

169

APRIL
2017

shots

Music & Sound Special

AUDIBLE EXCELLENCE

Amsterdam Focus

SMALL TOWN, BIG IDEAS

Matt Eastwood

UNICORNS DO EXIST

TOP DOG
AT DUBAI
LYNX

James Bland



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“...despite your numerous tours of Glastonbury and multitude of classic band t-shirts, you’re probably not an expert, and it’s not as simple as finding a song everyone agrees is a ‘cheewn’.”



Music is one of the most subjective topics in the process of creating a commercial because every person involved knows about music – though I use the term ‘knows’ advisedly. Everyone has an opinion about what is a good track and what song might work best with what pictures. Whether you’re an EDM aficionado, a rock’n’roll devotee or a pop fanatic, whatever you like to listen to always seems to sound best. But then, despite your numerous tours of Glastonbury and multitude of classic band t-shirts, you’re probably not an expert, and it’s not as simple as finding a song everyone agrees is a ‘cheewn’.

In this issue’s music and sound design special we’ve spoken to a number of people who you can call experts and we’ve asked their opinion on pairing music and moving images. Whether it’s brands aligning more closely with artists to create mutually beneficial partnerships, such as the one FKA twigs has struck up with Nike (Finger Music’s Chris Phelps on page 35), or the ability for artists and brands – to be at the forefront of a new wave of protest songs (MassiveMusic’s Paul Reynolds on page 42), we have a medley of musings for you to mull

over. There are also interviews with some of the sector’s most prominent proponents of the art including Sam Ashwell, Sam ‘Squeak E Clean’ Spiegel and our cover star Abi Leland, the musical magician behind the John Lewis Christmas ads.

Music’s not the only thing we delve into over the course of this issue. Our deputy editor, Selena Schleh, defied those pesky Brexiteers by embracing one of our European neighbours: namely Amsterdam. From page 51 she reports on a city that may be geographically small, but which is punching well above its creative weight. We also spread our wings by heading to the Middle East ahead of the 2017 Dubai Lynx festival and discuss, from page 70, the importance of film craft and the difficulty of defining branded content by talking to the jury presidents for those two categories, Blink’s James Bland and Havas Sport and Entertainment’s Fredda Hurwitz.

As if that wasn’t enough, elsewhere we speak to JWT global CCO and ‘unicorn of adland’, Matt Eastwood, whose mix of intense creativity and dogged discipline has seen him steer the JWT behemoth to new heights (page 64). There’s also an interview with Tom



Rainsford, the brand director of mobile phone network, giffgaff, who reveals the thinking behind the brand’s creative strategy (page 24) and on page 16 director Henry Hobson discusses his journey from directing an independent, Arnold Schwarzenegger-starring movie to helming high profile, narrative-driven commercials. Basically, this issue’s like a print version of an eclectic mix tape someone who really fancies you might make.

Danny Edwards
Editor
@shotsmag_dan

Top shots editor Danny Edwards, as seen through the eyes of Simon Dovar, who created the opening illustration for our Music & Sound Design Special – page 29

Above James Bland EP/managing partner at Blink London, discusses his role as Dubai Lynx Film Craft jury president, page 70

Below Get Blipping! Additional content using the Blippar app is available throughout the magazine

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shots 169

April 2017

News Insight Inspiration
shots.net**shots 169 / front cover**

We have two different cover stars this issue: Leland Music's **Abi Leland**, who talks beats to bounce to on page 40, and Blink's **James Bland** who gets crafty on page 70.

**shots 169 contributors**

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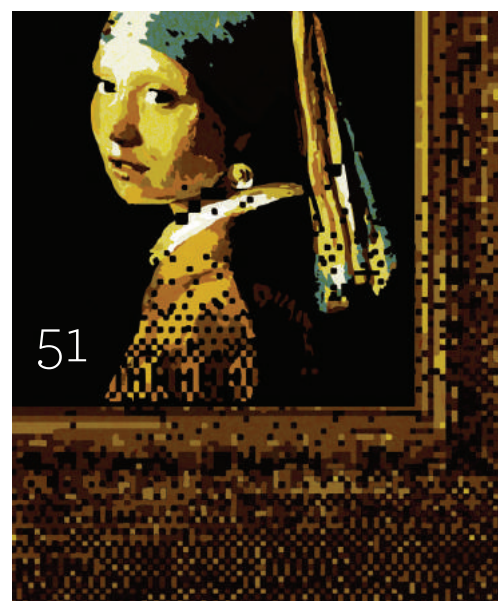
Would you believe that our next issue is this year's **Cannes Special**? Well, it is. We'll be drilling down into the potential highlights from this year's Croisette contenders and talking to a selection of judges. We'll also be taking a bite out of the Big Apple in our special **New York focus**.

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**Key to symbols**

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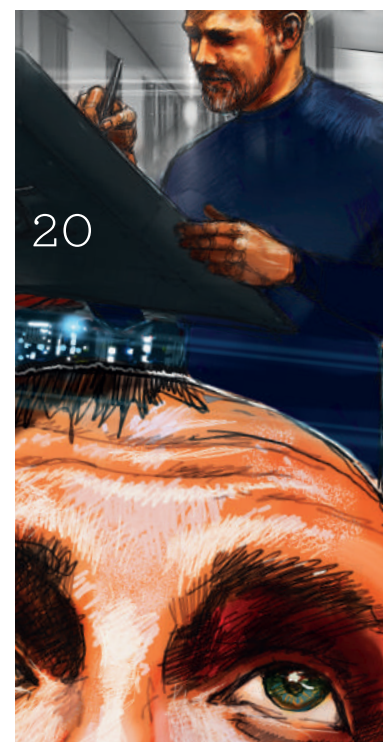
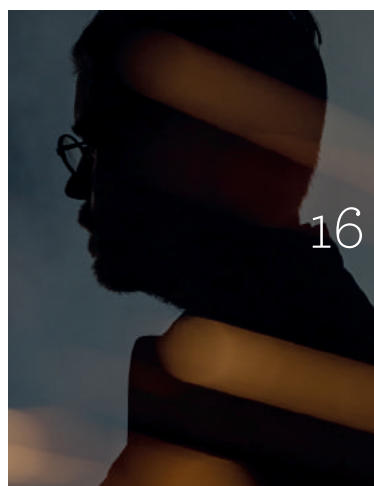
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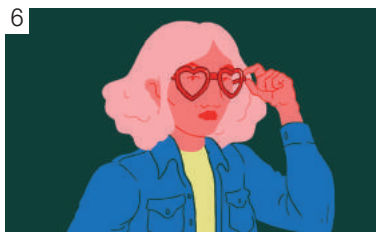
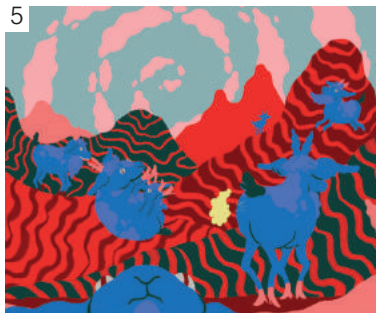
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Anthony Burrill for 2AM





Playtime for dad and Barbie

TV & CINEMA



Barbie
Dads Who Play Barbie

Many dads don't realise that the time they spend hunched on the floor, playing Barbie with their daughters directly impacts on the girls' decisions and prospects in later life. Unveiled during this year's NFL playoffs, BBDO San Francisco targeted fathers by screening a docu-style spot to highlight the importance of father-daughter playtime.

Inspired by research led by Linda Nielsen at Wake Forest University, which found that girls with actively-involved fathers are more likely to graduate from college, secure a higher-paying job and generally feel more confident – the spot encouraged fathers to trade in their Sunday sports-watching routines and set foot inside their daughters' worlds, by focusing on six fathers who regularly play Barbie.

"It's a brand that very few dads have any past relationship with, yet we're telling them to get down on the floor and play," says BBDO's ECD Matt Miller, who regularly joins in with his own daughter's play. "But once we saw the troves of research that showed the more involved a dad is in his daughter's imaginative play, the more he contributes to her real life development, our job became very easy."

Follow #DadsWhoPlayBarbie. You never know... you might actually enjoy Barbie world once you set foot in it. **OA**

Unfolding the fabric of sustainability

ONLINE FILM



Selfridges
Material World

Sustainability is one of the biggest buzzwords in fashion at the moment, but the image it conjures up is one of hemp sack-like garments rather than stylish threads. Luxury UK retailer Selfridges is aiming to change that via its new campaign *Material World*, following on from 2016's *Bright New Things* initiative, which showcased innovative designers using sustainable working processes.

Spearheading the campaign is this short animated documentary directed by Anna Ginsburg – a recent addition to Passion Pictures' young talent arm, Strange Beast – which brings to life the drawings of illustrator/designer Sara Andreasson (whose bold, colourful artwork has previously graced these very pages).

What fresh work is this? This issue we look at newly minted spots that reflect an increasingly stressful world, encouraging fantasy, play, better working with weed, and political activism through the very modern methods of shopping and social media

7



1/2 Barbie, Dads Who Play Barbie

3/4/5/6 Selfridges, Material World

7 The Fifty, The Fifty Weed

Weed to feed the creative soul

PRODUCT DESIGN



The Fifty
The Fifty Weed

Inspiration running low? Need help to keep those creative juices flowing? Well, Colorado agency TDA_Boulder and marijuana grower Colorado Kind may have the solution: limited-edition cannabis targeted at ad industry types.

Available in three strains – Concepting Indica, taking creatives' minds and bodies to another universe; Strategy Hybrid, which offers "focus, connecting patterns and outliers quickly and for those who seek the truth" (i.e. strategists); and Coding Sativa, for technologists who need something to "drive [them] through 1s and 0s all night" – The Fifty Weed is part of a promotional campaign for the Denver Ad Club's annual award show, The Fifty.

The limited-edition leaves – only available in the state of Colorado – went on sale at the end of February, so whether we'll see a glut of creative campaigns or just a boom in statewide pizza deliveries remains to be seen... **SS**

Combining snippets of interviews with seamless 2D animation, the two-minute film spotlights the ways brands are working to make stylish clothing more sustainable, be that using replacement materials like Tencel and yak wool or simply re-working vintage items, and contains some fascinating but sobering facts – did you know that one pair of jeans takes 4,000 litres of water to produce?

One of the biggest challenges for Ginsburg was cutting down over eight hours of audio to two-and-a-half minutes, while a team of eight animators worked on the storyboard frame by frame. The result is a beautifully crafted, thought provoking film, that will make you reconsider your high-street shopping habits. **SS**

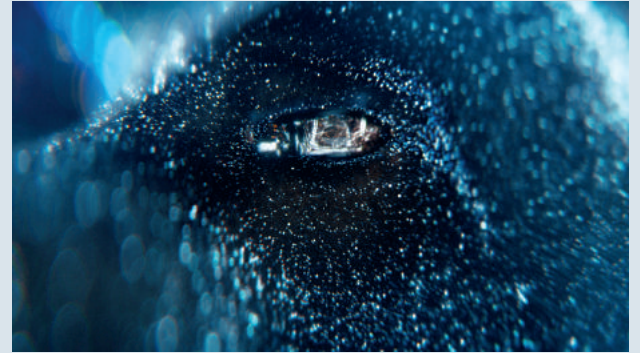
Telling stories at the speed of light

TV & CINEMA



Audi

Pure Imagination



If a new campaign for Audi is to be believed, androids dream not of electric sheep, but wolves, wormholes through space and dazzling neon cityscapes. Combining futuristic visuals with the nostalgic strains of Gene Wilder singing *Pure Imagination*, the hypnotic spot, created by BBH London and directed by Nexus' GMUNK, features eye-popping VFX courtesy of The Mill. Below, GMUNK tells *shots* about crafting an extraordinary imaginary world and why AI will embolden, not threaten, human creativity.



"We used a ton of lensing techniques... each generates movement where there isn't any. These types of techniques are my favourite – essentially playing tricks on the eye."

At what stage were you brought onto the project?

I was brought in during the early pitch development phase – I took the agency's brief and rough storyboards, grabbed the reins and made it my own. The big challenge with this project was to create a dream world that was acceptable to a widespread mainstream audience, so we had to create an aesthetic palette that people would find approachable, yet wanting to remain as abstract and moody as we could get away with. So we pushed forward with the language

of light – its vibrance being something that would create an illuminated world that didn't feel scary or too dark.

What inspired the aesthetic and style of the spot?

The look of the spot was inspired by the aesthetic of anamorphic lensing in our CG world, so the bokeh [out-of-focus backgrounds] was distorted and everything existed in a very shallow depth of field, accentuating the dream-like qualities of out-of-focus

light. However, the most important technique for the team was to create an illuminated lidar [3D scanned] world, as the narrative was about an artificial intelligence creating its own dream world, so everything had to be data driven.

This resulted in ultra-dense point clouds generating all the objects in the scenes, allowing them to transition seamlessly from each thought, and then giving them illuminated properties while lensing them aggressively with anamorphic techniques and wide open apertures, to create our world.

How closely did you work with The Mill to achieve the complicated VFX?

We worked very closely, with weekly check-ins and creative meetings throughout the process. My extensive background in design and VFX meant we all spoke the same language, which made the process much easier.

Why did you decide to use an edit without cuts and rely so heavily on design?

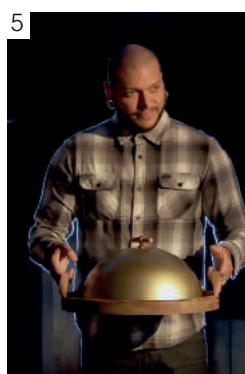
We thought it would feel much more dream-like if the voyage was

uninterrupted, where each visual element transitioned seamlessly into each other. I don't necessarily think it made things harder, it just meant we had to be a bit more laced-up with our planning and preparation. One thing we did to embellish the single-shot approach was use a ton of lensing techniques in this film – methods like dolly zooms, spherical wrap distortions and rack focusing, each of which generates a lot of movement where in reality there isn't any, due to optical aberrations. These types of techniques are my favourite thing – essentially playing tricks on the eye using optical illusions and making the single take concept much more dream-like.

The spot imagines the creative potential of artificial intelligence. Do you think AI represents a threat to human creativity?

I certainly do not. I actually think artificial intelligence will embolden creativity on all levels by becoming a creative partner and collaborator. Presently, creatives are using AI to iterate and discover new methods of creative thinking and problem solving, and I certainly plan on tapping into it as well – what could possibly go wrong? **OA**





1/2/3/4/5/6 Johnsonville,
The Sausage Dome

7/8/9 Amnesty International,
#TakeAction



“The #TakeAction campaign ran for one week, in which all refugee-related tweets were personally responded to with footage live-streamed from refugee camps in Kenya and Lebanon.”

Live streaming life as a refugee

SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN



For all those who have felt disheartened or unsure of how to support the global refugee crisis, Ogilvy & Mather London has created a campaign aimed at providing a solution and inspiring international action.

It seemed an appropriate time to launch #TakeAction for Amnesty International just days after Donald Trump's 'Muslim ban', an executive order denying refugees and other travellers from seven Muslim-majority countries entry into America. Responding to the fact that almost 10,000 people tweet their support for refugees on a daily basis, O&M wanted to find a way to get more people to personally understand and engage with the situation and the people involved.

Realising how many young people have been vocal about the subject, actively posting their opinions about refugees on social media, O&M decided that connecting refugees based in Kenyan and Lebanese camps with Twitter users would help to humanise and share their stories.

So, O&M sent a core team out to these camps to film and live stream the stories of real refugees, providing them with an opportunity to speak for themselves, share their experiences and individually thank tweeters for their support.

The campaign ran for one week, in which all refugee-related tweets were personally responded to with footage live-streamed from Kenya and Lebanon.

Each reply also encouraged tweeters to take action and sign a global petition that was presented to UN secretary general António Guterres on 6 February, urging him to resolve the ongoing conflict.

“We’ve had a wonderful response from the refugees in the camps – who are all very ordinary people like ourselves in extraordinary circumstances,” says

O&M's CCO Mick Mahoney. “They, like us, use social media. Our hope is that this campaign will help to motivate people to take the next step in encouraging governments to take their share of the responsibility to resolve the crisis that continues to impact millions of people worldwide.” **OA**

Humble sausage in starring role

WEB FILMS



Sausage advertising isn't usually held up as a sector of the business that can shine a creative light for all others to follow. To be fair, Wall's has done some interesting, mainly dog-based stuff, with singing, miniature canines taking centre stage a few years back and, before that, back in the halcyon days of the early 80s, a dog that growled the word “Wall's” when asked to say “sausages”.

However, in the last few years, Droga5 has put the sausage back on the creative map with work for brand Johnsonville. They introduced the new 'holiday' of Bratsgiving, created a surreal sausage dream in a spot called *Bratfast in Bed* and even allowed the employees of Johnsonville to co-create a series of brilliantly outlandish commercials for the American banger brand.

Recently, just ahead of Super Bowl LI, which took place in early February, Droga5 and Johnsonville released their campaign

for the big game, *The Sausage Dome* – a cross between *MasterChef* and *Dragon's Den*. The online show features a selection of people coming face-to-face with six real Johnsonville employees and sausage experts whom the plucky contestants need to impress with their sausage-based game day recipes.

Our experts – called the Sausage Six, naturally – sample the food, quiz the creators and then decide whose recipe gets to be immortalised in the Johnsonville Big Game Binder, which forms part of the digital and print campaign.

The debut episode of the three-part series, called *A Twist of Fate*, sees the first three wannabe sausage stars champion their dishes, with a second trio stepping up to the sausage plate in episode two, *Tears of Glory*. At the time of going to press, the third episode was still to come. But we're all licking our lips in anticipation. **DE**



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GOING GLOBAL

USA

No one can hear you snore

ONLINE



Cisco Spark
The Space Hotel

Ever imagined what it would be like to holiday in space? Goodby Silverstein & Partners has been wondering the same thing in a campaign to promote Cisco Spark, a team messaging, video calling and interactive drawing service. The agency summoned space traveller Anousheh Ansari, space tech research professor David Barnhart, hotel expert Brian Kelly and interior designer Nicole Hollis to discuss the possibility of realistically creating a hotel in lower Earth orbit.

The campaign highlights how the power of teamwork – and a platform on which to share information, meet virtually and plan the impossible – can transform any idea into reality... including holidaying in space.

The plush hotel the team came up with boasts luxury facilities, sleeping sacks that overlook planet Earth, a gravity defying shower and the universe's first zero-G swimming pool.

While the hotel is definitely not being developed yet (at least, it wasn't at press time), the team were confident that building a hotel in space was actually feasible and confirmed that their plans aren't as unbelievable as they initially sound.

"Late last year, both President Obama and Elon Musk announced plans for a trip to Mars, so this idea doesn't seem that far-fetched," says the agency's associate partner/CD, Will Elliott. "Our new campaign shows how Cisco Spark helps teams turn big ideas, such as the galaxy's first space hotel, into reality."

Watch this space! **OA**



ILLUSTRATION: CHRIS MADDEN



FRANCE

Bienvenue Americans

ONLINE FILM



Speakwell
#SaveAnAmerican

For those in the USA not exactly overjoyed about the current occupation of the White House, this rather sweet campaign from Paris-based agency Gloryparis, for language trainer Speakwell, extends a hand of friendship across the pond to our bewildered cousins.

