

What about Juan Valdez?

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By Iulia Pascanu

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Juan Valdez is a most popular figure in the advertising world and the symbol of the Columbian 'cafetelero' since 1959.

Juan Valdez is a fictious character created in 1959 to represent the National Federation of Coffee Growers of Columbia (founded 1926).

His appearance is one of the steadiest in the advertising world, including allmost mythical moustace, sombrero, poncho and a mule-companion called Lana.

In the first commercials, Juan Valdez used to wonder-around in the coffee fields, picking with his hands the ripe coffee cerries, meaning to be the representative of those thousands Colombian 'cafeteros' (also called 'caficultores'). He managed to create a rather romantic figure of this guild, an immagine that collected many critics on its road to success.

The real situation of the cafetero in the early days of Juan Valdez was often described as dire poverty, insecurity of life because of guerillas and narco-trafficants, not to mention the DDT treatments of the coffee fields, which sometimes came by surprise, when people were at work. However, a situation that the Federation failed to represent.

Further, Juan Valdez moved from the farm to the average woman's kitchen, personally handing her a bag of – you can immagine – freshly processed coffee beans.

In TV commercials, Juan Valdez was first embodied by actor Jose Duval (until 1969, when he was no more representative). Carlos Sanchez of Medellin took his place. In the 1980's, the Juan Valdez commercials used Rolls Royce cars and luxury home residences. In the 1990's, a new campaign idea was released: 'grab life by the beans', and Juan Valdez had plenty of those. He's proven it in idilic frames with him surfing or snowboarding. In the late nineties however, Juan Valdez dissapeard for

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several years from the public attention, as the Colombian government drastically cut on his advertising funds.

Juan Valdez (Carlos Sanchez) made sort of a come-back in the year 2000, when he received the silver cross medal for national merit, from Mr. President of Columbia himself, Andres Pastrana.

The National Federation of Coffee Growers of Colombia opened its first 'Juan Valdez' Coffee shop in the Bogota airport, in december 2002. The appearance of Juan Valdez in movie 'Bruce Almighty' costed the Federation \$1,5 millions.

At this moment (the year 2004), the symbol of Columbian coffee, is trying to make a breakthrough to North America. The first 'Juan Valdez' coffee house was opened in september 2004 in Washington, and the second one month later in New York.

Ultimately, Juan Valdez aims the heart of American coffee-making, Seattle. Starbucks officials stated they do not feel threatened by the famous moustachioed as far. Gabriel Silva, the Columbian Federation's manager, said in return they're not planning to open 8,000 or 10,000 Juan Valdez establishments.

Iulia Pascanu writes for

www.madcoffeemaker.com

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Seinfeld: The Chairs

By Alex Reidiboim and Martin Winer

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Scene 1:

George and Jerry are at the diner having lunch. Jerry eats his sandwich while George stares blankly at the coffee in front of him.

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George: I don't approve of coffee.

Jerry: How could you not approve of coffee?

George: Well it's not so much coffee it's that whole Juan Valdez thing. Talk about cruelty to animals.

Jerry: Cruelty to animals? They make coffee out of beans... beans don't have feelings.

George: It's not the beans it's the donkey.

Jerry: The donkey?

George: Yah, have you noticed on the coffee package that Juan Valdez's mule doesn't look very happy?

Jerry: I don't want to know how you can tell when a mule is happy... Hang on a second, you drink coffee all the time.

George: I am in to passive resistance. I enlighten others as to the ills of our society hoping that they will do something about it. This is my niche in life.

This unaired Seinfeld script is an example of the comedic writing skills of Alex Reidiboim and Martin Winer. For any comedic writing needs, feel free to contact alex.reidiboim@utoronto.ca or martin_winer@hotmail.com

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