Marlboro Man Encyclopedia Article

Marlboro Man

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Contents

Marlboro Man Encyclopedia Article.....1

Contents.....2

Marlboro Man.....3

Marlboro Man

Marlboro is America's best-selling cigarette, and a major reason for its popularity can be traced to a cowboy. He is not classically handsome, nor does he wear fancy clothes or a gunbelt cinched around his lean hips. Rather, he is a working man, his face weathered from the sun and wind, his clothing sturdy and functional. He works on a real ranch, and he works hard. And when he wants a smoke, he reaches for a Marlboro.

However, when Marlboro was first marketed in the 1920s, Philip Morris had women smokers in mind, and the advertising slogan was "Mild as May." Consequently, Marlboro was a "ladies smoke" until the 1950s brought the first research linking smoking with lung cancer. This had many smokers searching for a "safer" cigarette. Filters provided that illusion, but many considered filters to be effeminate. Thus, if Philip Morris wanted to sell Marlboro to men, the product's image had to be made more macho. And soon, courtesy of Chicago's Leo Burnett ad agency, the Marlboro man was born.

An example of the Marlboro Man advertising campaign.

Further Reading:

Lohof, Bruce A. *American Commonplace.* Bowling Green, Ohio, Popular Press, 1982.