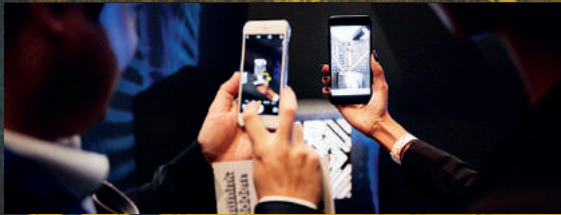
In the wake of the US presidential election last year, a stream of US citizens sought to leave their homeland, even crashing the official Canadian immigration website in their quest to head north. Playing on the idea that many Americans are seeking somewhere to get away from the madness, Speakwell decided to help out by offering free English language workshops to French families wishing to host an American 'refugee'.

The campaign's tongue-in-cheek video – which viewers were encouraged to share using the hashtag #SaveAnAmerican – features a host of would-be French hosts offering warm welcomes and a promise to learn English to enhance their hospitality.

One French farmer offers accommodation in his "grande maison", along with the opportunity to help him look after his cows. Well, some might say shovelling Gallic cow shit has got to be better than drowning in congressional bullshit... **CC**



"Speakwell decided to help out by offering free English language workshops to French families wishing to host an American 'refugee'."



USA

Revealing hidden STEM stories

AR APP


IBM
Outthink Hidden

Ogilvy & Mather LA has teamed up with 20th Century Fox, along with IBM and the *New York Times'* creative agency, T Brand Studio, to release an AR app chronicling the women behind Fox's newly released film *Hidden Figures*. *Outthink Hidden* highlights the story behind the film's leading ladies and shines some light on the often forgotten African-American women who helped launch astronaut John Glenn into space in the 1960s.

The film brought attention to the largely unknown story, which is why O&M decided to support its efforts and create a campaign celebrating the role that women played during the space race across science, technology, economics and mathematics (STEM).

Released at Nevada's CES tech festival earlier this year, the campaign launched using holograms of the film's main characters. By wandering into an interactive booth, festival attendees could activate the holograms' stories through a motion sensor.

Users of the free AR app can find out more information about the eight women who inspired the film and unlock additional content about female STEM achievements. The app contains a map so users can locate markers in places such as the California Institute of Technology. Pointing a smart device at a marker reveals more inspiring stories of women's achievements in STEM from the past. **OA**

UAE

Did you mean to say that?

TV & CINEMA


Snickers
The Warning

We've all been there. A long day. A boring meeting. You've made your contribution and somewhere around the seventh or eighth endless data presentation or PowerPoint drone-on your mind starts wandering. No one notices, they're all probably doing the same, kicking back, doodling, or just staring vacantly into space thinking about what to have or where to go for lunch. Your stomach starts rumbling and the noise slowly brings you back to life and you realise the boss is calling your name and everyone is staring expectantly at you.

Well, Snickers takes this idea and runs with it in another funny execution of their ongoing 'You're not you when you're hungry' campaign. Created by Impact BBDO Dubai, the spot opens with Danny, our office worker protagonist, suddenly confronted with a version of himself from the future, a version who looks like he's just come from the top of a very cold, snowy mountain, who tells him he has to eat a Snickers before he heads to the meeting. Danny asks why and we cut to a narrative which shows him drifting off and saying yes to a question he never heard – thus taking a job in a very remote, very cold outpost. The amusing spot was shot by Maged Nassar through Good People. **DE**

ARGENTINA

Rock-a-bye baby in the car seat

INNOVATION

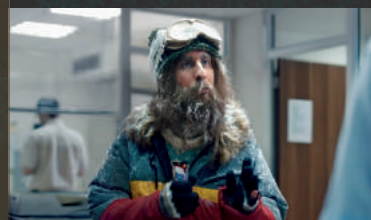
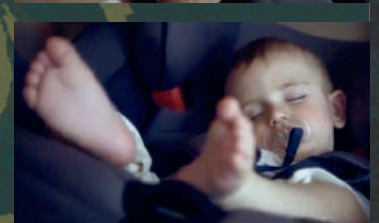
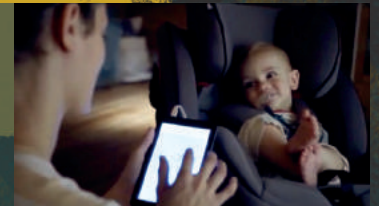

Renault
Baby Home Seat

It's a well-known fact that babies, in general, like being driven in the car. The soothing sound of the engine, the rocking motion as the car makes its way along the road... put a snot-nosed, crying, devil-baby in a car and, boom, two minutes later you (hopefully) have a beautiful, angelic and, most importantly, sleeping child. But being in the car isn't always practical so what to do? Enter car manufacturer Renault. The team that works on their family car, the Logan, has devised an ingenious contraption called the Baby Home Seat, which imitates a car journey, including the sounds and motions, so you get the magical effects without having to leave the house.

Created in partnership with a creative team from Publicis Buenos Aires and led by general CD Fabio Mazia, the innovative product includes an intuitive app, available for smartphones and tablets, which lets you choose the sound, route, distance and interactions of the sleep-inducing faux drive.

"We always want to think of ideas for our customers that achieve change and improve people's lives," says Mazia. "In accordance with that aim, we created this prototype." The Baby Home Seat has a platform with two engines that provide power to move the chair while the Bluetooth connection allows for music and sound reproduction to really make the 'journey' seem real.

Though we're not sure you should necessarily leave your baby in it all night, if you're parents looking for a couple of hour's respite, look no further... **DE**



It may feel like all eyes are fixed on the US but the world is still turning and creatives are still coming up with ways to make things better, from baby-rocking innovations to an idea for escaping the planet altogether...

BEAUTIFULLY UNFORGIVING



Simone Moessinger, creative director at 72andSunny Amsterdam, is attracted to the honest viewpoints of artists such as Martin Parr and abhors the dishonesty of the most creative campaign of recent times; the US election. In other news, she's in dire need of a time machine and she and her son would be dead without Google

What is the most creative advertising idea you've seen in the last few months?

The recent election campaigns were creative, but not in a positive way. The ability to distort and shift people's thinking was, and continues to be, horrifying. The only, and very important, good to come out of it is that it caused a change in people. People feel empowered and compelled to participate and create change now. A lot of advocates have emerged. That's great. And if I'm honest that's all we can hope to achieve in our work.

What's your favourite website/app?

Hangouts. Skype. WhatsApp. FaceTime. Viber. Basically anything that enables me to talk to my favourite people from all over the world about nothing at all, for nothing at all, deserves all my love and favouritism.

What website do you use most regularly?

Google. The amount of questions I ask Google is concerning. Especially when I had just had my child. Every other search was about what I could/couldn't or should/shouldn't do with him. Google was my everything. Google is probably why he, and I, are still alive.

Instagram or Twitter?

Instagram captions.

What product could you not live without?

A coffee machine. I mean I know I could, technically – I just wouldn't want to.

What product hasn't been invented yet that would make your life/job better?

A time machine that gives me an extra hour or two a day. But just for me. Because if other people had it then I'd be back in the same situation. Basically I would just like 26 hours to everyone else's 24.

What track/artist would you listen to for inspiration?

Sometimes, when I'm alone, I'll listen to coaching monologues on YouTube. Especially when it's early in the morning and I've just finished my first coffee. One can get so pumped. If it's meant to make a 300-pound linebacker make a halftime comeback, then it'll most likely work for me.

What shows/exhibitions have most inspired you recently?

Sophie Calle and Miranda July are absolute favourites. So even when I can't manage to see their work in person I'll simply find anything of theirs online and scroll through it (with a glass of wine in hand) as if I were strolling through a gallery. It's a true treat for the soul.

What fictitious character do you most relate to?

All of the emotion characters in *Inside Out*. Except, perhaps I'd add 'Optimism'.

What's the best film you've seen over the last year?

Nothing I've seen lately measures up to *Force Majeure* [Cannes 2014 Jury Prize-winning psychodrama]. I loved its simple premise, how the entire film lingered on one moment; one subconscious decision that unravelled so much.

What's your favourite magazine?

I propose a new magazine: the cover and comics from *The New Yorker*, articles from *Scientific American*, and the final page of *Vanity Fair*.

"Sometimes, when I'm alone, I'll listen to coaching monologues on YouTube. Especially when it's early in the morning and I've just finished my first coffee. One can get so pumped."

If you could live in one city, where would it be?

I'm pretty happy with Amsterdam. The privilege of having a 10-minute cycle into work is pretty unmatched. On a beautiful day it's a 10-minute bike ride across canals. On a bad day it's a 10-minute bike ride in the cold and windy rain. Either one is pretty manageable.

Who's your favourite photographer?

Martin Parr. He knows how to capture us as we really are. It's beautifully unforgiving.

Who's your favourite designer?

Mike Mills. Anything he touches, touches my heart so profoundly. I love how he distills his thoughts, ideas, drawings, words and all to their basic selves. It's all so honest and human.

If you could have been in any band, what band would you choose?


I actually was in a band back in fifth grade. It was a band for the deaf community. We were called The Fabulous Flying Fingers and 'sang' in sign language. I would probably just be a lifer in that band if I could. But being a 30-something in a band with 10 year olds might be weird. Or maybe it is my calling. **S**



What inspires Moessinger:

- 1 The New Yorker covers
- 2 The design of Mike Mills – album cover for Wild Flag
- 3 The photography of Martin Parr
- 4 Artist and writer Sophie Calle
- 5 Performance artist and filmmaker Miranda July
- 6 The emotion characters from the film Inside Out
- 7 Coffee machines
- 8 The film Force Majeure





Director Henry Hobson goes over to the dark side, bringing a new strain of moody narrative drama to videogame promos and a graphic design discipline to shoots. He tells *David Knight* why his favourite thing to do is shout at Arnold Schwarzenegger

A full-page portrait of Henry Hobson, a man with a beard and glasses, shown in silhouette. He is looking out over a city skyline at night, with blurred lights from buildings and streets in the background. The text "HENRY HOBSON" is overlaid in a large, white, serif font.

HENRY HOBSON

Henry Hobson is in Brasov in the Carpathian Mountains, where it's 20 degrees below zero, talking about his current shoot, which is "keeping everyone on their toes, that's for sure," he says. "We have battalions of soldiers, different historical figures. We have scope, scale and the depth of history to play with. It's pretty special." This is actually the second part of a production that started in New Zealand, deep in *Lord of the Rings* country on South Island, where Hobson staged battle scenes with American actors Aaron Eckhart (*The Dark Knight*) and Jeffrey Dean Morgan (*The Walking Dead*), and top Chinese actor Fan Bingbing as the legendary commanders of different armies from history. Now Hobson is filming sequences in real medieval castles and villages around Brasov, adding more interior texture and atmosphere to this series of commercials for mobile game *Evony*.

"We can play with characters that have a pre-existing story and twist those stories and create new worlds," Hobson says of the ads, which are a big leap

"I'm pretty collaborative. In commercials when someone has been working for six months or a year on a script, you have to pay a lot of reverence to that."

of the imagination from the algorithm-based game itself. It is also the latest and most spectacular example of the type of ads that Hobson has been making for a while. He has built a reputation for adding a new cinematic live-action dimension to video game spots such as *Resistance 3*, *The Bureau* and *Halo 5*. These are dark, gripping, nerve-janglingly tense works – not usually terms associated with commercials. Hobson is now also applying this dramatic style to much bigger household-name brands.

In the past year he has worked with Gillette to tell a fast-moving story using characters and hardware from *Star Wars* movie *Rogue One*; directed an ad for Apple, highlighting the design and durability of the iPhone 7 through a near-monochromatic graphic style – probably the darkest Apple commercial ever; and helmed a PlayStation ad where a sinister shop owner displays the array of imaginative weaponry he sells in a gothic 'real life' version of the online PlayStation Store.

What's as remarkable as any of the tales Hobson tells is his own near-meteoric progress. He has gone from being fairly unknown in commercials to directing big budget ads in a little over two years. But like a lot of supposed overnight successes, there's more to the story. His previous career in graphic

"When you catch yourself shouting across the room to Schwarzenegger, him reacting to that and being changed by what you're saying – that for me was a key moment."

and motion design saw Hobson create title sequences for some of the biggest Hollywood movies of recent years, including *The Hangover Part II*, *Snow White and the Huntsman* and *The Help*. Furthermore, before he really cut it as a commercials director he had already directed a low budget feature – starring Arnold Schwarzenegger. He has demonstrated he can work with big names in filmmaking, now he's doing the same in advertising.

"I'm pretty collaborative," reflects Hobson. "In commercials when someone has been working for six months or a year on a script, you have to pay a lot of reverence to that. Ultimately, the most important part is communicating what the end goal is."

Hobson has latterly found success in the US, but he's English. Born in Salisbury and brought up in Yorkshire and Wiltshire, he was obsessed with filmmaking from his youth, shooting numerous Super 8 films. But having no

connections in film, he couldn't find a route into the industry. Instead he studied graphic design at the London College of Printing (now the London College of Communication) in London, which led him to a job at design group Why Not Associates.

Why Not was co-founded by music video and commercials director Howard Greenhalgh and, as Hobson says, "There was definitely a bent towards the filmmaking side when they started training me up – it meant I could bridge the various skillsets involved." When he began working in motion design, creating title sequences for the BBC and others, it got him noticed in Los Angeles. He moved to the US in 2009, initially to work on the Academy Awards show, and also to make title sequences for British director Guy Ritchie.

Hobson's work in titles design would give him access to more of Hollywood's big hitters, including Ridley Scott, Gore Verbinski and Rupert Sanders. Creating the titles for these directors' movies was, he says, like "becoming a sort of miniaturised auteur within someone else's project". He built his reputation by bringing a "slightly obtuse" British design sensibility on board.

"I approached it with the viewpoint of how I would like to see it, rather than how they wanted it to be."

Having created design elements for the Academy Awards for a few years, he was handed the role of lead designer for the 2015 show – the first Oscars with an expanded Best Picture category, with 10 nominations. Hobson's innovation was to give each award its own graphic personality within the show's overall unified aesthetic. For example, for the award for Best Production Design, he created a grid of objects from the physical props of each nominated film. For Best Picture, the iconic moments from each film were captured in a poster-like single frame.

Hobson's design work led to his filmmaking break in 2010 when he was approached to make an ad for the PlayStation game *Resistance 3*. The client was expecting an ad using assets from the game itself, but Hobson made a persuasive pitch to shoot live-action. "I didn't think the audience was going to relate to the characters [in the game itself]," he says. "I said we could make it happen for the budget, and said: 'Let's get behind the characters and tell a story of what could happen, not what has happened.'"

The ad was made on a shoestring but Hobson proved his point, building a nail-bitingly tense portrait of a group of survivors on a train crossing America, preparing to do battle with monsters as night falls. He went on to use the same approach on more promos for games such as *The Bureau* and *Evolve*. He also directed a gripping short film, *The Greys*, starring top screen villain Michael Ironside. The effectiveness of these films far exceeded their budgets, which Hobson attributes to the discipline of his design background.

"The major lesson I bring from the design world is the preparation that goes into it. I'll do my own board creation and work where I'm taking from storyboards and building further, photographing intensely, and being very methodical about how various choices are made."

You took my smartphone – big mistake

Hobson's design skills were instrumental when it came to directing his debut feature. *Maggie*, which was released in 2015, is a low-budget independent movie, which nonetheless stars Arnold Schwarzenegger, very much against type, as a father unable to prevent his daughter succumbing to a zombie virus. Hobson presented 200 pages of detailed storyboards for his vision of the movie to Schwarzenegger, who was also a producer.

"My preconceptions of Arnold were as a strong man who can solve all problems," he says. "But on meeting him I saw flashes of vulnerability. I immediately thought that this could be an interesting space for him." *Maggie* provided plenty of challenges – not least working with more than 20 producers on the movie – but it sealed Hobson's love of directing. "When you



Henry Hobson

Representation

Commercials

Furlined.com

Features CAA.com

Design

meandthebootmaker.com

Key work

- 1 Gillette *Every Story Has a Face*
 - 2 Mobile Strike *Fight*
 - 3 Halo 5 *A Hero Falls*
- PlayStation *You Won't Believe What's in Store*



catch yourself shouting across to Schwarzenegger, him reacting to that and being changed by what you're saying – that for me was a key moment.”

Hobson has since worked with Schwarzenegger again in different circumstances – on the spot *Fight* for mobile game *Mobile Strike*, which is also probably his most lighthearted work to date. It's an action-comedy with Arnie fighting his fellow hotel guests for his smartphone, setting off a mini-war. “We didn't know we were both involved until we were both locked in,” says Hobson. “And we realised we could play with a whole host of cinematic memories.”

He also calls *Fight* a “fun breather” from the narrative work that has flowed over the past couple of years, particularly since he joined LA's Furlined in 2014. These include two blockbuster ads for *Halo 5*, in which Hobson pushed an iconic videogame character into a new dramatic space by suggesting he had been killed off.

“What I enjoy about the videogame world is the ability to bring rich stories to life, and also twist expectations,” he says. “To be able to play with the *Halo* world and expand upon it and give it emotional resonance was a real highlight.”

Give yourself to the dark side

That feeling only intensified when he was able to enter the *Star Wars* universe with Gillette last year. He was effectively embedded in the production of the *Rogue One* movie, with access to all the toys. Then came the Apple iPhone 7 spot, where aspects of nature and the real world are fused into the device, which is only ever seen in silhouette. “That allowed all the strands from my world to come together from a graphic perspective,” says Hobson. “I think the visual look and aesthetic that Apple is leaning towards now is a lot braver than before.”

Henry Hobson is definitely playing in the big league now. And as he readies for another day's shoot on his latest blockbuster ad, he explains why his darker, dramatic, graphic style is no longer a barrier to working with more mainstream brands. In short, an audience that loves *Game Of Thrones* and *Breaking Bad* is ready for it.

“Fifteen years ago the contemporary fix would be soap opera, now we can see that soap opera can be spun in a moodier, involved story way,” he says. “I think the same can be said of commercials. People just love to be told a story.” **BS**

Henry Hobson is inspired by...

What's your favourite ever ad? [Frank] Budgen's PlayStation *Double Life*; [Jonathan] Glazer's Guinness *Dreamer*.

What product could you not live without? Muji pens.

What are your thoughts on social media? We have the first social media president, so it's a growing evil. Creating echo chambers of hate, allowing fear and untruth to run rampant. However, you can connect to old friends... so maybe it all balances out?

What's your favourite piece of tech? My smart carry-on case which has an abundance of semi-pointless tech but can charge my phone.

How do you relieve stress during a shoot? Not sitting down and always moving.

What's the last film you watched and was it any good? *Lion*, which was heartbreaking. Also, it showed India in a new light – no longer beholden to the trope of bright vivid colours, it felt entirely naturalistic and made the film that much more poignant.

What fictitious character do you most relate to? Alan Partridge.

If you weren't doing the job you do now, what would you like to be? Some kind of homeopathic healer. It would be great to get paid to talk bullshit.

