

American Expresses it: Sleaze

By ALEX MICHELINI

Daily News Staff Writer

American Express accused three sex novelty companies yesterday of hitting below the belt.

The financial services company said in a Manhattan Federal Court suit that the firms tarnished the American Express image by peddling a "sleazy" greeting card containing a condom and the phrase, "Never Leave Home Without It."

The look-alike card is fashioned in slick green-and-white cardboard in the same shape and size as the American Express credit card.

Even the famous American Express gladiator was

purloined, the company charged. The cover contains the familiar design under the words "Universal America Express" or "Amelica Express."

The condom is stuck in a small pocket on the inside.

American Express claimed trademark infringement and unfair competition, saying the cards resemble its credit card and motto, "Don't Leave Home Without It."

In addition to damaging its reputation, the company said, the gimmick card might wrongly lead some to believe that it was promoting condoms as a public service.

Federal Judge Charles Haight Jr. ordered the seizure of the novelty cards

and temporarily barred the firms from producing or selling any more pending a hearing Monday.

American Express also wants damages amounting to triple the profits from the sale of the sex cards.

Jerry Wisotsky Jr., vice president of Hollywood Creations Co., W. 20th St., said the card was "nothing but a piece of garbage."

He added: "We didn't look to hurt anybody. It's a joke."

He said he had turned over "five or six gross" of the cards to American Express. Nalpac Ltd. of Oak Park, Mich., and Maxson International, with two Manhattan offices, also are named in the suit.

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Grossing out at Amex' cost

Has the condom craze gone too far? Ask American Express. The famous firm's famous slogan—as in "don't leave home without it"—has been appropriated by three sex novelty companies to help sell sleazy greeting cards. Ditto for Amex' well-known gladiator symbol.

American Express is suing. And rightly so. Not only has the company's distinctive green and white credit card been copied, but the greeting card in question contains a small pocket inside containing a condom. Which is not what American Express is selling.

A federal judge in Manhattan has ordered the novelty cards seized, and has temporarily barred their production or sale pending a hearing. Good. This type of commercialization of condoms serves to trivialize the use of a truly vital tool in the battle against venereal disease and AIDS.

The guys who thought up the gimmick ought to have their mouths washed out with soap. And their designers should be put to work gratis producing respectable 1988 Christmas cards for the needy. Funny it is not.

12/29/87
CURT - Am
Editorial
endorsement
of our
condom case!
cc: J. Hoffner
LOS WISOTSKY MG

MIAMI HERALD

NEW YORK

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Pg 29A

Condom 'credit card' ordered seized

NEW YORK — A federal judge Monday ordered the seizure of materials sold by firms marketing condoms with a simulated American Express credit card reading "Never leave home without it."

U.S. District Judge Charles Haight ordered the seizure as part of a temporary restraining order against further use of the American Express gladiator logo, a look-alike credit card, the words "American Express" and the words "Never leave home without it."

Named in a suit filed by American Express were Jerry Wistosky Jr., Hollywood Creations Co., Vibra Approved Laboratories of New York, Maxson International (USA) Corp., also of New York, and Nalpac, Ltd. of Oak Park, Mich.

BUSINESS

LEDGER

American Express Files Suit Over Condom Spoof

American Express sued a Manhattan novelty concern yesterday over a condom-equipped spoof of its famous credit card that advised: "Don't Leave Home Without It." Unamused, American Express claimed trademark infringement and sought unspecified damages in a civil suit filed at federal court in Manhattan. The court issued a temporary restraining order against further sale of the cards and scheduled a hearing for next Monday.

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THE TIMES DIARY

Homing in

American Express is going to court to defend its trademark sales slogan: "Never leave home without it". The company is suing a Manhattan novelty outfit for marketing a greetings card with the slogan on the cover and a

condom inside. American Express argues that in addition to damaging its reputation, the gimmick card could lead people to believe it was promoting condoms as a public service. The slogan is also being used in a joke now popular in the U.S. It runs: Gorbachov has launched a Soviet rival called Russian Express. Its motto? "Don't leave home."

