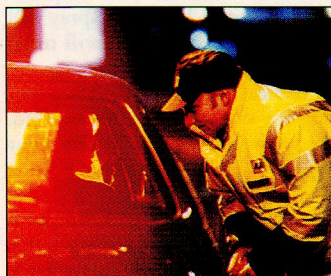
Under the scheme, which was launched in 1995, members were able to call a number featured in their annual handbook and ask for details of an appropriate tradesman from a register of builders, electri-

cians, roofers and plumbers which had been vetted by the AA.

"Only 0.02 per cent of the AA membership took up the service over the past year," says a spokesman for the organisation, which has 9.3 million members. "The AA is in the business of making its members' money work and if there's no demand for a particular service, there's no point wasting resources on it."

He adds that the database of tradesmen had already been compiled for use in conjunction with one of the AA's insurance policies.

The database will continue to be used for the Home Assistance Annual Cover, which provides 90 minutes free labour for £59; and the AA Premium Cover, which offers three hours of labour, plus £100 of parts and materials for £89.



AA: Lack of take-up dooms scheme

Granada Home Technology is launching a TV advertising campaign for its first digital television package. The push, through Abbott Mead Vickers. BBDO, features Top Gear presenter Jeremy Clarkson. It aims to show consumers how Granada can help them avoid being saddled with outdated technology. The TV 2000 scheme offers viewers a Nicam stereo television and a set-top box, compatible with digital terrestrial TV consortium British Digital Broadcasting. The equipment will subsequently be replaced by an integrated set once it becomes available, in about two years' time. Media for the campaign is being handled by New PHD.





## Principles bridges North/South divide

Oxford-based Marketing Principles and Leeds-based Advertising Principles have joined forces to enable the two companies to offer a fuller range of marketing services in each of the regional centres.

'The geography is ideal,' enthuses Marketing Principles managing director, David Croydon. 'We see the Leeds base as a gateway into the North. Many clients prefer to use agencies close to them so we hope this will open up a whole new client base for us.'



Getting closer: Ruel Hudson (left) group manager of Advertising Principles with David Croydon, MD of Marketing Principles

## Superhero update

Classic hero Action Man has been enjoying a new lease of life during 1995 and is currently starring in an eight-week children's meal promotion running in 57 Woolworth cafés countrywide. Taking a similar format to the McDonalds 'Happy Meal', the 'Action Man Mission Meal' includes a sandwich, drink and Action Man gift.

The character, represented in this country by 3D Licensing, is also seeking favour from the 16-30 year-old youth market with the planned launch of a branded clothing range through leading male youth multiple, Top Man.

## Daddies helps kiddies' charity

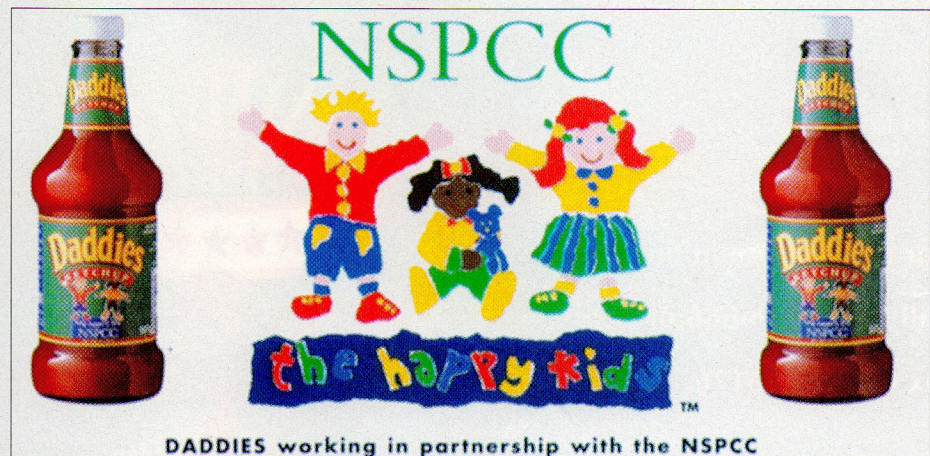
The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) has joined up with HP Foods' Daddies Tomato Ketchup brand to form a fundraising initiative which is expected to raise upwards of £80,000 in the first year. Daddies, currently lying second in the UK ketchup league, is now sporting a specially redesigned label which features the NSPCC's 'Happy Kids' design. For every one of the new bottles sold, HP is donating 1p to the charity, with a proportion of money raised going towards funding the NSPCC's Christmas TV advertising campaign.

Head of corporate funding at the NSPCC, Ian McLaren, believes the link between the two names was a natural one to make, as both 'reach out to families'. He says that the charity worked closely with HP on all aspects

of the current fundraising campaign and is now looking forward to a lasting partnership with the company.

HP Foods managing director, Andrew Marsden, is also keen to emphasise the long-term nature of this 'strategic partnership'. 'The link with the NSPCC is an ongoing initiative which aims to motivate customers to reconsider their Tomato Ketchup purchasing habits,' he explains. 'This will drive sales and benefit the work of the NSPCC.' HP is putting together an extensive publicity programme to support the initiative and says it has further awareness-building campaigns planned for 1996.

● The £67m tomato ketchup market is currently dominated by Heinz, who hold a 60.3 per cent volume share.



Daddies tomato ketchup's redesigned label featuring the NSPCC's 'Happy Kids' design

## Mirror promotion criticised by ASA

A recent scratchcard promotion in *The People* and *Daily Mirror* has come under fire from the Advertising Standards Authority for 'causing considerable disappointment to many people'.

In its recent report the ASA upheld 26 complaints against Mirror Group Newspapers for a promotion which offered money prizes to readers whose card numbers matched those given on a premium rate telephone message. Consumers who had received their scratchcards in *The People* were dismayed to find that their cards were not valid for the 'Mystery Bonus Cash Hotline' on 3 July and objected that there had been no prior indication of this.

While the ASA acknowledged that the Mirror Group had taken action to correct the

error – a separate draw was set up for disgruntled *People* readers – the advertisers were ticked off for not making the situation clear.

► Complaints brought against Shell's 1994 'Make Money' promotion by the Shell Corporate Pressure Group and Don Marketing have not been upheld. The complainants claimed that the promotion – which involved matching two halves of the same value note for a cash prize – was severely flawed, as it was possible for staff to identify envelopes which contained the winning half notes. Following investigation, the watchdog ruled that the risk of staff being able to breach the security of the game was 'no greater than the likelihood of unfair acts by other means' and that the Codes had not been breached.