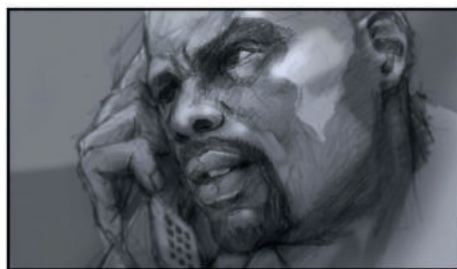
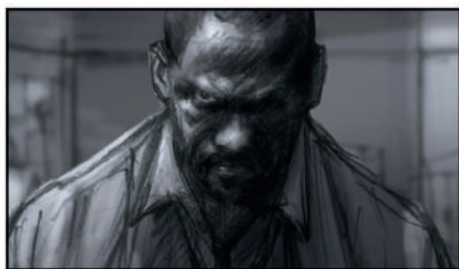
What film do you think everyone should have seen? *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*.

Tell us one thing about yourself that most people won't know... I have had the odd experience of haunting myself... On a shoot in Hull I was put in a B&B in the town I grew up in. When I got there it turned out to be my old house from early childhood. The landlady informed me that the house was haunted by the ghosts of the previous owners – though I hadn't told her my family were the previous owners. I didn't sleep at all that night with the thought of a small ghost version of myself. True story.

DANCING ON WAVES

Likening his role as director to a captain steering a ship through choppy seas, Caswell Coggins, whose diverse body of work ranges from Lily Allen promos to Xbox ads, insists a film needs a “map”; his cartographer of choice being storyboarder Kore Antonsen, who also helps him come up with concepts. Though their passions may differ – Antonsen once had a career in surfing; Coggins makes contemporary dance films – as the duo tell *Carol Cooper*, their love of riffing, bodies in motion and teamwork makes filmmaking plain sailing





Trailer for BBC
TV series *Luther*

It was one of those Christmas-is-over-deal-with-it January Monday mornings that make people want to lie down in the middle of the M25. For Londoners, there was also a train and tube strike, horizontal rain and gusts of bitter, broily-breaking wind. A dark day. Yet, when I staggered into the London offices of Another Film Company, the sun seemed to be shining indoors. In a bright, cheery meeting room there was a plate of good biscuits, some fine tea and Caswell Coggins with a ready smile, awaiting the arrival of his stalwart storyboarder Kore Antonsen, who was driving up from Somerset. Although they've had a close and productive working relationship since the mid-2000s, thanks to Skype, they've not actually been in the same room together for five years. I was chuffed to be present at this warm reunion.

Concepts born in a Queen's Park kitchen

Their partnership started when Coggins was directing promos at music video company Draw Pictures and Antonsen started helping him draw concepts for pitches. "A while after meeting Kore, I called him and said, 'Do you want to do music videos with me?'" recalls Coggins. "We'd sit in Kore's kitchen in his flat in Queen's Park, drink cups of tea, and hack on for hours about everything but work." Antonsen says that during this time, they were "developing the process of riffing, of coming up with ideas together".

Before Antonsen moved out west they had a solid five years of working together. Now they collaborate virtually – Antonsen scans sketches onto a draw-on digital screen that he can share and amend live via Skype with his clients. Coggins says they're so used to "hanging out" that their Skype meetings feel as if they're in the same room.

Both of them honed their skills via hard work and experimentation. Knowing he wanted to direct from a young age, Coggins skipped film school and worked as a runner on shoots for companies including Tony Kaye Films, and served apprenticeships with the BBC and in first and second AD roles. Similarly, Antonsen, though always a gifted artist, didn't go to art school – in fact his first career was in a very different arena. Growing up in Australia, he got the surfing bug, left to surf the world at 18 and ended up, at just 22, owning what was then London's only specialist surf and skateboard shop. "I was very

"It isn't just about being able to draw. There are lots of people who can draw, but Kore brings something much more conceptual, much more atmospheric in the early stages."

Caswell Coggins

into the business but the surf industry died at the end of the 2000s, so I quit. But I'd been drawing a poster for the shop when someone said 'Have you ever thought about doing storyboards?'" He started experimenting with airbrushing and photorealism and ended up doing a mood board for Victoria Beckham.

Coggins also loves experimenting and will try anything if it deepens his knowledge. Wanting to improve his ability to direct actors, he took acting classes for two years. His passion for contemporary dance, which

led to the creation of his feature dance documentary *Destino*, resulted in his involvement in the Alchemy Project, a dance therapy initiative that treats young adults with psychosis – he spent a week studying dance with the youngsters so he could gain their trust when filming them.

Even if their interests and backgrounds differ, the pair say they share a way of viewing the world. "Directors are always looking for details in life that make you think," says Antonsen, "I have the same way of observing. I see how things might tell a story, or how I might twist something in a weird way." Their varied interests can also be of help, "Caswell uses me because I bring a different angle. I'm into graphic novels and all kinds of visual imagery and I might see something he wouldn't look at in the same way."

When Coggins wins a pitch, he asks the producer to call Antonsen. "Your language with [regular collaborators] becomes sort of invisible. You trust these people. You're trusting them with your job. Plus, I'm always interested to see how Kore will interpret a treatment."

Coggins' call for close collaboration

I point out that it's rare for a director to talk about his storyboard artist so much. But Coggins says the storyboard has an essential role as a film's bible or map – it's part of his emphasis on good preparation, communication and close collaboration: "It's fundamental to everybody involved," he says. "You can write a good treatment, but then you have to transpose what's in your mind into something that everyone can talk about. If you take people with you throughout the process, they feel it's a closer collaboration. The main thing I've found is not to surprise creatives and clients halfway through the shoot with things you've decided independently – it unsettles things. When

*Actimel, Surfer*

“Caswell uses me because I bring a different angle. I’m into graphic novels and all kinds of visual imagery and I might see something he wouldn’t look at in the same way.”

Kore Antonsen

you work with an ad agency, it’s not us and them, you’re collaborating to produce something for a client, so it has to be inclusive and having a blueprint, like a good storyboard, allows everyone to share in it.” For something that is essentially a map, it’s remarkable how much detail Antonsen puts into his drawings. Coggins is enthusiastic about their quality: “It isn’t just about being able to draw. There are lots of people who can draw, but Kore brings something much more conceptual, much more atmospheric in the early stages. That’s what is key about them – when you have a storyboard that has all that mood and texture and you show it to a DP and the creatives they all start to get very excited, because they can feel the atmosphere early on.”

Idris Elba’s balletic backwards blowout

The duo explain they don’t collaborate on Coggins’ dance-based films, such as the Channel 4 *Random Acts* series, as it would be too restrictive for the dancers; instead those were worked out with the choreographers and DPs. However Antonsen does have an interest in bodies in motion. “I’m constantly drawing the shape of moving bodies. If you see a skateboarder doing a trick you can see the style, if he’s got the right hunched shoulders, and I like to capture those little weird, quirky bits.” I suggest to them that there could be synergy between their different passions – contemporary dance and skateboarding/surfing. Antonsen agrees: “In surfing competitions you’re judged on style. It’s not just how many waves you catch, it’s what you do as a performer. It’s like a dance.”

Their shared obsession with movement came together in the trailer for TV show *Luther* with Idris Elba – a brilliant exploration of the character’s destructiveness, in which his total trashing of his office is played backwards in slo-mo. It’s an elegant ballet of chairs describing graceful arcs as they are unhurled across the room, while exploded detritus unexplodes from chaos back to order, creating a calm that, in the final frame, encapsulates Luther’s ultimate coolness. The concept, developed by Coggins and a BBC creative director, threw up a unique set of problems and required very precise storyboards. “If you look at the action, then at the boards, we were very faithful to them, it’s pretty close in terms of the movement. In fact,

there was only one of Kore’s boards we didn’t shoot in the end,” recalls Coggins.

Observing the pair together you don’t feel that one is more dominant, or one extrovert/one introvert. They both seem equally enthusiastic, yet chilled. So how do their temperaments match? “Kore’s very easy-going so we can sit in a room together and not get on each other’s tits,” says Coggins, “though we do argue about work. Kore can get hot-headed about a frame and I’ll tell him it won’t work. But what’s vital is that you ultimately like someone, so we

can argue about work, but it’s not personal. Some conflict can create good things in a working relationship, too – as long as it’s kind and positive.”

The most notable thing they share is a remarkably ego-free love of the process. “Being a director is about compromise,” says Coggins, “particularly in advertising. It’s not about you. It’s about you being asked to realise a vision. As a director, you’re steering a ship through a stormy sea.” Antonsen also sees himself as a creative conduit. “I’m just a player. I can suggest loads of things, but I’ll never get too personal about it. It’s not my idea, I’m a creative tool for the director to use. My work is to be part of the team process.”

Unsung heroes accessing the joy

I ask if Antonsen feels the storyboard artist is an unsung hero. “I think everybody involved in a film is an unsung hero,” he says. “Even if it’s the gaffer doing bits and pieces, it’s a team effort, everybody in this business puts in a lot of time and effort. But at least we’re doing what we love. I really like drawing, I can draw for hours. What enables me to do this kind of work is I’m willing to do lots of changes, to put the hours in, because I enjoy it. I don’t really need any more than the satisfaction I get from drawing and getting paid for it.”

Like any successful creative pairing, Coggins and Antonsen not only share a lack of preciousness about, and enjoyment of, their individual roles but they genuinely relish teamwork. “Filmmaking should be a joy,” says Coggins. “I think I can tell when I’ve watched a piece of work that’s been a joy to make, because it comes off the screen. From an ad to a film to a piece of drama, it should be a good process.”

I leave the pair to their sunny reunion of riffing and joy and head out to the troubled streets, where people with joyless jobs battle through the rain. **8**

MEMBERS ONLY

giffgaff is a foreign country, they do things differently there... (apologies to LP Hartley). The mobile network's brand director Tom Rainsford has been steering the company's creative down an idiosyncratic path since its inception and is now smashing down more barriers and breaking more rules by not only bringing ads in-house but even directing one himself. *Danny Edwards* talks to the client who knows his brand, its values and its members – don't mention the C word! – back-to-front and is turning the usual client-agency model upside down



giffgaff E4 ident

“**A**t the very heart of it,” explains Tom Rainsford, brand director for mobile phone network giffgaff, “I am – and my team are – responsible for our brand. Someone walking down the street talking to their friend isn’t saying ‘Did you see that giffgaff ad? It was wicked,’ or, ‘It was crap,’ and then going on to say it was from such-and-such an agency, with production by such-and-such company and was directed by this guy. They’re simply saying that they saw it and really liked it, or really didn’t like it, and judging our brand.”

Sitting in an office in Covent Garden on a cold January morning, Rainsford is engaging company. Unlike many clients, who can be guarded and PR-trained to within an inch of their lives – and therefore fairly bland – Rainsford is open, forthright and relatively unfiltered. Nor does he look like how you might expect a client brand director and co-founder of a successful mobile network business to look, with his long beard, even longer hair and the air of a classic rock’n’roll star about him (which isn’t too far from the truth, more of which later).

But then giffgaff isn’t the usual mobile brand. Launched in 2009, giffgaff sees itself as an antidote to the corporate behemoths already in the sector. The company’s founding principle is based around mutuality (the word giffgaff is a Scots term for mutual giving), which translates into such details as no contracts tying you in for years at a time and no call centres to deal with. Instead, giffgaff members – they’re never called customers – help each other out with questions and problems. The term ‘member’ isn’t used lightly. “My belief is that customers go into a shop to buy a can of Coke and the shop owner hopes that they come back to buy another can of Coke and maybe a Snickers, right?” explains Rainsford. “That’s not a relationship. All [the customer] wants to do is just get a drink and go away and it’s very unlikely that they’re ever going to come back. Members, though, are people who join something, they proactively participate. That doesn’t mean that every one of our members is in a TV ad or on the community [site] helping out, ☐



“I just think you should know what your brand stands for, you should be able to know what your brand represents and what you want to do with it because otherwise what’s the point?”

1



2

1 *The Music Box*2 *#heyyou - It's Here*3 *I am giffgaff*4 *Don't Be Scared*

answering questions. Some of them just get the sim card and talk to their mates and that's all right, but a lot of them drive word of mouth, and lots of them do participate in the community or in ads or whatever else. So, it might seem like a mild distinction, but we're very tough about it. If anyone mentions the C word..."

giffgaff has grown from a handful of people eight years ago to close to 200 employees today, and much of that progression can be put down to the brand's successful marketing campaigns. They have a habit of making unusual, interesting, high-production-value films that garner great attention online, but it wasn't always so. Initially, giffgaff's grand idea was to do no paid-for advertising at all, "which actually turns out to have been a really crap strategy", laughs Rainsford. Wanting to follow their principle of bucking the trend of existing mobile companies who spend, well, a lot more than nothing on advertising, the brand aimed to involve its members in the advertising plan with a campaign called *Tool Hire*, which was basically a user-generated content idea, aiming to create whacky online videos.

"We had hundreds of videos," says Rainsford. "The problem was that 99 per cent of them were crap. People loved making them, which was great, but watching 15 minutes of someone dicking about on a bike in High Wycombe... who cares, you know?" Various tweaks to the idea helped drive up the quality, but the main problem the company had was reach. "In 2009, if I put something on Facebook my mum would 'like' it, my girlfriend might 'like' it, maybe comment on it and share it, and my mates would take the piss out of me about it," he explains. "Then what happens? Nothing."

Remember when we used to hire films from a shop?

The company readdressed its approach and took their first steps into broadcast media by sponsoring hit TV show *The Big Bang Theory* on British youth channel, E4. The creative strategy was simplicity itself: "Let's blow some shit up!" is the pitch Rainsford made to his CEO. giffgaff continued to include their members by asking them to suggest things to explode. A variety of politicians were the most popular suggestions, but giffgaff introduced a poll, rather than giving people carte blanche, which saw objects from huge jelly moulds to iPhones dynamited to oblivion. The inclusion of members in the creative idea process is very important because that's how the brand differentiates itself from bigger competitors and you can't,

Rainsford is keen to point out, say one thing and do another. "You have to deliver against [that principle]," he stresses. "People have to be able to see tangible evidence that you're doing that. It's much, much harder to deliver authenticity than not, but I'd rather do that than simply stick a balloon outside a mobile phone shop."

When giffgaff launched they worked with agencies to create their advertising campaigns. Initially, Albion held the account, which went to Fallon in 2013, but Rainsford, while admitting that both agencies did some great work with them, feels that the traditional client/agency approach isn't always the right one. "I think for some brands it works and I think for others, including ourselves, it doesn't," he says. "What we wanted to do was break the model, bring it in house and pull on different experts to create work with. And that breaks down all walls, all existing barriers and all the client bollocks that exists within that model and other models. I just think you should know what your brand stands for, you should be able to know what your brand represents and what you want to do with it because otherwise what's the point?"

Rainsford believes the business of advertising – though not just advertising – and people in general simply don't like change. "When we launched in 2009 Blockbuster was one of the biggest, if not the biggest, video rental place in the world. But in 2017 it seems insane to leave your house to go to hire a movie. Blockbuster didn't evolve and it died. To buck the trend is difficult and I don't know if many people have the appetite to do that [in advertising]."

giffgaff is trying to buck advertising trends by keeping much closer control of its output. Rainsford admits that some of it is trial and error, that they learn from their mistakes and get better as each year passes, but they feel they know their market and their members better than anyone else. They sometimes work with outside creative teams, as well as different production companies and directors, but everything flows through Rainsford and his team.

Feeling the fear of a bad idea and doing it anyway

Halloween has become one of giffgaff's key calendar moments. Fallon did some nice spots around that holiday including 2013's *Don't Be Scared* and 2014's *Chain of Scares* and giffgaff has kept up the momentum. In 2016 Rainsford even took the unusual step of pitching an idea to direct himself. "Abi [Pearl], our head of advertising, told me that pitching was the worst idea she'd ever heard, but I told her I was going to do it anyway." Rainsford was kept out of the loop of that year's potential work but eventually won the pitch and directed *The Music Box*, a clever journey through classic horror scenes meant to illustrate the horrors of two-year phone contracts. Was it odd being the client, the director and, essentially, the creative? "Well, it was a completely different way to approach it. Will we do it like that again? I don't know, but it felt right and, if our principles are all about being disruptive with no barriers and no rules, then there really have to be no barriers and no rules. Do I think all clients should start directing their own stuff? Absolutely not, but in this instance, it worked."

The 36-year-old Rainsford is a natural creative force. When he was younger he was on the fringes of full-time professional football with Crystal Palace, before playing in good, but not hugely successful, bands got in the way. "They were probably ahead of their time," he smiles. While playing music Rainsford also got into contemporary dance, so much so that he completed a degree in the subject and, after graduating, got work experience in various dance productions. Then the stark reality of needing to earn money came to the fore and, after some traditional marketing positions that taught him the basics of the business, he ended up at T-Mobile. Then, in 2009, giffgaff's CEO Mike Fairman got in touch looking for help to launch the new brand.

Rainsford aims to keep giffgaff true to its principles while still creating bold, creative work within their own walls. A recent series of documentary shorts called *Perspectives*, co-created with VICE and based around the topics of housing, mental health and the economy, was well-received. "We're looking

Tom Rainsford is inspired by...

What's your favourite ever ad? There were some brilliant press ads in 2016: Norwegian Airlines *Brad Is single* was great. They jumped on the news agenda about Brad and Angelina's split. Best ever? Sony Bravia *Balls* (yeah that one), Levi's *Spaceman* (that one with the Babylon Zoo track) and Kenzo *My Mutant Brain* (that Spike Jonze one). They all drive an emotive response and get that powerful "Mate! You have to see this!" response, both of which are so hard to do.

What product could you not live without? My laptop goes everywhere with me. I thought about sleeping with it under my pillow. My wife said no.

What are your thoughts on social media? It's unquestionably powerful. It gives people a platform to spread their message, be that positive or negative. It simply comes down to how you use it *gives Donald Trump side-eye*. I'm a massive fan of Instagram, but the key is knowing when to put the phone down.

What's the last film you watched and was it any good? I just watched *La La Land* and loved it. Damien Chazelle's direction and vision

was a beautiful combination of classic Hollywood and wonderful technical execution. I wasn't entirely convinced by some of the singing, but that said, I loved it.

What's your favourite piece of tech? I'm not really a tech person. Sonos is about as fancy as I go. The Sonos subwoofer on my TV is floor-shakingly good, less so for my neighbours.

What film do you think everyone should have seen? *Casino*. The opening speech by De Niro is timeless and brilliant.

What other brands do you admire for their approach to advertising? Lush, because they don't really do traditional advertising. They focus on word of mouth and social channels, yet continue to be even more successful.

If you weren't doing the job you do now, what would you like to be? All I have ever wanted is to be in Guns N' Roses in 1987. Unfortunately I was seven at the time. That or I'd like to dance at the Royal Opera House.

Tell us one thing about yourself that most people won't know... I have a degree in contemporary dance.



