

Landscapes

Sustainable Impressions

That

the entertainment industry has a profound influence on social values is nothing new. Over 1,000 years ago, the romantic fables spread by wandering minstrels launched the age of chivalry which motivated knights to extreme and sometimes disastrous lengths in demonstrating their chivalrous virtues.

Fast-forward a thousand years, and the movie Bambi struck a blow to deer hunting everywhere in North America. Protest songs in the 1960s were the anthem of the powerful anti-war movement. Many people argue that nuclear power was brought to a virtual standstill in the 1970s by a movie that eerily predicted the events at Three Mile Island.

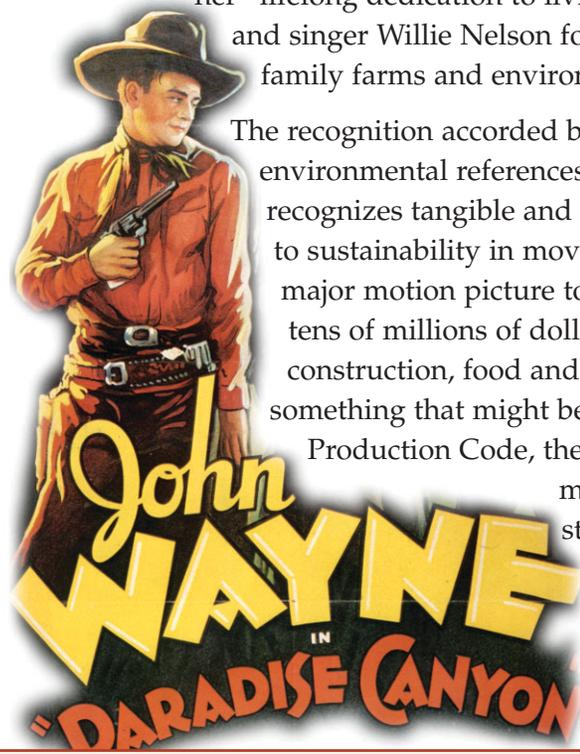
In 1989 in California, an organization was launched to channel the energies of the entertainment industry into positive environmental initiatives. The association, called the Environmental Media Association, or EMA, works on a number of fronts to bring the power of entertainment to the goals of sustainability. It cooperates with TV and film producers to “weave environmental messages into scripts” and encourages celebrities to act as role models for environmental action. With access to some of the icons of entertainment, EMA can create environmentally themed public service announcements using talents such as Gwyneth Paltrow, Christian Slater, Cameron Diaz and Canada’s Alanis Morissette.

Once a year, the EMA sponsors its Environmental Media Awards night to recognize efforts across the entertainment industry to promote a positive environmental message. Award categories cover the full gamut of production including television drama, comedy, children’s animation and children’s live action television. Movies, both drama and comedy are recognized as are documentaries. Among this year’s winners in the documentary category was a Canadian film called The Corporation, a production created and developed in British Columbia.

Special awards this year went to actress Daryl Hannah (see page 6) for her “lifelong dedication to living a sustainable lifestyle” and singer Willie Nelson for his “commitment to family farms and environmental causes.”

The recognition accorded by EMA goes far beyond environmental references in scripts. The association recognizes tangible and meaningful commitments to sustainability in movie production. Creating a major motion picture today involves spending tens of millions of dollars in resources, energy, construction, food and materials. Without something that might be called a Green

Production Code, the movie industry could be making movies with a strong environmental message, but making them in an environmentally indefensible manner.



EMA is in the forefront of encouraging environmentally responsible moviemaking.

If celebrities can influence ordinary individuals to adopt responsible environmental behaviours, they can have the same effect on corporations. The presence of major

corporate sponsors like Toyota and Eddie Bauer at the awards gala attests to the renewable energy of star power. In Toyota’s case, not only was it the lead sponsor for the event, but also



every celebrity attending arrived in a Toyota Prius, the energy efficient vehicle that has become the car-of-choice for environmentally conscious entertainers. Another sponsor was Canada’s Four Seasons Hotels, which owns the Beverly Wilshire Hotel in Hollywood. The hotel provided FORED with accommodation to attend the EMA event. Explaining Four Seasons’ support, a hotel spokesperson said “Our mission is to support reputable organizations such as the Environmental Media Association that provide a service to the community.”

Entertainers can also act as a catalyst for good corporate citizenship. When film star Edward Norton visited B.P. Solar to get an estimate on solar electricity for his home, he expressed a desire to work with the company in order to get solar power for people living in low income homes. The result was the B.P. Solar Neighbours’ Program. Every time a participating celebrity purchases a B.P. Solar home installation, the company donates the full solar home system to a low income family in Los Angeles. In another gesture of support, the Southern California Edison Company, California’s major hydro corporation, agreed to plant 1,000 trees in the Southern California area devastated by forest fires last year for every one of the hundreds of guests attending the gala event.

For the entertainers involved in supporting EMA, there is a difference between making a name and making a difference.



it started with Bambi