“As a client, if the majority of the conversations you’re having are about cost, headcount and timesheets, then you’ve probably already lost.”

at doing more of that,” comments Rainsford. “It delivers the ideology and ethos of doing things differently, being David versus Goliath, without being explicit and without being an advert.” Doing things differently is exactly what Rainsford sees for 2017 and beyond. giffgaff, he says, is a brand that sets its stall out to be a challenger and, while he realises that the bigger the brand gets the harder it will be to navigate those waters, sometimes it simply comes down to attitude and desire. “As a client,” he concludes, “if the majority of the conversations you’re having are about cost, headcount and timesheets, then you’ve probably already lost. If you’re talking about your members, your campaigns, your creative and social output, you’re probably doing all right.” **S**

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From bright and breezy lilts to dark orchestral passages, music provokes emotions in us all. *shots* talks to industry insiders about how advertising can best use music's power to move

mash-up MAN

As a man of the Renaissance, the Age of Discovery, Sam Spiegel has not only been busy acquiring job titles – musician, DJ, producer, composer of scores for classic ads by Kenzo, adidas et al, but has been exploring new ones. Recently discovering he can direct, his first project was a brave, controversial and quite brilliant jihad-themed music video. *Iain Blair* meets the intrepid explorer

Sam Spiegel is a Renaissance mash-up man – musician, composer, DJ, producer and all-around ideas guy. Fast-talking, fast-acting, exuberant and uber-creative, he's a force of nature and the sort of creative person everyone wants to collaborate with on some sort of project, however unlikely the pairing. After all, he's persuaded various superstars as Kanye West, David Byrne, M.I.A., George Clinton and Tom Waits into guesting with his bands N.A.S.A. and Maximum Hedrum, and as producer and DJ Squeak E. Clean, he's collaborated with the likes of Jay-Z and Karen O.

He's also composed or co-written music for such classic commercials and campaigns as adidas *Hello Tomorrow* (directed by his brother Spike Jonze), Target's *Kaleidoscopic Fashion Spectacular* and Sci-fi Channel *Human Suit*. The N.A.S.A. song *Hide* was featured in a Sonos commercial aired during the 2014 Oscars and Super Bowl. His film score credits include *Yeah Right!* (the top-selling skate video of all time, directed by Jonze), *Jackass Presents: Bad Grandpa*, and *Whip It*. Then there's all his music for videogames (as Squeak E. Clean).

Courting controversy

Last year he directed the video for his band's track *Jihad Love Squad* (featuring KRS One). "It was my first time directing, and I was a bit terrified as it had a lot of complicated choreography, explosions, and we were shooting in India," says Spiegel. He also admits to being "quite worried" about Muslim reaction to the controversial video – "But people got it and it ultimately went viral in India and the mid-east." He also found out that he "loved directing" and has since signed to RSA, another arrow in his ever-expanding creative quiver. "I love the challenge of doing something new and different, as I thrive on variety," he says.

An East Coast native, Spiegel began his career as a musician. "I began producing hip hop beats and making records and then moved to LA when I was 18 and began DJing in clubs and working with West Coast rappers." That led to scoring skate films and videos, which in turn opened the doors to advertising.

"All the hip hop and skate stuff was very influential – visually and musically," he adds. "And a lot of agencies and creatives wanted that vibe and look. And it all grew very organically. Friends would just come over to the house and we'd start working on stuff together, and I was also making records and I began working with Yeah Yeah Yeahs singer Karen O, who did the music with me for the adidas *Hello Tomorrow* spot."

With the huge success of that spot and song, Spiegel found himself "having to hire people – usually those same friends – just to keep up with demand. And brands and agencies love that synergy, when things take on a life of their own, because it's like cool tastemaker conversations –

kids are talking about the commercial, the song and the brand, all at once."

Since then Spiegel has worked on hundreds of commercials, including last year's inspired Kenzo World perfume ad directed by his brother. "I have a great relationship with Kenzo and [Kenzo creative directors] Humberto Leon and Carol Lim because they are super-open to any idea, however wild, and they just want to do things that are unprecedented in the fashion world," he notes. "Spike had this idea for this beautiful woman at a fancy gala who suddenly dances her ass off; it's the opposite of what you expect from the usual perfume ad." Especially as she dances with total abandon to *Mutant Brain* by Ape Drums, featuring Spiegel and his "favourite Jamaican artist" Assassin.

His Squeak E. Clean company also created the music for the ultra-hip 2016 adidas spot *Your Future Is Not Mine* directed by RSA's Terence Neale, and Spiegel also took part in several events for Kenzo World that will continue to roll out in 2017. "I can't say too much about the upcoming ones, but we did one in Paris in October, and I met the legendary [designer, photographer, director] Jean-Paul Goude, who did all that great work with Grace Jones," he reports. "He just loved the video and song we did for Kenzo, and it all coincided with the roll-out he did for Kenzo's

"All the hip hop and skate stuff was very influential – visually and musically. And a lot of agencies and creatives wanted that vibe and look. And it all grew very organically."

collaboration with H&M, with this amazing show he did. And now we're collaborating on a series of commercials, as well as some more shows, with some very big celebrities we can't mention yet. It's pretty exciting." **S**



serial EARWIGGER

Very few eardrums reverberate as sensitively to the world's sounds as those of Sam Ashwell, head sound engineer and creative partner at sound studios 750mph. Here, *Tim Cumming* tunes in to a champion eavesdropper who's constantly taking "audio photographs", is wary of falling down rabbit holes of over-complex tech, and can be nearly deafened by birds singing in a forest

Sometimes you see them – the one person on the bus or train who isn't plugged in to their smartphone, oblivious to their surroundings and the random soundtrack of people on the move – fragments of conversation, traffic sounds. Those that aren't tuning out their surroundings are more than likely to be someone like Sam Ashwell, sound designer extraordinaire at 750mph, the audio post wizards based in Golden Square, Soho.

"I spend a lot of my time listening to the world as I'm on my journeys around places," he says, from one of the plush mixing suites at 750mph. "Listening and taking it in. A quality of a good sound designer is having the ability to listen

to the world around you, and to make audio photographs, so when you're presented with a job, and they didn't shoot any sound, and there're cars whizzing past or horses riding through a forest, gunshots ... you need to have a snapshot of what you have to do to make that sound."

The sound of a stropky alien

In a way, a sound designer is a spy, eavesdropping on the world of what we hear and don't often notice, learning what makes it tick, and how to remake it perfectly in the studio. "I'm always interested in listening to the world," says Ashwell. "On trains, I love hearing dialogue weaving in and out. When I'm walking in a wood, the birdsong – no one believes how loud it is, but when you're standing there in the wood, it can be deafening. Put that in a job, and they'll say, no that's definitely too loud. Or I sit on the beach, listening, figuring out perspectives, wondering, 'How could you fake that?' I enjoy the challenge." As for field recordings, and testing soundscapes for specific jobs, Ashwell is more inclined to simply listen and absorb. "I'll go round recording things when I need them," he says. "Sirens – you can never have enough good UK sirens; a lot of the library stuff is American. But you have to have a break – we do 10-, 12-hour days, five or six days a week – seven sometimes." He laughs. "Sometimes you just want some peace and quiet."

Ashwell joined 750mph in 2000, straight out of college, aged 22, so the last 17 years have seen him move from technical assistant, through to junior, then senior then head engineer and now partner.

He studied sound engineering at Kingston University ("My whole family work in advertising and film, and I used to go to film sets a lot when I was young, and at 16 or 17 realised sound design was a thing.") and also worked as a DJ and collected music tech. "Ataris, midi and Akai samplers, old digital synths, stuff from the 80s and 90s. Then, as computers got more powerful, I got into plug-ins, and all that hardcore modular stuff that's basically programming to make music."

The world, the industry, and the tech of sound design has changed dramatically since Ashwell started out. "We were using original Fairlight kit, 24 track. There were no plug-ins. We were using VHS and cassettes – there were no MP3s. We had

dial-up, but there was no broadband. The runners were really running." In some ways, he misses the relative simplicity of that era's kit. "The more advanced a technology gets, the more you can do, but the more you can go down a rabbit hole, too. You can do a lot more but a lot more can go wrong. People say, it must all be so much quicker now, but it was quicker when you could do less." The relentless arrival of new tech, new software, and new plug-ins is formidable. They all have to be mastered and road-tested by Ashwell before being released on his clients' work, or upon junior sound designers. The most useful, he says, are the latest innovations in restoration, in cleaning up and getting rid of noise on shoot sound, making good things that would have once been unusable. And then there are the plug-ins Ashwell uses to generate otherworldly sounds for sci-fi settings, including one of his favourite recent spots, *Alien* for Volkswagen ("a really scary alien becoming frustrated and having a tantrum like a toddler").

Audio to appease the auto geeks

The biggest challenges, says Ashwell, tend to involve cars. "Especially when they haven't recorded it, and it's an obscure model you can't find any recordings of, and you have to get the right one or all the car geeks will go mental." This is when a trusted battalion of sound recordists comes in to the frame, slapping contact mics all over the vehicle. "On the exhaust, in the gear box, underneath, in the front. All these different bits of the car. I just listen to what they're doing and soak up the sound design possibilities."

At the heart of his sound design philosophy is simplicity. Don't go for unnecessary complication. "If you just have two reverbs, you work with them to make them sound good. I'm a firm believer that you can do 90 per cent of all your work with reverb, dynamics and EQ [equalisation]. If you understand how dynamics, compression and EQing works then that's the bulk of your work."

What he will insist upon is autonomy when it comes to knowing which sound design to choose. "Doing it by committee is not always a success," he says. "I fight my corner – and I usually know when I am right. But I also know the point where to stop fighting. But that's my job – to know when it's right. And people hire me to do my job." **S**



“I’m always listening to the world... on trains, I love hearing dialogue weaving in and out. In a forest or wood, the birdsong – no one believes how loud it is...”



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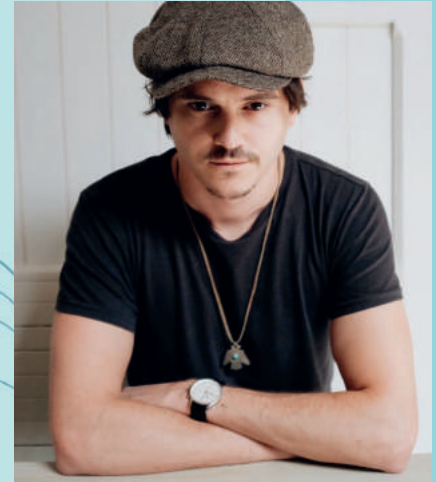
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BRANDS: DON'T BREAK ARTISTS, BALANCE THEM

Chris Phelps, head of sync at Finger Music London, explores how music and advertising trends are aligning to create exciting new opportunities for brands and artists



“BRANDS ARE STARTING TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE NEED FOR A CREATIVE PHILOSOPHY AS OPPOSED TO A GENERIC CAMPAIGN THEME AND MUSICIANS WANT TO BE A PART OF THAT.”

Nike's latest collaborator isn't an athlete, they're a musician. FKA twigs recently accepted the position of creative director with the sportswear brand. While other sporting brands continue to make deals with leading sports personalities, Nike has chosen a musician with a relatively niche following to transcend the role of brand ambassador, driving new content streams for the brand.

Why? The partnership is mutually beneficial to both parties. FKA twigs' persona, ideals, style and reputation align perfectly with the brand message. She wields a huge influence on the fashion choices of her own followers, but the Nike brand also exposes her to potential new fans and elevates her music globally. She has provided Nike with original, authentic music and visual content and in return Nike has provided her with creative freedom and exposure.

No matter what anyone says, we're living in an extremely exciting time in advertising where the goals of brands and record labels are beginning to align.

BRANDS AND ARTISTS GETTING ENGAGED

Why is this exciting? Every creative wants to come up with an original idea – something unique and authentic that has never been done before. But I'm sure any creative will tell you that fresh, original ideas don't magically appear out of thin air. The more that time progresses, the more ideas have already been had.

But imagine you're sat at your desk and in your possession is a track. A track by a high-profile artist or an artist that's about to hit the big time. No one has ever heard that music before. That artist has written that song specifically for a brand campaign or wants you to be the first one to play it.

You have in your hands original, powerful, authentic content, that no one has ever heard. It comes with endless opportunities for further content: music videos, social content and so on – and these too will have never been seen by anyone. You also have the fan base of that artist and the promotional power of a record label at your disposal.

The interesting thing is that five years ago there was a general reluctance to use a track that no one had heard before. Only recently (and I mean in the last year or so) has this started to change.

Before now, it seemed that an artist (or a specific track) had to have at least a six month lead time before agencies had enough confidence in them to expose them to a client. They wanted to gauge what the public reaction to the artist and/or the sound of the new track would be first.

As branded entertainment, brand partnerships and new content streams begin to grow, we are reaching a tipping point of mutual benefit for artists and advertisers. This is due to the development of two things: more engaging creative content and media usage from advertisers, and the new transparency of artists' social media profiles.

There are far more credible, meaningful stories and personalities coming from brands that can really resonate with an artist's following, style and reputation – and vice versa. There are so many more options open to agencies and artists nowadays than just placing a track on an ad under a VO. Brands are starting to acknowledge the need for a creative philosophy as opposed to a generic campaign theme and musicians want to be a part of that.

However, that's not to say that every artist pairing will work for every brand or every campaign. It all comes down to a very delicate balance – one that creates a mutually beneficial partnership for both brands and artists.

IT'S NOT WHO YOU KNOW, IT'S HOW

So how do you strike this critical creative balance? When it comes to music these days, no single talent pool is unique. We live in an age where knowledge is free and widely accessible, music companies all have the same scope when it comes to who they can work with. Traditionally it was all about who you know, but now it's about how you know them and how you work with them.

Any good music company should be the bridge between a brand and an artist. Having navigated the waters between brand and label for years, I can tell you that labels and brands have never and still do not speak the same language – and they're far from having the same priorities. In my experience, you must be completely immersed in not only current trends, licensing and upcoming talent in the music world, but also the latest consumer trends and the creative process in advertising from top to bottom. It's not enough just to have contacts at labels, you must be able to seek out and align creative goals and think about a project from the position of both parties. If you aren't striving to learn more and more about your partners on both sides – music and advertising – you'll never be the all-important fulcrum for this new powerful balancing act. **S**



“SOUND IS A UNIQUE TOOL BECAUSE IT IS MALLEABLE. IT CAN BE REALISTIC, HYPERREAL OR FANTASTICAL. IT CAN DISTRACT, MISDIRECT OR DIRECT ATTENTION AND IS THEREFORE A GREAT DEVICE FOR MOVING THE VIEWER THROUGH A STORY WHERE YOU CANNOT CONTROL THE EXPERIENCE IN THE SAME WAY YOU DO IN FILM.”

The further we go into virtual reality, the more we understand how little we actually know about reality. Whatever you make of inventor/entrepreneur Elon Musk’s claim there is a “one in a billion” chance that we are living in a simulation, there’s no doubt that virtual reality and augmented reality are evolving so rapidly, ultimately VR will become indistinguishable from reality. Once we reach full immersion with all five physical senses, we will encounter Schrödinger’s dilemma: am I a man dreaming of a butterfly or am I a butterfly dreaming of a man? Are we spiritual beings having a physical experience or are we physical beings having a spiritual experience?

THE SOUND OF GOD ASKING FOR LIGHT

So, what role does sound play in this immersion? In Genesis, the first act of creation starts with light: “And God said: let there be light.” But light is, in fact, preceded by sound. That is, he *said*: “Let there

be light.” In VR, the role of sound is to create a persistent universe in terms of quality and consistency that maintains the suspension of disbelief. The world we are portraying via sensory input or implied physics needs to be above a certain threshold to be convincing. Virtual reality is an unforgiving medium, and spatial sound plays a critical role.

Working on a VR project is a very different process to working on a film or a broadcast commercial. As the sound partner we perform the role of an audio director, working very closely with the VR director to use sound to direct the viewer’s attention. Sound is a unique tool because it is malleable. It can be realistic, hyperreal or fantastical. It can distract, misdirect or direct attention and is therefore a great device for moving the viewer through a story where you cannot control the experience in the same way you do in film.

When Q Department began working on

virtual reality projects there were no standards or best practices, and while the medium has come a long way, there is still much to be figured out. As Robert Stromberg, the director of *The Martian* VR experience put it, the process is akin to flying a plane while you are building it.

TAKING SPATIAL AUDIO TO MARS

As a music studio focussed on both original music and sound design, we have always been obsessed with immersing the audience in a film’s narrative through sound. When virtual reality arrived on our scene with *The Martian* VR experience, it prompted us to transform into a kind of music-lab, identifying techniques and processes to bring high-fidelity spatial audio into virtual reality. Earlier last year, through our specialist audio technology company Mach1, we succeeded in designing a new sound format specifically for the VR medium for our collaboration with *The New York Times* on their NYT VR app. The only problem is that once you have left Plato’s cave, and seen true reality, there is no going back. Sound that is not 360° suddenly feels inadequate.

We want to create visuals with sounds that make people feel like they have never used their eyes and ears before. As we move towards increasing levels of technological mediation, we need to make sure that our storytelling still touches the core of what it means to be human, rather than creating barriers that distance us and disconnect us from who and what we really are.

AM I AN ALIEN DREAMING I’M A MAN OR...

In the future, we will be creating permanent universes for an audience to inhabit, but what responsibilities will come with that power? As we enter worlds within worlds that seem real, retaining a sense of self in a disorientating, unfamiliar environment will be more important than ever – as Q Department’s recent work on the *Alien: Covenant* VR experience has shown. After all, in VR, no one can hear you scream... **S**

Jacqueline Bošnjak, CEO of sound design studio Q Department and VR/AR sound technology company Mach1, ponders the power of sound in VR and the philosophical implications of creating alternative worlds that boggle our senses

IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD, THE SOUND OF A WORD

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my office, put this on, take a breath and listen. Then I'm ready to get back to the madness of advertising.

A Tribe Called Quest
Dis Generation

I think I'm just now finally taking this album off repeat. The whole record is incredible. It's an album with a message at just the right time, and the production is so modern but classic all at once. Working on music for the Hillary [Clinton] campaign was the most humbling project of my career, and the timely dropping of this album on the Friday after the election was perfect. It was just what everyone, feeling blue, needed.

Pastor T.L. Barrett & The Youth For Christ Choir
Nobody Knows

I was turned on to this track during our Google Pixel development. The first time I heard it, I got mad I'd gone so long without it. One listen leaves you walking around feeling like you can do anything. Getting it in the *Make That Old* Under Armour spot might be my favourite placement to date.

Bon Iver 45

From one of the most sonically interesting albums I've heard all year. Beautiful, aggressive and strange. I don't think this is the best song on the

album, but when you listen to literally hundreds or thousands of tracks a day for your job, it's rare to come across a new, unique sound. Putting a sax through a vocoder is such a simple idea, but the resulting noise is beautifully strange, just like Bon Iver.

O'Flynn
Aloha Ice Jam

This is just a straight-up jam-and-a-half. It's the kind of track I like to start a DJ set with. It's instantaneously infectious, and you can't help but bob your head to this on the first listen. I love the fresh sound created by the worldly groove and real instruments blended with electronic sounds.

AG ROJAS

Director, Park Pictures

Mica Levi
Under The Skin

Though the film polarised opinion, Levi's score was incredibly striking. Since its release I've spent many late nights writing to it. It's a great record if you're looking to tap into the more dramatic depths of your imagination.

Max Richter
Memoryhouse

This is without a doubt what I listen to most when writing. It has a lot of range and is incredibly cinematic. The sporadic incorporation of practical sounds and mysterious narration is helpful when attempting to get into a very specific mood.

Michael Nyman
The Draughtsman's Contract

Nyman's music is intrinsically tied to [director Peter] Greenaway's images, which means it's appropriate when I am attempting to conjure up more whimsical or surreal moments. It features the greatest track titles ever.

audio UPLIFT

Six industry insiders reveal the tracks and albums

SHARON LOCK

Creative director
and head of design,
Framestore New York

The Fall
Bremen Nacht

I could have chosen anything by The Fall as I listen to them a lot while working, but I'm choosing this track from *The Frenz Experiment* which a friend gave me on tape back in 1988. It was the first time I'd listened to them and it blew me away. They sounded like nothing I'd ever heard before and I was attracted to that uniqueness, that they were different and stood out from the crowd. To this day I am still very much inspired by the genius of Mark E. Smith: his creative integrity, the constant

reinvention of his band, his collaborations outside The Fall. He's always striving creatively for something new.

The Cure
In Between Days

I remember the first time I saw the sleeve design for this single, with its manipulation of image and type, along with Tim Pope's video – he attached cameras to the instruments decades before GoPros existed – the UV make-up, the blue-blacks, the animation. This visual extension to the music is what really inspired me to study art in the first place.

I spent subsequent years poring over every detail of every record I ever bought. My teenage dream was to become a sleeve designer so I could listen to and be creatively inspired by music every day.

Weaves *Candy*

As a designer and director I'm constantly seeking new inspiration from everything around me and that definitely includes music. This colourful track caught my ear last year, and I've listened to Weaves' album a lot walking to and from work, which is the time that I probably do most of my creative thinking.

Cheval Sombre
I Sleep

I've always loved the fact that music and visuals are so intrinsically linked. When I first heard this song, it inspired me to create a series of images which I tentatively emailed across the ocean and which later became posters for the first Cheval Sombre UK shows. This led to me being asked to design the artwork for both the single and LP – 27 years after that Cure release, my teenage dream came true! I also ended up directing a promo for a track from the album *Mad Love*.





John Coltrane
A Love Supreme

I was introduced to jazz through my father's old Dexter Gordon tapes, which inspired me to pick up the saxophone as a teenager. I still listen to his *Tangerine* quite often, but the effect Coltrane has had on me is undeniable. This is just a beautiful record to put on, whether you're designing a treatment or entertaining a friend.

Gil Scott-Heron
I'm New Here

I was lucky enough to work on Mr Scott-Heron's last video so, apart from the dramatic beauty of his voice and the provocative nature of his lyrics, I have an emotional connection to this that I cherish and revisit when writing. Jamie xx's reimagining of the album is incredible as well.

DAVID NOBAY
Founder and CCO,
Marcel Sydney

Grace Jones
Slave to the Rhythm

As a teenager, I had serious aspirations of earning my living as a drummer. To this day, the drums on this track make me think I should have stuck to my childish dreams (and practised a lot more!). Whatever, it's guaranteed to lift me from my regular creative funk.

Prefab Sprout
Moving the River

Quite possibly the stupidest name for a band in history. Which is ironic, given how beautiful their craft is. This song reminds me of my relationship with

my father. It moved me to write the stage play *Moving Parts* six years ago, which Steve Rogers directed here in Sydney.

IAM Poudre de Brique Rouge

I've been spending a lot of time in Paris and I first heard this in a taxi there. My French is OK but too sketchy to keep up with the lyrics. These guys are seriously great, regardless. Great track to cut to, too.

John Martyn
Don't Want to Know

It's been a difficult year if you give a shit about

fascism taking a firm grip of the US and Europe. John Martyn was my go-to stoner album at art college 30 years ago. The lyrics to this one are still sadly apt and haunting.

Klazz Brothers & Cuba Percussion
Air

Michael Mann is a very clever filmmaker, that much we know, but his choice of music for the *Collateral* soundtrack couldn't be more mercurial. I listen to the full album when driving, which is when ideas usually pop into my head. This cover of the classical classic is a favourite.



LIZ TAYLOR
CCO, FCB Chicago

Beastie Boys
Shake Your Rump

One of the greatest booty-shaking, get-ready-for-the-day commuting songs. Their second studio album, *Paul's Boutique*, cures commuting crankiness. It's the musical version of Starbucks for the not-quite-awake, morning creative brain.

José González
Heartbeats

He can serenade his way into my soul. Heart-wrenching, soulful, complex, breathtakingly beautiful. One of the prettiest songs of all time.

Santigold
Girls

This is just good ol' cheeky, sassy, infectious, anthemic fun.

Amy Winehouse
Back To Black

It's like soul, jazz and blues met up at a bar for a cocktail. Amy was one of the world's most authentic, provocative storytellers. When I sit down to write, I need to listen to expressive, heartbreakingly beautiful music that speaks to my heart. Rich, comforting, earnest, often bittersweet, sad songs filled with longing and lingering pain. Songs about unanswered questions. Somehow this fuels my writing. Sometimes that's Death Cab for Cutie. Or Iron & Wine. Or Michael Kiwanuka. Or Damien Jurado. Lately, it's Amy.

Missy Elliott
Get Ur Freak On

When I'm in a creative slump or need to get ready for a big presentation, I need music that I can't sit still to. There's nothing quite like a lip-synching, funky, nutty dance break with Missy Misdemeanor.

that pick them up, inspire them to action... or collapse them into hysterics

Thee Oh Sees
I Was Denied

Whenever I hear this song it takes me back to seeing Thee Oh Sees playing [London venue, now closed] the Luminaire back in 2010, one of the most energetic and invigorating shows I've ever seen. I love seeing music live, and I spend a considerable amount of my time outside of work doing just that. It really opens your mind and I'm often rewarded with subconscious inspiration for my work. Thee Oh Sees' energy is inspiring in itself, and this track always gives me a much-needed kick into action.

ROB LEGGATT
Director, Knucklehead

Moondog
Pastoral

Moondog is an obsession of mine. A blind, homeless giant with a godly white beard, he stood on the same street corner in downtown Manhattan from the late 1940s to the early 1970s dressed as a Viking, selling poetry and playing self-composed music on bizarre instruments of his own making. He released several albums and was revered by the likes of Steve Reich and Phillip Glass. His music has a hypnotic, ancient vibe, yet is always playful and alive.

Warfield Spillers
Daddy's Little Girl

From a recent compilation album called *Sky Girl*, a diverse collection of private press tracks from 1961-91. I plumped for this song because, despite its gloriously shambolic approach (lopsided timing, biscuit tin percussion and mumble-soul vocals) it's also an achingly beautiful love song from a father to his estranged daughter.

The Walker Brothers
The Electrician

Horror movie strings, moody electronics, nightmare lyrics about torture and damnation and

then a glorious explosion of Spanish guitar and orchestral lushness. A very strange and terrifying record. Used to great effect at the ultra-violent opening of Nicolas Winding Refn's *Bronson*. I like to imagine a parallel universe where this piece is used to soundtrack a commercial for an energy company or power tool manufacturer.

John Cale
Do Not Go Gentle

I DJ at festivals occasionally as part of a collective and this track was introduced to me by a friend during a Sunday morning session where

we played hangover music to stragglers and early risers. A famous Dylan Thomas poem set to a modern classical score. One of those records that makes such an instant impression you wonder why you've never heard it before.

Spike Milligan
Q5 Piano Theme

The sound of insanity. A high watermark in the production career of George Martin. The accidental invention of drill and bass. It could be argued that without Spike Milligan there'd be no Squarepusher. At some



point in every edit I'll try this to picture. It never, ever works. In fact it always fails in the most spectacular fashion. The sheer sonic nonsense of the record will completely overpower any visuals but the result always collapses me into hysterics.



abi's
ROAD

Choosing the right music for a spot may not be rocket science, but it seems to baffle plenty of people in the industry. Not music supervisor and Leland Music founder Abi Leland (photographed in an anechoic chamber, left), though. *Tim Cumming* meets the co-creator of one of the most recognisable music styles in adland, to learn how she went from door-knocking to company director to picking Christmas number ones

“Music isn’t like other areas of production where people hesitate to offer an opinion,” says Abi Leland. “Everyone has an opinion about music.”

She should know. She’s spent around 20 years making her opinions about music count as one of Britain’s top music supervisors, working on bringing music to feature films and TV, as well as some of the most memorable British commercials of the past decade.

Her job, put simply, is to find the right music for film, whether that requires researching, discovering and licensing existing music tracks, freshly re-recording existing music, or commissioning original scores.

Leland’s credits include supervising original scores for Honda spots and sourcing music on numerous ads for Tesco. And she has played a crucial role in reducing a nation to emotional mush for the last few Christmases, having worked on every festive John Lewis ad since 2010.

“It’s not rocket science, putting music to picture,” says Leland. “But it is a bit of a sixth

sense. You need to have that instinct for what is right and what’s not.”

A few days before Christmas, with *Buster The Boxer* bouncing on British TV screens and across the internet, she is reflecting on another big year, which included work on Channel 4’s blockbuster Paralympics promo *We’re The Superhumans*; her company Leland Music supervising their first British TV show *Crazyhead* for E4; and setting up an independent agency to represent a curated selection of composers, Leland Originals.

Tell everybody this is your song

Leland describes her role as helping directors and ad creatives fulfil their vision. “We like people to use us, not as a walking talking database of music, or to be reactive to changes in the brief, but really to guide the process.” A good example of the ideal scenario was the *We’re The Superhumans* project. She was invited into the process at an early stage by director Dougal Wilson – who had already had the idea of recording a real band of disabled musicians – and provided song suggestions from a range of musical genres. The oldest and least well-known was the swing number *Yes I Can*, originally performed by Sammy Davis Jr, a “wild card” that she hoped they would go for. “It’s an amazing message, and it’s a great song. Dougal latched onto it and everyone loved it.”

The song also had to be recorded before any footage was shot – the commercial was effectively made like a music video – with Leland supervising the recording of a band that had never worked together before, at Abbey Road Studios. “I wanted it to be a good experience for everyone there – people are so excited when they go to Abbey Road,” she says, describing it as “a great and humbling experience” working with disabled musicians recruited from all over the world.

Leland found her calling back in the late 1990s. The daughter of writer/director David Leland, she left school before her A-levels and worked as a runner and promoter of techno gigs, then got a job at a label that re-released classic movie soundtracks. Wondering who chose the music for the films, she “started knocking on doors and asking questions” and, still in her early 20s, discovered the role of music supervisor.

Her friend, the film composer Simon Boswell, was working on the movie *Women Talking Dirty* – produced by Elton John’s partner David Furnish – and heard they needed a music supervisor. Leland was offered the job. “Obviously I said yes,” she says. “You kind of have no fear at that age.”

She survived that experience, and her early career saw her working on a succession of modestly-budgeted British feature films alongside licensing expert Dan Rose. In the early noughties she joined Soundtree Music, run by Peter Raeburn, and was introduced to the world of commercials, “suddenly working on great scripts”.

She stayed at Soundtree for a relatively short period before forming Leland Music in 2005.

From early on she attracted prestigious work, collaborating with Wieden+Kennedy on spots for Nike and Honda. Being able to build her own team, creating a new generation of music researchers, really inspired her. “That’s now a big part of what drives me – running the business and having a team of people... seeing them being able to fulfil their ambition.”

adam&eveDDB asked Leland to music supervise her first John Lewis commercial in 2010. “We looked at different options, and one of those was to take existing songs, redefine the song, and cover it.” Out of that came Fyfe Dangerfield’s cover of the Billy Joel song *She’s Always A Woman* for Dougal Wilson’s ad of the same name. Then came her first John Lewis Christmas ad *A Tribute To Givers*. She had to fight for Elton John’s *Your Song*, covered for the ad by Ellie Goulding. “I think people thought it would be too cheesy. I was sure it wouldn’t be.” She asked a few artists to demo, but Goulding “nailed it”.

And so, the unmistakable template that has done so much to help embed John Lewis Christmas ads into the public consciousness was established, although, Leland says, “It wasn’t as if they decided that this was going to be the route for the next so many years. Even now we still always explore what it is because creative people will always question what they do.”

For *Buster The Boxer*, she says, Dougal Wilson had put *One Day I’ll Fly Away* on an early animatic and “it just worked”. But she felt it needed a very different approach from previous tracks, with their stripped-back arrangements. “I was looking forward to doing that song – the over-the-topness of the comedy moments lent demanded a big orchestration – so we mocked up an orchestral arrangement first, and then the artists demoed to that.”

“It’s not rocket science, putting music to picture. But it is a bit of a sixth sense. You need to have that instinct for what is right and what’s not.”

The artists in question were up-and-coming band Vaults. Landing the job gave the band a big publicity boost, but the process is not driven primarily by the need for a hit. Leyland says an important part of her job is making sure the music comes first. “It is, first and foremost, what works for the film. Devaluing music doesn’t benefit anyone in the long run. You want artists to be involved because they think it’s a good use of their music. A constant part of my role is to positively promote the use of music in the best way possible.”



“BUT PROTEST SONGS, FOR ALL THEIR BRAVADO, ARE A DELICATE BEAST. IT’S A TRICKY BALANCING ACT TO MAXIMISE THEIR USE WHILE AVOIDING PISSING PEOPLE OFF IN THE PROCESS. AVOID MISAPPROPRIATION. DON’T CAUSE OFFENCE.”

Paul Reynolds, MD, MassiveMusic London, looks forward to dark days ahead being brightened by a new generation of rebel songs from protest singers

A MUSICAL MIDDLE FINGER TO THE ESTABLISHMENT

The Western world has seemed like a crazy place over the past 12 months. After a reasonable period of general stability we find ourselves looking at an uncertain future. Should we be celebrating (our independence day)? Or should we be heading for a nuclear shelter? Will advertisers hit the panic button and switch to survival mode?

While the natural reaction to uncertainty is to play things safe, in fact, the current situation is an enormous opportunity for advertisers to capitalise on a new era of artistic expression.

When dissatisfaction, resentment and even anger grow due to political, social, economic and technological change, this kind of upset can be expressed in many impactful ways. Perhaps the most potent and enduring means of expressing these feelings lie in the hands of musicians, artists and the creative industries.

Whatever emerges promises to be a welcome relief from the usual stream of songs about love and heartbreak. Like a phoenix from the ashes, what’s likely to emerge from the turmoil is music that is energised, engaged and enriched.

THE LIBERAL SNOWFLAKE SONGBOOK

With the creative industries being full of those pesky liberal elites, we may comfortably assume that the hits being written right now will be lamenting these changes rather than singing their praises.

Gorillaz has just made a return with new track *Hallelujah Money*, featuring Mercury Prize-winner Benjamin Clementine. Released the day before the US’s mogul-in-chief took office, the lyrics are brazen in their criticism of the influence of big business on politics and the track is sure to be just one of many such songs to come.

Conversely, U2 has announced that the release of their new album – which was due early 2017 – has been put on hold due to its incongruity with today’s world. Publicity stunt or not, it shows the deep chasm that the current state of affairs is scoring through the creative landscape.

Although 2017 may feel like a unique era in history, modern human rights and social justice have been fought over for decades, and artists have always been involved in the frustrated and bitter struggle. The sentiments expressed in many of these historic works are still relevant today.

This January, hundreds of thousands of women around the world marched to defend the rights that previous generations fought so hard to gain. Released half a century ago, Aretha Franklin’s rendition of *Respect* remains as empowering a soundtrack for the feminist movement as ever. And this power was put to effective use in Pepsi’s 2011 Super Bowl spot, featuring Melanie Amaro singing that very song.

A lesser known example is the song *Little Boxes*, as re-recorded for an O2 campaign in 2012. The original meaning behind the track – a political satire from the 1960s about the complacent, conformist middle-class in their identikit suburban houses – may have been lost, but I’d say it still worked. Its message regarding change is prominent and malleable enough to mould around any product – and to sell phones at a time when the country, in the midst of London Olympics-fuelled nostalgia, appeared relatively indifferent to change, at least on the surface.

DON’T PISS OFF THE PROTESTORS

The same year – gosh, 2012 was busy – Macklemore & Ryan Lewis, with Mary Lambert, released the song *Same Love*, a positive commentary on equal marriage, which was immediately adopted as an unofficial anthem for the gay marriage campaign in the USA. In 2015 the AdCouncil used a version of the track for their *Love Has No Labels* campaign, gaining support from countless brand partners and even an Emmy award.

Many protest songs are written to galvanize their audience into taking positive action and the call-to-action songbook looks like it will gain a whole new chapter this year. Even the long-quiet KLF – as readers of a certain age will have noticed – are rumoured to be making a return.

But protest songs, for all their bravado, are a delicate beast. It’s a tricky balancing act to maximise their use while avoiding pissing people off in the process. Avoid misappropriation. Do not cause offence. If you want to avoid creative ideas falling to pieces, check that the writer will understand and support the cause or story, then they’re more likely to license the track – or less likely to kick up a fuss if they don’t control licensing. Stay on the pulse, and do everything with slick and – more importantly – mindful execution.

This coming generation of ‘down with the establishment’-driven music could prove a treasure trove for advertisers and agencies alike.

As for the rest of us, we may well be listening to some of the most incredible music ever written – and maybe buying more stuff as a result.

Power to the people! Power to the brands! **S**

CHOOSE YOUR MUSIC WITH YOUR HEAD AND YOUR HEART

Why is there so much awful music in advertising? Because people don't ask the experts, says Simon Elms, partner at London music collective, Eclectic



When someone says you have good taste in music, what they mean is that you like the same music as them. There's no science involved. It's tribal. It means 'we think alike and aren't we great' – and most of us are guilty of thinking this way

Music is hard-wired into our internal psyche. We have no control over it. Our feelings about it are based on a lifetime of experiences: our parents' favourite albums, the music from the local cafe, early morning radio, the song that was playing when Samantha Dicks laughed at you when you asked her to dance at your first school disco, all determine what we like and, probably more importantly, what we really don't like. Understanding this bias is key when it comes to choosing music for an advert.

We all know how important music is when it comes to a spot's success yet we strangely fail to employ any kind of method to make sure that the music selection process happens effectively.

I HATE IT... BUT IT WORKS!

The idea of trying to get a group of creative individuals to agree on one piece of music in a short period of time is, potentially, deeply flawed and often leads to deeply flawed music. When it comes to choosing a director, countless meetings are had, weeks are spent briefing production companies and pawing over treatments to get the visual look just right, but music briefing is often left to the last minute.

Music should be on the agenda from an ad's very inception – and its choice approached forensically. Should it be 'big'? Slow? What style is right? Who is the ad aimed at? Demographically, does that style have any relevance? Will it be understood? Is it legal? How can we tick all of the boxes above and still create something worth listening to? To answer all these questions agencies need music supervisors and not just a music company whose end game is to sell them something. It'll be cheaper in the long run. In the same way that you'd ask a director for an opinion, why don't you ask a composer/producer for one?

When you go to a posh restaurant you usually have to deal with a sommelier. They can be a bit

intimidating, but they're also a fountain of knowledge. They've tried everything so you don't have to and, irrespective of their personal preferences, they can help you choose something you're going to love. A music professional – like a sommelier and unlike a music enthusiast – doesn't have to love something to see its worth. They might actively dislike a certain style but still recognise its relevance. M People's Heather Small was constantly referenced as a powerful, distinctive voice in the late 1990s. Personally, her singing makes my teeth itch, but I can see the value and relevance of her style even though I wouldn't choose to listen to her for pleasure.

A good sommelier will know how to help the inexperienced wine drinker describe what they want. An experienced music producer will know the right questions to ask you if you can only say things like "I don't really know, but I feel it should be small and... purple." Let us help you. Then include all of the relevant people in the conversation. Resist the temptation to work on tracks in isolation for weeks on end only to be dismissed brutally by your ECD or, ultimately, your client. I've seen so many fantastic ideas shot down in flames because clients were presented with something they just weren't expecting. If you can get everybody involved in the conversation from day one then the chances of great ideas being derailed diminish.

NOTHING GOOD COMES FROM AN ORGY

Having said that, music created by committee is probably the main reason why there is so much awful music on TV. So beware. What usually happens is someone finds an edgy, cool reference. Everybody loves it but it's too cool, too edgy, so they say "Let's make it brighter with a big intro, a much bigger build and an even bigger 'ta-dah' moment on the pack shot." Then you add some strings, take the strings away, make it happier still.

Eventually, you end up with a compromise, which in advertising means a piece of music that no one really likes, but by now everybody's too bored and confused to keep arguing about – a bloodied and

"AN EXPERIENCED MUSIC PRODUCER WILL KNOW THE RIGHT QUESTIONS TO ASK IF YOU CAN ONLY SAY THINGS LIKE 'I DON'T REALLY KNOW, BUT I FEEL IT SHOULD BE SMALL... AND PURPLE.'"

bruised piece of sonic awfulness, the discarded love child of an orgy of well meaning but confused parents.

There are many talented composers/producers out there who have been playing in bands for years and who have studied with legends at renowned educational institutions. Use them. Be wary of any self-styled music gurus who promise you a piece of music that is "all things to all people". Such music doesn't exist. Ask the right people at the right time and avoid terrible car-crashes, like spending hundreds of thousands on a Rolling Stones track before remembering *Satisfaction* also contains the words "I can't get no".

But get it right and music in advertising can be powerful, emotional, alchemy. It transforms good ads into great ones. You can be satisfied. **S**

WOULD YOU ONLY EAT ONE SLICE OF YOUR PIZZA?



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MENU

The devil is in the detail and the dinner is on the head in this bold banquet cooked up by JWT Amsterdam's chef/food creative Robbie Postma and designer/photographer Robert Harrison. *Tim Cumming* licks his lips



Face decoration and body modification have been on-trend for the past decade or so, but few have taken things as far as JWT Amsterdam's chef/food creative Robbie Postma and designer/photographer Robert Harrison. The duo's *Menu* project features nine outrageous images, from place setting to final palate-sealing espresso, the raw ingredients sliced, chopped, dried, and plastered all over Robbie Postma's head.

As make-up goes, it's fairly radical, and as a face-based installation, the detail and bravura

styling is extraordinary. The chef's alchemy of the raw ingredients is rendered into living sculpture, photographed by Harrison and gloriously reminiscent of Italian renaissance painter Giuseppe Arcimboldo's vegetable heads. *Menu* is the result of late nights, a spare studio, probing creativity, mates with lighting, an obsessive attention to detail, soluble glue, and at least seven mouthfuls of wine.

"I did an internship at Noma in Copenhagen," says Postma, "and the big thing I took from there

was the level of attention to creating something beautiful and genuine. Even the smallest things. At Noma, they're bottling elderflower cider to use in ten years. When you're in a restaurant, trying something like that, it's priceless."

Harrison agrees. "We really wanted to take our time and create something beautiful, giving it a lot of attention without trying to execute something quickly and Photoshopping it. And it links so nicely with food. When you're in the kitchen, you take so much time to prepare an awesome dish."





“You have all the basics, every aspect you would find on a menu – vegetables, fish, coffee, wine, desserts. And in the order in which they’re served.”

Postma and Harrison both joined JWT Amsterdam five years ago, Harrison as a designer, Postma as a chef. “I started making lunches for the office,” says Postma. “That evolved and I began doing creative stuff for clients. When new clients came in, or we’d have a pitch, I’d make some grand connected food.” Postma and Harrison exchange glances. “We both have a passion for food...”

Postma becomes a pictorial picnic

The concept of *Menu* became a reality with an after-hours shoot at Harrison’s place, a first crack at capturing one of the series’ most powerful images, featuring charcoal and a fine looking piece of prime beef rib. “We spent a lot of time on it,” remembers Postma, “and it was beautiful, and we thought, okay we want to do more. But how are we going to make sense of it, and make a story of it? So we decided to approach it as we would a menu. You have all the basics, every aspect you would find on a menu – vegetables, fish, coffee, wine, desserts. And in the order in which they’re served.”

Though they started with the meat, they decided to re-shoot in the service of in-camera realism. “We’d glued charcoal to my face, but I was scared to put it on my eyebrows, which meant there were blank spots around my eyes,” says Postma. “Rob did a bit of Photoshop, but we were putting in so much energy, putting everything in piece by piece, we thought, no, let’s do it again.”

Being a personal project, it was all done after

hours. “So we’d prepare and have our last shot at four or five in the morning,” says Harrison, “which was intense, especially when you have work the next day.” For the second round, instead of pieces of charcoal of the same size, they started small at the bottom, and rose to bigger chunks at the top to provide more of a visual story. The finished result bears an uncanny resemblance to the fearsome Ice Warriors of vintage *Doctor Who*. “I love how you can just see the two eyes amongst the charcoal,” says Harrison.

All Postma had to do then was fill his mouth cavity with cigar smoke, shove the prime rib between his teeth and slowly exhale barbecue-style smoke around his face, while Harrison experimented with lighting – from the back in the final result – and took a lot of images. “Then I came home and fried the meat,” says Postma. “It was a bit smoky, but so good.”

Charcoal face is the fifth image of the nine. The first has the back of Postma’s head decorated with a knife and fork, the second, a frontal shot, has him ‘bandaged’ like a mummy with vegetables cut to almost see-through thinness. Then it’s the fish course, another extraordinary image. The upper part of Postma’s face is bobbled with the suction cups of octopus’s tentacles; the mouth blackened by squid ink (“horrible, I don’t know how he put it in his mouth”); the eyelids layered with mackerel skin; lobster and sea urchin shells and razor clams for the forehead and crown. They tried shooting it

underwater at a swimming pool (driving there in full fish make-up must have turned a few heads) and then replicated it again on dry land. The squid ink didn’t taste any better, alas. “We didn’t get too many shots,” says Harrison. “Robbie was gagging.”

Thankfully, they could then focus on the wine. On the downside, Postma’s face was covered in pieces of broken wine glass, but on the plus, he got to spit out seven great gobfuls of red so that Harrison could capture the full kinetic effect. Ditto with the handfuls of black rice thrown at the back of his head covered in various starches – Postma confirms that sticking lines of quinoa to your face requires patience and a steady hand.

A dainty dish to set before an ECD

After the meat course comes the seasonings and spices – a medley of rock salt, chilli, vanilla, cardamom, nutmeg, cinnamon, cloves – and then the dessert, a clown’s face paint of milk and white chocolate and a great mouthful of raspberries dripping from the mouth. The closer is the coffee. “It’s one kind of bean but in different stages of burn,” says Postma. You can all but smell the rich aroma of the dark roast circling the eyes.

Menu gets its first serving in *shots*, but the duo has plans for an exhibition, and their ECD at JWT, Bas Korsten, loved the project so much it is now the main dish at an upcoming food and creativity event at JWT. In the meantime, settle yourself down for a visual feast like no other. Bon appétit. **S**

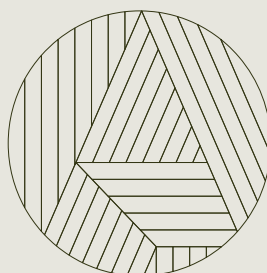


Voice over:

“ A PRINT AD? SOUNDS GREAT! ”

[SFX: Large outdoor crowd cheering]

[Music: Timpani drum roll, heavy orchestral strings & horns]



AMBASSADORS

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Selena Schleh
explores
the art of
advertising in
Amsterdam,
and finds
old masters
embracing
exciting new
technologies

Amsterdam

The future's bright. The future's orange

Amsterdam may be small but that's its great attraction. It lures in creatives from around the world who then export equally international work on a par with anything out of London or New York. Its diversity means culturally conscious ads are second nature, and the intimacy of the industry inspires collaboration more than competition. The only gloom on the horizon is the weather...

Whoever said size matters hadn't considered the Amsterdam ad industry. Less than a million people populate the city's picturesque tangle of streets and canals, and geographically it's so compact that you can cycle from one end to the other in under an hour, but when it comes to making creative, innovative and internationally-impactful work, this diminutive domain punches well above its weight.

Wieden+Kennedy may have put Amsterdam on the map in 2010 with *Write the Future* for Nike, but as Dinesh Sonak, managing director of local creative collective and awards body ADCN, points out, the city has been exporting creative ideas, art and products across the globe since its 17th century Golden Age. And looking back at 2016, Hans Brouwer, founder and CEO of

Amsterdam-headquartered music agency, MassiveMusic, believes "the creative work coming from Amsterdam can still compete with anywhere in the world."

72andSunny Amsterdam smashed laddish stereotypes and redefined the modern man with a new global campaign, *Find Your Magic*, for AXE; WE ARE Pi organised a rave in zero gravity (*Desperados Bass Drop*); DDB & Tribal Amsterdam designed a revolutionary Smart Jacket in collaboration with Vodafone, which allowed cyclists to use smartphone navigation hands-free; and Wieden+Kennedy Amsterdam put out possibly the best branded music video of the year with Budweiser/Tomorrowland's brilliantly bonkers *Infected*.

Plus there was a double-Grands Prix-winning experiment in AI art you might have heard of, courtesy of JWT Amsterdam. While not everyone shared the awards juries' admiration for ING's *The Next Rembrandt* (*The Guardian's* verdict: "What a horrible, tasteless, insensitive and soulless travesty of all that is creative in human nature.") it did spark a fascinating debate on the nature of creativity – one which rippled far beyond the adland echo-chamber.

The positive results of immigration

Pinpointing a characteristic tone or style is impossible – Amsterdam's advertising is from nowhere and everywhere simultaneously. "What makes Amsterdam unique is its huge diversity of advertising flavours," comments DDB & Tribal's creative director Bram Holzapfel. Carlo Cavallone, ECD at 72andSunny, observes that this

is a recent phenomenon: "It's become a lot more global, a lot more international – in a good way."

That's no surprise, given the melting pot of nationalities and talent here. "It's the clash of cultures that defines the output," says Wieden+Kennedy's ECD Mark Bernath. "We produce mostly global work, so for something to get out the door a whole lot of people from a whole lot of different places have to agree." For 72andSunny's head of strategy Nic Owen, that means elevating your creative insights: "You can't be lazy with cultural references – you have to take them to a higher level."

The collaborative culture that springs from the city's small size has also helped raise creative standards. It's hard to imagine agencies in uber-competitive London or New York flinging open their doors to competitors, but that's exactly what happens on Amsterdam's annual agency open day. "You can have conversations with other agencies and troubleshoot to an extent that's not the case elsewhere," according to Ravi Amaratunga, head of content at Amsterdam indie agency WE ARE Pi. "It's not a competition – we're trying to put Amsterdam [as a whole] on the map."

It's not just ideas that are being exchanged: talent is also flowing between the two traditional tiers of Amsterdam's advertising industry. Historically, notes Karlijn Paardekoojer, EP at CZAR Amsterdam, the expat market (that is international agencies making global campaigns for international brands) and the local market (Dutch agencies making Dutch campaigns for domestic clients) have operated independently of each other, but the boundaries are starting to



"We produce mostly global work, so for something to get out the door a whole lot of people from a whole lot of different places have to agree."

blur as expats move into local agencies or leave the big internationals to set up their own shops.

MassiveMusic's Brouwer thinks aspiration is also a factor. "The international agencies push towards a very high global standard, which makes the locals strive to make better campaigns." Look no further than Dawn (profiled on page 58), CODE D'AZUR (page 60) or INDIE Amsterdam for proof that Dutch shops are producing work on a creative par with their international counterparts. On the production front, homegrown directors Sam de Jong, Paul Geusebroek and Mees Peijnenburg are leading what Roel Oude Nijhuis, EP at production company Halal, calls "the new Dutch wave – raw and energetic, with a colourful aesthetic and a slightly absurd, cynical sense of humour".

From Netherlands to Neverleaveland

Attracting talent of all levels to Amsterdam is "delightfully easy" says Anomaly's ECD Lars Jorgensen. It's not hard to see why: as well as being a creative and tech hub, you get to swap your long commute for a 10-minute cycle to work and enjoy a decent work-life balance. In an increasingly nationalistic, inward-looking and intolerant global climate, Amsterdam's liberal, broad-minded vibe is even more appealing. But getting people to stick around is another matter, says 72andSunny's Cavallone, one of the longer-serving expats. "It's still a little village, and



"The integration to truly form a holistic network in our city has yet to come into bloom. However, Amsterdam has always been about ambition... so it could still happen."

there isn't loads [of work] here... It's not a final destination like New York is for a lot of people."

As a result, agencies are having to think laterally to retain their brightest stars – be that employing creatives on a freelance basis, supporting passion projects such as MENU, a photography series by a creative-chef duo at JWT Amsterdam (page 45) or giving employees an authentic start-up experience, as 72andSunny did last year, creating cycling onesie, Raynsie.

Talking to insiders, there's a sense of optimism about the future, particularly the opportunities in innovation, product development and VR. The Amsterdam HQ of creative digital production house MediaMonks has produced several global VR projects, including Samsung's *DISCOVER the World*. Its head of film, Rogier Schalken, says they have "some really cool things in development right now – it [VR] is definitely going to be the next big step for us."

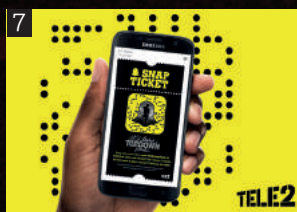
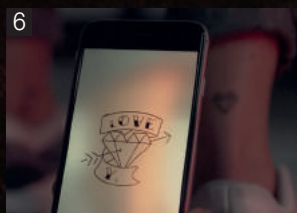
And of course, it was a Dutch agency, JWT Amsterdam, that scooped Cannes Lions' Innovation Agency of the Year in 2016 – though ECD Bas Korsten isn't resting on his laurels. "If you want to be at the forefront of innovation as an agency, you've got to be experimenting and developing stuff yourself, because clients are moving fast as well. [At JWT] what we try and do is not wait for the question to be asked, but to be ahead of the question," he says.

"There's a big transition happening across many industries here – start-ups, technology, design... the whole environment is changing," adds Korsten's colleague, innovation director, Emmanuel Flores Elías. Amsterdam might not rival Silicon Valley just yet, but there is a healthy start-up scene and all the tech giants, from Uber to Tesla, Facebook and Google, have a base here. If the ad industry can learn to collaborate with those kinds of companies, says WE ARE Pi's Amaratunga, rather than "trying to own it all", creative solutions will flourish.

The (Hol)Land of opportunity

Brexit, too, is likely to prove a further boon for Amsterdam, points out W+K's Bernath, being near the top of the relocation list for UK-based companies seeking a new European base. Coupled with the right strategy over the next two years, this tiny territory could yet topple London in the creative advertising stakes.

"Amsterdam really has got every discipline that's essential for a great piece of advertising, it just isn't used to its fullest potential yet," concludes CZAR EPs Paardekoooper and Willem Bos. "The integration to truly form a holistic network in our city has yet to come into bloom. However, Amsterdam has always been about ambition... so it could still happen." **S**



1/2 ING, *The Next Rembrandt* from JWT Amsterdam

3/4 Budweiser/ Tomorrowland, *Infected* from W+K Amsterdam

5/6/7 CODE D'AZUR: multi-mobile adventure game for Tele2; AR Tattoo; Snaptickets for Tele2

8 AXE, *Find Your Magic* from 72andSunny

Striking an [umbilical] chord

Mea Dols de Jong makes people cry – not only has she become a go-to director for brands wanting ads that provoke tears, she’s making other directors pretty lachrymose at the speedy rise of her career. This was kicked off by a graduation film that attracted plaudits, a signing and commercial work by exploring the average woman’s most significant struggle for freedom – independence from mother

Still under 30, Amsterdam native Mea Dols de Jong is enjoying the sort of vertical career trajectory that must have other young directors gnashing their teeth. As well as scooping multiple awards, including best short documentary at Slamdance for her graduation film, she’s been named one of *Variety*’s top 10 European directors to watch, and, having been snapped up by local production company 100% Halal, is building a strong commercial reel. “I’ve been really lucky,” she says modestly of her stratospheric rise. “It was kind of a snowball effect.”

It all started with *If Mama Ain’t Happy, Nobody’s Happy*, a docu-drama exploring notions of female independence across four generations of Dols de Jong’s family, through the prism of her own relationship with her mother. “It’s almost two films within one,” explains Dols de Jong. “There’s the scripted film, the one I, as a filmmaker, wanted to make – and then the ‘real’ film, where my mum goes off-script. That’s the interesting part, because it’s where our relationship really starts showing.”

A relationship film with relatability

Intercutting footage from old family photos and videos with interviews, *If Mama Ain’t Happy, Nobody’s Happy* is by turns nostalgic, poignant and slyly humorous, an all-too-relatable portrait of the awkward transition, in relationship terms, from a dependent child to an equal, and all the accompanying guilt and exasperation that entails. No wonder then that it has struck such a chord with viewers – at the premiere, middle-aged men were coming up to Dols de Jong in tears, “crying about how they recognised themselves”.

Dols de Jong was always destined for a life in film: her father, Ate de Jong, is also a director and she spent much of her early childhood on sets, shuttling between Amsterdam and Los Angeles. Her own career began with a starring role in popular Dutch TV series *Gooische Vrouwen* aged 17. But after getting a degree in philosophy at the University of Amsterdam, she decided to move behind the camera and won a place at the prestigious Nederlandse Filmacademie where she graduated in 2014 with her award-winning short.

The mother of invention

Initially drawn to fiction, Dols de Jong switched tack for her graduation piece, which started out as a documentary on modern female emancipation. Wrestling with “all these questions in my head” she asked her mother for advice – and suddenly realised here was her angle. “I thought, I’m trying to make a film about independent women, but when it doesn’t work out, I go to my mum. What does that say about my own independence? By zooming in on that small thing – how does a daughter become independent from her mother? – I thought I could explore a bigger theme, about independent women in general.”

The film’s success came as a surprise: “It sounds a bit clichéd but I never really thought about the fact other people were going to watch it.” What was her mother’s reaction? “At first she didn’t say anything... and then a few days later, she was sitting there like this [arms folded and scowling] and said ‘It’s actually quite critical of me!’ But then we had a good chat about it all. When you’re touched by a documentary, it

touches you deeper than a fictional film,” she continues. “It has a special quality, and if you know how to work with that you can achieve a lot.”

Since signing to Halal, Dols de Jong has certainly brought this emotional nous to her fledgling commercial career. *Mother’s Day*, an online film for C&A where she interviewed passers-by in Spain, Holland and Germany about their mums was a viral snuffle-fest, while *Why Stop Setting Goals?*, a sweet 30-second spot for education providers LOI, documented the responses of children aged three to sixteen, plus

PHOTOGRAPH: ELZA JO VAN REEVEN




“[Feminism] is not my main thing. And I would hate to be put in that box. It’s like saying a black person can only make films about racism.”



an adult, to the question “What would you like to become?” There are plenty of would-be pirates, astronauts, psychologists and vets – but inevitably, the grown-up is left stumped by the question.

“If they [brands] want people to cry within 30 seconds, they call me!” she laughs of the emotionally charged scripts that are constantly winging her way. However, she’s anxious not to be pigeon-holed, and particularly not as a feminist director. “Of course, it would be great to approach female products in a relatable way, but I also can’t wait to get a call to direct the most

traditionally masculine commercial ever, for beer or a car. [Feminism] is not my main thing. And I would hate to be put in that box. It’s like saying a black person can only make films about racism.”

So far, Dols de Jong’s commercial work hasn’t strayed far from her documentary roots, but ultimately, she hopes to move into more visual storytelling. “Some commercial directors keep on reinventing themselves,” she muses, “and that would be my ambition. You find your niche, but you’re still brave enough to set new goals. I think that’s the only way to stay creative.” 

“Some commercial directors keep on reinventing themselves, and that’s my ambition. You find your niche, but you’re still brave enough to set new goals. I think that’s the only way to stay creative.”

Making ads for humans across the planet

In her bid to tackle the “Benetton baggage”, i.e. the brand’s history of daring ads, Hannah Smit worked on films that captured relatable human moments, while Tony Bartolucci’s work for ASICS has a universal message for athletes everywhere. Together the CDs at international agency 180 Amsterdam are set to create ads that resonate around the world

Tony Bartolucci and Hannah Smit channel 180 Amsterdam HQ’s 18th-century heritage

Around the offices of 180 Amsterdam, the towpaths are paved with gold. Well, not quite, but this stretch of the canal is known as the Gouden Bocht (Golden Bend) for more than just its picturesque sunsets. Back in the 18th century, it was the wealthiest corner of the city, home to merchants and traders. The agency occupies the former HQ of the most famous of them all: the East India Trading Company. Herengracht 506 is still a hub of activity and a gateway to the globe today, although the goods being exported are different: sumptuous furs and exotic spices have been replaced by award-winning ideas.

The bold buccaneers of this brave new world are creative directors Hannah Smit and Tony Bartolucci, who together run two of the agency’s major global accounts, Benetton and ASICS. Hailing from Canada and the US respectively, they grew up a mere hour’s drive from each other on opposite sides of Lake Erie, but their backgrounds couldn’t be more different – and this, the duo reckon, is what’s key to their success.

Speaking in multiple tongues

Smit’s career has criss-crossed the globe, taking her from big networks to “scrappy little” shops, before arriving at 180 Amsterdam last year. A graduate of Ontario College of Art and Design, she joined Ogilvy & Mather Toronto under Nancy Vonk and Janet Kestin of Dove’s *Campaign for Real Beauty* fame, moved to J. Walter Thompson Melbourne for two years, and returned to Canada in 2011, for a job at Toronto indie, John St.

Despite winning a gold Design Lion in 2011, Smit is proudest of her unbranded work – namely

2015’s *#CoverTheAthlete*, which highlights the “frankly inappropriate and fucked-up” media coverage of female athletes. Her zero-budget film in which bemused sportsmen are asked the same sort of sexist questions (sample: “Can you give us a twirl and tell us about your outfit?”), has clocked up over 200m YouTube views and sparked a global conversation.

By contrast, Bartolucci, who’s been with 180 since 2013, complains he “hasn’t done enough work for good. And that makes me feel guilty.” The Ohio State University alumnus spent his early years freelancing as a graphic designer, and segued into advertising while working at BBDO New York: “Being in a building with David Lubars, and part of this cool culture... I got this little spark.” Stints at Grey, McCann and Campfire followed, before he got his big break at DDB New York with The New York Lottery’s ‘Yeah, That Kind of Rich’. “I got spoiled rotten,” he says of the account. “We were able to write jokes for people in the tri-state area and just ignore everyone else. You’re talking to yourself, basically.”

It’s a huge contrast to working for an international agency in Amsterdam, where they’re talking to the entire world. “You have to please everybody and it’s a totally different way of thinking creatively,” says Bartolucci. “That is the challenge for us,” admits Smit. “How do you make something that strikes a nerve in multiple cultures and multiple languages?”

Well, one tack is appealing to common humanity – such as in the new brand positioning campaign for Benetton. “Benetton has a history of famous, provocative fashion advertising, but in the

last ten years they hadn’t really sold any product,” explains Smit. “They said, ‘We need to put product at the centre of our advertising.’” The result was *Clothes for Humans*, a campaign celebrating Benetton’s functional fashion via “honest human moments”. Was it a daunting brief, given the brand’s strong creative legacy? “We called it ‘the Benetton baggage,’” laughs Smit, “and yes it was challenging, but the brief was very clear. We kept the DNA of the brand intact with this honest, social commentary angle, but did it in a way that’s more insight driven than shocking. And it went beyond a print or film campaign, it was a tone of voice used across their stores and products.”

United [colours of] Nations

Global resonance was high on the agenda for ASICS’ *#WantItMore* campaign, which Bartolucci worked on alongside ECDs Dan Treichel and Dave Canning, and the campaign’s blood-sweat-and-tears realism delivered that in spades. Plus, its go-getting tagline was lauded by *The Guardian* as making Nike’s ‘Just Do It’ sound “laidback, flaky and out of date”. Work for ASICS will continue this year with an immersive running event in LA, produced by HeLo, in which 60 runner-influencers will tackle an obstacle-laden, interactive 5km course, with all the action captured on film.

With new briefs from Benetton landing on the desk, the duo will continue to strive for universal appeal. “180 is like the UN,” smiles Smit. “Being in a room with people who have varied backgrounds and perspectives on the world... it’s really inspiring and acts like a natural filter to make sure our ideas and insights are global in reach.” **S**

“180 is like the United Nations... being in a room with people who have such varied backgrounds and perspectives on the world...”

A man and a woman are posed in 16th-century style clothing. The man, on the left, stands wearing a dark velvet tunic with gold trim, a large white ruff collar, and a dark hat. The woman, on the right, sits wearing a similar dark velvet dress with gold trim, a white ruff collar, and a white headscarf. The background is dark and moody.

“We kept the DNA of the [Benetton] brand intact with this honest, social commentary angle, but did it in a way that’s more insight driven than shocking.”

The sun rises on a new era

Since 2008, Dawn has quietly built a reputation for smart, design-driven work. Now, with the launch of a branded content sister agency and European expansion on the cards, this self-styled “marathon runner” is set to draw ahead of the pack

Founder David Snellenberg (right) with CD Ward Graumans

There's no such thing as a perfect agency, but Amsterdam-based indie Dawn comes pretty close. With just 25 staff, they're nimble and tight-knit. Their client roster is chock-full of socially responsible yet commercially successful enterprises, for whom they deliver visually stunning, impactful campaigns. They strike a healthy balance between competition and collaboration: if you beat them in a pitch, they'll shake your hand and send you a congratulatory cake. Last year, they were named Holland's number one independent agency (and third overall) in The Gunn Report. And yet, unless you're based in the Netherlands, chances are you won't have heard of Dawn.

That's all set to change this year as the agency takes its first steps into the European league, according to founder David Snellenberg. The Amsterdam native set up Dawn in 2008 after 12 years climbing the creative ladder at BBDO in New York, London and Madrid. Growing tired of network agency culture (“I realised I was being led by the clients, rather than my own creativity”) he returned home to open an agency with partners Jaap Boender, Pepijn Rooijens and Greo Belgers.

Good friends and gunnen

Coinciding with the start of the global financial crisis, it was, Snellenberg admits, probably a bad time to set up shop, but Dawn has shown staying power. “I compare us to a marathon runner,” he laughs, “we don't have any excess fat.” Staying small and nimble has no doubt aided its success, but perhaps more crucial is its strong founding vision. “We have an opinion on the world, and we

work for clients that have not only a commercial role but also a societal role,” says Snellenberg, a claim borne out by a roster that includes FNV, the Netherlands's biggest trade union; ethical bank Triodos; the Amsterdam Royal Zoo; and renewable energy company Eneco.

Over the years, the agency has built a reputation for its design-driven, ‘visually friendly’ advertising – the original company logo even picked up a coveted Red Dot Design Award – but as creative director Ward Graumans, who joined in 2011, points out, strategy was always at its core. These days, though the craft is still important, the focus is more on innovation and impact. “Our main discussions with clients now are, ‘How can we create as much impact as possible with your point of view on the world?’” says Snellenberg.

Take The Social Shuffle for Zorg en Zekerheid, an insurer dedicated to improving social cohesion. Based on research that shows regularly switching seating in a classroom encourages student interaction and can prevent bullying, Dawn developed a digital interactive tool to help teachers rearrange where kids sit. It got three Webby nominations and a European Design Award and was picked up by 120 schools.

Even more ambitious is the work for Triodos Bank, which finances sustainable entrepreneurs and encourages consumers to change the world by changing how they spend money. Buy The Change is an online platform that connects sustainable enterprises with consumers. The second phase is an app developed by their “good friends” [creative production house] MediaMonks, which allows the concept to reach

more people. “It's interesting, because not only are we moving into campaigns, but also utilities to augment our campaigns,” says Snellenberg.

Partnerships with the likes of MediaMonks are both a function of the agency's diminutive size and, claim the pair, a genuine love of collaboration – balanced by healthy competitiveness. They embrace the Dutch trait of *gunnen* (magnanimity) in a pitch, “If a competitor gets the job, we applaud them, send them a cake or a bottle of wine,” but “we also want to win,” laughs Graumans, “so the next time, we do better.”

Daybreak for two new ventures

Last year, in response to increased demand for branded content, Dawn launched a sister agency, Hearhear, led by industry journalist Ebele Wybenga, which offers more in-depth, long-form content solutions to brands. Though much of Hearhear's roster was initially shared with Dawn, Wybenga now has several independent clients.

This year a second outpost of the Dawn empire will offer trend forecasting, bringing an “in-depth understanding of today's culture to our clients”, says Snellenberg. “Look at Brexit, or Trump – the polling agencies didn't get it right, there's a misunderstanding about what's really happening [culturally] today.” This looks set to be a busy year, but Snellenberg is adamant that growth won't be at the expense of Dawn's founding principles. “[We always ask] Are those new clients making us better? Are we making them better? The most important thing is to nurture our culture.” Smart, socially-minded and strategic: here's to a new dawn of possibilities. **S**

“We have an opinion on the world, and we work for clients that have not only a commercial role but also a societal role.”



“Look at Brexit, or Trump – the polling agencies didn’t get it right, there’s a misunderstanding about what’s really happening [culturally] today.”

How to make interesting things happen

CODE D'AZUR co-founder Nik Nieuwenhuijs is not a “do the job and shut the fuck up” type, which is why he ditched clients who shunned his input and grew his creative digital agency into a one-stop-shop, half-full of nerds, half-full of hipsters, completely full of a rare blend of creativity, strategy and techno-nous

Disruption, once the biggest buzzword in the creative technology sector, is now almost a hoary old cliché. Amsterdam-based creative digital agency CODE D'AZUR has a more original, refined, 2017-appropriate mantra: “Stand out and fit in”. As CEO Nik Nieuwenhuijs explains, this is less about disruption for disruption's sake and more about “coming up with unconventional ideas, which actually add value to people's daily lives, but at the same time fit in with the values people share and the technology they use.”

CODE D'AZUR's blend of creativity, strategy and technology is something of a rarity in the Netherlands, according to Nieuwenhuijs. “You've got solid creative production companies and ad agencies, but I don't think there's another company with our profile doing what we do.”

Nieuwenhuijs oversees a 40-strong crew of “half-nerds, half-hipsters. We believe if you mix them up interesting things happen.” Whether it's down to this geek-chic love-in or not, plenty of interesting things have happened since the agency launched as a two-man-band digital production company almost a decade ago.

Projects for long-standing client KLM have included *Must See Map*, a website where users could request travel tips from friends, which were then turned into a personalised printed map, and *FlightFunding*, a 24-hour ‘social experiment’ that petitioned the airline's social media followers to crowdfund a flight for someone in need. For domestic telecoms provider Tele2 Netherlands, the agency developed a multiplayer game for friends to physically play together by lining up their mobile devices, and rewarded speedy screenshotting

teens on Snapchat with *Snaptickets* – the chance to meet their favourite stars. This year looks set to bring even more interesting things – international expansion plans, an AI bot and an innovative new project with KLM and Airbnb.

It's a long way from Amsterdam native Nieuwenhuijs' beginnings as a self-taught Flash programmer back in 2000. After a week at Haarlem Business School, he shelved his economics textbooks and followed his sister into the ad trade, freelancing as a creative technologist at the likes of BBDO. Along the way he met graphic designer Jeroen Bijl, and in 2007 the pair combined their design and technology expertise, setting up a digital production company.

Being forced into commitment

Five years into “making cool interactive online stuff” for agencies, including the multi-award-winning, paedophile-ensnaring *Sweetie* for Terre des Hommes, Nieuwenhuijs became frustrated by a lack of autonomy. “[Agencies] weren't looking for our creative input. I'd explain why something wasn't going to work and be told, ‘Do your job and shut the fuck up.’ I woke up one morning and thought: ‘I don't want to do this any more.’”

Aiming to grow CODE D'AZUR into a full-service digital creative agency, Nieuwenhuijs poached his creative director sister from local agency Lemz, to head up his new creative department. The initial plan was to diversify the offering gradually, but then came the runaway success of the *Must See Map* campaign: “It started off as a campaign, but ended up as a sustainable service. That's the ultimate achievement,” says

Nieuwenhuijs. But it made agencies see CODE D'AZUR as competitors, not collaborators, and they stopped calling. “That fucked up the whole transition plan,” he laughs. “But on the good side it forced us to commit to that choice [to become a full-service digital creative agency].”

The gamble seems to have paid off: CODE D'AZUR now offers brands a one-stop-shop for sustainable products and services, from concept to build. There's a new office in Barcelona and plans for expansion beyond Europe this year. Although they're currently experimenting with the hottest tech du jour, such as AI, bots and voice-driven interfaces, Nieuwenhuijs insists the agency has a technology-as-toolbox mentality. “We always choose the solution based on the problem, rather than specialising in a particular [technology]. So it could be bots, or it could be an app, or it could be content that people share and like, rather than skip and mute.”

One reason for opening the Barcelona office was the ease of recruiting “solid” tech specialists, thanks to the city's superior universities and commitment to start-ups – Nieuwenhuijs has had something of a problem finding creative techy brains, companies such as Google creaming off the brightest and best from Amsterdam's small talent pool. “[Holland] has a great heritage in design, but not so much in technology, particularly software,” he says. But the situation is set to improve with the Dutch government now investing heavily in its tech sector, and Nieuwenhuijs is confident about the future. “We've got all the creative capital under one roof to help grow companies and accelerate start-ups,” he says. “And that's exciting.” **S**

“We've got all the creative capital under one roof to help grow companies and accelerate start-ups, and that's exciting.”



Going native: Amsterdam



Ed Meijaard, founding partner and MD at creative production studio Ambassadors, explains Amsterdam's similarity to a Leatherman multi-tool and describes the city as a chilled, villagey place, awash with boozy advertising parties

What is the best thing about working in advertising in Amsterdam?

Amsterdam offers a nice mix of artists and business-minded people, big agencies and smaller boutique-like ventures. It has an informal atmosphere that makes it easy for corporate people to loosen up a little and dare to be a bit more creative.

And the worst thing?

Too many advertising parties with sponsored booze, it's hard to say no. "Honey, I'm working late again" is a phrase that has lost all its credibility because of this.

What advice would you give to a visitor?

Only ride a bicycle if you don't mind being shouted at by everybody else in the traffic. It's never personal but Amsterdam people on bicycles are extremely rude, even the cutest-looking women.

What's the best Dutch ad you have seen in the last year?

I really enjoyed Tele2 *Because You Can* – refreshing and great music. Centraal Beheer *Rapper* was cool and ASN Bank *Gewoontedier* makes me smile every time.

If you were booking a hotel in Amsterdam, where would you choose to stay?

The relatively new Waldorf Astoria has a great two-star Michelin restaurant, Librije's Zusje. For a tighter budget I'd recommend The College Hotel, Hampshire Hotel – The Manor or Lloyd Hotel. They're further out but that gives you a chance to avoid the tourist traps and see more of the town.

Where's the best place to eat in Amsterdam?

Sazanka, a teppanyaki restaurant in the Okura Hotel. But also try the Eiburgh snack bar right over the Amsterdam bridge on Zeeburg Island – they have the best Belgian hand-cut fries and killer meatballs in satay sauce. Take tram 26 from Central station. Cafe Bern on the Nieuwmarkt does great cheese fondue and steak.

And the best place to have a drink?

GlouGlou wine bar at Tweede van der Helststraat 3 in De Pijp area, has a really cosy atmosphere and friendly service, and they really know their wine – they only serve organic. In summer you'll love the sunny terrace. If you're into local beer, check out Brouwerij 't IJ, next to the massive windmill, but go early as they close at 8pm.

"Try the Eiburgh snack bar for the best Belgian hand-cut fries and killer meatballs in satay sauce."

Who would you love to work with in the industry?

Michel Gondry. I'm a huge fan of his work. His Smirnoff commercial *Smarienberg* is still a masterpiece today.

What do you miss when you are out of the city?

Amsterdam doesn't really feel like a city, more like a village, so when you are away from Amsterdam you are usually in a bigger city. So then I miss my village!

If Amsterdam were a product, what would it be?

A Leatherman multi-tool, which has a lot of features, is small, cute and beautifully designed... though not always practical.

What's Amsterdam's favourite pastime?

Socialising with people, whilst watching other people socialise.

One table, four places. You and who?

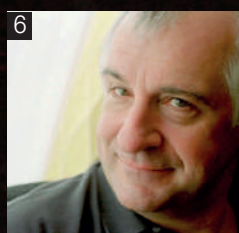
Douglas Adams, Philip K. Dick, William Bernbach.

What's your one-line life philosophy?

Eat, Sleep, Love, Repeat.

If you could have one question answered, what would it be?

What is the question if the answer is the "Ultimate Answer to Life, The Universe and Everything?" [From *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*] **S**



1 Cycling in Amsterdam

2 Eiburgh snack bar

3 GlouGlou wine bar

4 Socialising – drinks on street corners in the evening

5 ASN Bank, *Gewoontedier*

6 Douglas Adams

7 Beer from Brouwerij 't IJ



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THE WAY I SEE IT

Matt Eastwood

‘Make a plan, take action’: this is the simple, yet effective, mantra of a man who knows a bit about goal orientation. Matt Eastwood, global CCO of JWT, has a CV that dazzles with such titles as founding partner of M&C Saatchi in Australia and CCO of DDB New York. Since joining JWT in 2014, he’s nudged the network up Cannes’ creativity ratings with a haul last year of 80 Lions, a record for the agency. Yet, this highly organised plan-maker also has an easygoing, Aussie cool. He confounds Myers-Briggs tests with his mix of creativity and discipline. Once dubbed ‘the unicorn’ of adland, there is, as *Carol Cooper* learns, something magical about Matt





“I really had to pinch myself. Maurice freakin’ Saatchi was proposing a toast in my honour!”

I was born in Perth, Western Australia, and had a great childhood. We moved around a lot when I was younger – 11 towns in 11 years. It was crazy, but also an amazing experience to have as a kid. I have two brothers and a sister and we all became close as we had to rely on each other for companionship.

My brothers and sisters had a nickname for me – Diplo, which was short for Diplo-Matt. I guess because I was always the one who would rarely get in trouble. I was a good talker.

I knew I wanted to be in advertising from age 13. It sounds unbelievable, but I was inspired by the character of Darrin in [60s US sitcom] *Bewitched*. I saw him constantly coming up with crazy ideas and thought that would be a great job.

My parents didn’t have artistic careers – my mother was a librarian and my father was an accountant – but they encouraged me to be creative. Having said that, my father was always keen on me joining his accountancy practice. Ironically, my two best subjects at school were art and accounting. They are diametrically opposed skills, but actually both have served me well during my career. You don’t really need to understand a balance sheet when you’re a copywriter, but it certainly helps once you start running an agency.

My first job as a copywriter was at a small agency in Perth called The Partnership. I studied graphic design and after graduating I spent the summer looking for a job as an art director. After

three or four months I’d had no luck – plenty of, “I love your work, but we’re just not looking for anyone.” One day I saw an ad for The Partnership who were looking for a senior copywriter. I was neither senior, nor a copywriter, but I thought, “What the hell, go for it.” Somehow, I convinced the creative director to hire me.

My first boss, Gordon Dawson, really helped me understand what it takes to be a proper writer. In my first week on the job he asked me if I’d read *Catch-22*, *Slaughterhouse 5*, *Brave New World* and about a dozen other novels. Of course, I’d read none of them. So he bought me a stack of paperbacks and told me to start reading. There’s no doubt that he made me better. And it’s a lesson that has stuck with me.

In the early part of my career I think I was pretty easy to work with. I was very ambitious to make a name for myself, so I worked hard. And I worked with the same art director for almost nine years, so we developed a really easy creative process. Although I’m a morning person and he’s an evening person – that created a few challenges.

If I wasn’t in advertising I’d be an interior designer or an architect. It’s my biggest passion outside of advertising. I’ve actually designed a number of houses, three of which have been featured in magazines. I even used to write a blog about interior design and architecture.

Bob Isherwood was a mentor when he was in Sydney as global CCO at Saatchi, but I don’t think he knew he was mentoring me at the time. □

“Creativity
begets awards
which, in turn,
begets
creativity.”



I always paid close attention to what he did and how he behaved. Bob really lived the Saatchi philosophy: “Nothing is impossible.” He inspired greatness, then did whatever he could to bring that greatness to life. This can be a tough industry. Bob taught me the importance of passion.

Keith Reinhard, chairman emeritus at DDB, has become a lifelong mentor. Keith once said, “Your job is not to create great advertising, it’s to cause it.” That’s become a mantra for me. To create an environment where great advertising can happen. Maurice Saatchi taught me that a few well chosen words of encouragement can make anyone walk a few inches taller.

The piece of work that affected me most as a young creative was Apple’s *Think Different* and I think it touched a nerve in many creative people. We all want to change the world. More recently, I love REI’s *#OptOutside*. I’m always searching for work that not only lifts creativity to a higher level, but also lifts society to a higher level. *#OptOutside* wasn’t just a campaign; it was a movement. And it perfectly amplified REI’s belief that a life outside is a life well lived. I appreciate the audacity, the activism and the challenge it must have been simply to make it happen. It’s a brilliant example of a brand aligning its purpose with its marketing and demonstrating that companies can grow through doing good.

I’ll always love the *#FirstWorldProblems* campaign we did for Water is Life. It moved people into understanding the disparity between our trivial problems and those in countries with

concerns for more basic human needs. It was interesting, the film sparked debate over whether or not we understood the *#FirstWorldProblems* hashtag. Of course we understood the original intended irony and even *Urban Dictionary* describes first-world problems as “Problems from living in a wealthy, industrialised nation that third worlders would probably roll their eyes at.” And the Haitian people featured in the ad were definitely in on the joke and understood the nature of the inconsequential problems that people across the world were putting out over social media. The *#FirstWorldProblems* tweets were funny to them and elicited laughs as we asked them to read out their lines, because the ‘problems’ were so mundane. Our belief was that although the *#FirstWorldProblems* hashtag was created as a self-mocking mechanism for the privileged, these tweets about ‘problems’ also showcased a lack of sensitivity about serious concerns and the ways that social media users can help improve real problems. Most of all, it made me happy to produce a campaign that increased donations by over 500 per cent and made a real difference in people’s lives.

Weirdly, I think I’m an exact balance of extrovert and introvert. When you look at my Myers-Briggs chart, I’m exactly equal in all four quadrants. I’m creative, but I’m organised. I’m a balance of both thinking and feeling. I’m not even sure how that’s possible.

I’ve always been organised. But that’s how I best process tasks and information, in an ordered and sequential way. I’m all about lists.

The things I say most often are “Make a plan” and “Take action.” It’s the key to achieving your goals. It frustrates me when young creatives say, “I want to win more awards, but I don’t get the opportunity to do that type of work.” That kind of thinking is useless. If you want to win awards, make a plan. What are you going to do to enable that to happen? Work an extra three hours every Thursday night on proactive briefs? Team up with a partner who has won awards in the past? If you make a plan, and take action towards that plan, then the chances of it happening are hugely increased.

I’m a huge early adopter. I had the first iPhone, the first iPad, the first Apple Watch. I’m constantly looking for ways that technology can simplify and improve my life. Because I travel so much, I love technology that enables me to have access to everything, everywhere. But the technology has to be beautifully designed, which is probably why I’m such an Apple fan-boy. Steve Jobs once said, “The best technology is technology that disappears.” When something slips seamlessly into your life and disappears into the background, that’s when it can make a difference.

I’m a creature of habit. I don’t want to spend time on small decisions like what to eat for lunch or what clothes to wear. It distracts from the bigger, more creative decisions. That’s where I want to focus.

I have rituals that are embedded into my daily routine. I try to end each day having dealt with all my emails. It means being quite disciplined –



“Sometimes
not funny,
is not funny
everywhere.”

answer it, file it or delete it. I’ve also become a creature of habit when I travel and have got it down to a fine art. My most common trip is New York to London and I know exactly what to pack, prefer not to check luggage, and I even try to sit in the same seat each time. I guess I discover what works and I stick to it.

When I was 26 I enrolled in a three-day presentation skills workshop and, without being overly dramatic, I think it changed my life. That was when I understood the importance of commanding a room, and how to do it effectively. Since then, I’ve never been afraid of public speaking, never been afraid of standing up in front of the entire agency, never been afraid of presenting to even the most senior client. I’ve had the opportunity to present to everyone from the prime minister of Australia to the former vice president of the United States. For three years, in Australia, I was even on the panel of a weekly TV show about advertising called *The Gruen Transfer*, which was taped in front of a live studio audience. I loved it.

A key part of the job is that you have to believe in what you are selling. I’ve always felt that if you can’t convince yourself, then you can’t convince someone else. With the New York Lottery campaign ‘Yeah, That Kind of Rich’ and Water is Life’s *#FirstWorldProblems* I loved the balance of being able to create two campaigns with such opposing points of view. The important thing is that both campaigns were built on genuine human insights. I think that’s what makes each powerful in their own way.

Bill Bernbach once said, “All of us who professionally use the mass media are the shapers of society. We can vulgarise that society. We can brutalise it. Or we can help lift it to a higher level.” I think that’s a responsibility and an opportunity for all creatives.

The most important thing for me is to work with nice clients. Life’s too short to work with bad people. Only once have I told a client that the agency could no longer work with them because of the way they behaved. That’s a really tough decision to make so it’s very much a last resort. But, ultimately, a bad client can destroy the culture of the agency. I’m fairly open and honest (I think it’s in my Aussie nature) so if there are issues, I’d rather confront a client and try to resolve how to work better together.

I like the Aussie brand of cheeky and irreverent humour, but I’ve learned to appreciate other types of humour, too. London has a dryer sense of humour and the US is more slapstick. But I’ve also learned to trust my gut. When I first moved to New York, I remember looking at some scripts and not finding them funny, but the creatives assured me “This is really funny in the US.” Nope, it’s not. Sometimes not funny, is not funny everywhere.


I’ve lived in New York for 11 years and my father thinks I talk with an American accent. I guess sometimes I do. If you want to be understood in New York sometimes it’s easier to say “toona” instead of “chewna”. Most importantly, living in New York reminds me to

take advantage of the culture that surrounds me. In many ways, I’ll always see New York with a foreigner’s eyes, which is a good thing. I’ll never take for granted the fact that I have access to the Guggenheim, or Broadway, or Madison Square Garden. New York has probably heightened my ambition, too. Everyone comes to New York with a dream: “If I can make it here, I can make it anywhere.” It’s incredibly invigorating to be surrounded by such passionate people.

It’s the small things that I miss about Australia. Scrambled eggs at Bill’s in Surrey Hills, Bondi Beach in the summer, barbecuing in the backyard, being able to drive to and from work. And, of course, I miss my family. But New York is definitely ‘home’ now.

I think there is less ageism in the ad industry in the USA than in Australia. At DDB New York, I had four creatives in their early 60s working in the creative department. And a similar number when I was running Y&R New York. The knowledge and experience that an older person can offer is impossible to get from a 23 year old. Plus, I think clients genuinely appreciate that kind of experience.

I’m comfortable with getting older. I just wish my body could live up to the demands I put on it. My travel schedule is tough, and my body doesn’t recover as quickly as it used to. The older you get, the better you have to treat yourself. You can’t just eat whatever you want. You have to find time to exercise, which is a battle for me. Also, I wish my glasses didn’t have to get stronger every year. ▢



“If you want to be understood in New York sometimes it’s easier to say “toona” instead of “chewna”.”

As a leader of creatives, I don’t like to compete with the team by bringing my ideas to the table, but if I have an idea I find a way to make it happen. I just need to make it feel like the team’s idea. But what excites me most is seeing people who work for me be successful. It’s so fulfilling to see young creatives win their first award and knowing that I helped them get there. It’s better than the feeling of personal achievement.

One thing that I’m really passionate about is training for creative people. In most of the agencies there’s an abundance of training for account management but very little for creatives. So I started the Future Leaders programme, which is a three-day workshop that deals with everything from leadership skills and performance management to finance and business strategy. Every year, I also take a contingent to the Berlin School of Creative Leadership. Their philosophy of ‘a creative CEO in every creative company’ is something I really believe in.

When I was described as a ‘unicorn’ in the communications industry I think that was because I was so young (I was only 32), had the ability to command a big agency creative department and deal with clients. Personally, I’ve never felt like a unicorn, but I guess sometimes it’s quite hard to see and acknowledge your own strengths.

When I started in the advertising industry in the 1990s it was pretty much all about print and TV. Now advertising covers an enormous range of ideas. One day we can be developing a new product like Touchable Ink [a product that allows


braille to be printed more easily] and the next day we’ll be working on a scripted TV series. It really is the best time to be working in the industry.

When I arrived at J. Walter Thompson, I set my sights on Cannes. To be clear: I don’t believe in working for awards, but awards are important. Cannes, for me, was not necessarily an end goal but something that could potentially build on itself. If I could get our agency’s standing at Cannes to rise, I knew this tide would then encourage creativity all over the globe. It’s a virtuous circle. Creativity begets awards which, in turn, begets creativity. So I knew it could, essentially, act as an engine turning itself over. Also, awards are measurable.

At my first global network meeting at JWT I needed to convince the network why upping our creativity was so important. I presented a plan that included evidence from *The Gunn Report* that our creative reputation was slipping. Perhaps the biggest challenge was convincing the network that profit couldn’t be our only goal. It helped that our CEO was 100 per cent on board. Also, Martin Sorrell, the CEO of WPP was totally supportive. At our annual performance review Martin gave us only two goals: growth and creativity. It’s important to have that kind of focus coming from the very top.

I always say two things to people who want to work as a creative: work hard and be nice to people. You don’t have to be the most talented person in the world to be successful. Sure, you need talent, but passion is far more important. Passion trumps talent.

“I’ve never felt like a unicorn, but I guess sometimes it’s quite hard to see and acknowledge your own strengths.”





The best day in my career came after I was appointed ECD of M&C Saatchi in London, when I was at dinner with the company's founders and partners. Maurice Saatchi raised his glass and proposed a toast to my success. At that moment, I really had to pinch myself. Maurice freakin' Saatchi was proposing a toast in my honour!

My worst moment was after about three years in the industry when I was at Ogilvy in Perth. I was working on great accounts, had a great partner and was doing great work, but despite this, one afternoon I was called into the managing director's office and let go. I was extremely upset and couldn't understand why I'd been fired. It turned out that the Perth agency was going into bankruptcy. Fairly soon, everyone was let go, but it still sticks with me as a devastating moment.

Success for the brand is more important than artistic merit. But if we do our job right, we can achieve both.

If I could change one thing about myself it would be my memory. I have the worst short-term memory and it stops me from remembering names, and even faces, which can be extremely awkward in my role.

I travel probably 60-70 per cent of the time so when I get a chance to be home I try to embrace it. We have a lake house in upstate New York. It's my favourite place in the world. And my husband makes the world's best Hendrick's dirty martini with three olives, which definitely helps me relax.

The closest I've ever been to death was a hit-and-run accident in Boston when a lady who was texting and driving swerved and hit me. Luckily, I was with a colleague who called 911. At first, he thought I was dead. I was unconscious with a pool of blood coming from my head. In the end, I had a broken wrist, some nasty lacerations and concussion.

Defeatism makes me angry. I come from the 'never give up' school. I guess that's why I talk so much about passion.

Do I Google myself? Guilty. I'd like to think I don't care what people think about me, but I do. I don't think I'm thick-skinned enough to ever get over reading negative comments about myself.

At the end of the day, the most important thing is relationships – with my husband, with my family, with my friends. They are the people who are there to celebrate the good times and help get you through the bad times. **ES**

THE WINTER OF OUR DISSED CONTENT



Ahead of the Dubai Lynx festival next month, James Bland, Film Craft jury president and EP/managing partner at Blink London, talks to *Tim Cumming* about the festival's role in a challenging territory, the importance of judging a whole piece of work and how the supremacy of content is sooo last year – nowadays it's all about the craft

When it comes to film craft, the category jury president at Dubai Lynx, Blink EP James Bland, is passionate. “About 15 years ago, the advertising and media phrase was ‘content is king’, and now that couldn’t be more untrue, because we are so overwhelmed with content. What’s been lost is the film craft to distinguish the work. Craft is king now – a good idea without great execution will ultimately not succeed.”

When he arrives in Dubai, Bland comes well armed not only with wide-ranging experience, as a well-seasoned first assistant director, and an executive producer since 2007 (joining Blink in London in 2008) but with jury experience on the likes of D&AD and British Arrows. “At D&AD, the way we looked at work was to evaluate it on three criteria – idea, execution, relevance. On the Lynx Film Craft jury, they asked us to invert the first two. But you cannot judge solely on execution. It might be an idea that doesn’t quite work, that doesn’t have relevance – it has to be a great piece of work in its entirety.”

A nice surprise from a Skittles spot

Mastery of craft cuts across every facet of a finished piece of work, and each one will be considered in the Film Craft awards. “Entries will need to demonstrate exceptional filmmaking; that is, work in which technical skill and production prowess elevate an idea or dramatically enhances its execution.”

As for all the juries, a cultural liaison officer will be on hand to help steer the Film Craft jury through any MENA cultural tonality or nuance that needs explanation. Though the industry is

not short of awards shows, festivals such as Lynx work as divining rods to sort the great from the good, the bad and the ugly in a territory with unique challenges and opportunities for communication. “It’s a very important festival, and it is really good for bringing in new, fresh ideas and encouraging the next generation,” says Bland. “Advertising students get the chance to listen to some of the industry leaders and talk to them. It’s powerful and positive for the advertising community.”

Bland worked for almost a decade as first assistant director with the likes of Johnny Green, Tim Godsall, John Mastromonaco and Paul Street. “My interest in craft comes from working on the set floor with some of the best talent in the industry,” he says. “I really understand what it takes to make a great advertising film from working with those people. It’s brilliant to put those teams together, [with people] who will understand the idea and bring real inspiration and fresh thinking to the project.”

Born in Dublin and raised in Canada, his entry into production came with a move to Vancouver. “Around every corner were film trucks, lights – I couldn’t believe it. I arrived at the perfect time to get in.” He started as a runner, and by 1994 was an AD on all sorts of film and TV productions. A brief hiatus led to a three-week job on a Skittles spot for Palomar Pictures. “I was surprised to find out that what I thought was an amazing industry was even better inside advertising,” he says. “I got to be part of the entire process, working closely with the director, Buddy Cone, helping with the storyboards and location scouting, and it

was way more exciting and far more interesting.” More demanding, too. Almost a decade later, what pushed him towards executive producing was a Stella ad in Buenos Aires. “A period scene, under very arduous conditions – a hot day, lots of actors in costume, horses to wrangle, extremely frustrating and difficult to keep the show together.” There, in the middle distance, he spied an executive producer sipping lemonade under an umbrella, chatting to the agency people. The apparent ease of the executive class was one thing, but a more practical realisation drew him to change roles. “As an AD, I realised that after that shoot was over, I was done. I had no stake, no say. And I wanted to be more involved in the entire process, from pitch to delivery.”

Sitting in the shade, delivering

Starting as an EP with Tim Goodsall’s OPC in Toronto, Bland moved back to Europe, joining Knucklehead, before being invited to Blink in 2008. So has the ensuing decade been a case of sipping lemonade in the shade? Bland laughs. “I have to deliver and I have to make the budget work,” he says. “When I look at a potential project, I look at it with the knowledge and experience of how a shoot day is put together, how a job is made, and what it takes.”

Time is a precious commodity in filmmaking, as Bland points out – not only in terms of schedules or shooting at 24fps, but in the industry’s speed of change. “This business moves at an incredibly fast pace. We’re looking ahead as far as we can, and we’re looking to nurture the next generation of directing talent.” **S**

“...we are so overwhelmed with content. What’s been lost is the film craft to distinguish the work. Craft is king now – a good idea without great execution will ultimately not succeed.”



THE BRAND GURU'S BIG QUESTIONS

Can branded content address the issues specific to the MENA region? Is it a buzzword for just any content with a brand attached? Fredda Hurwitz, Havas Sports & Entertainment's global CSO and the Lynx jury president of Branded Content & Entertainment talks to *Tim Cumming* about tussling with such queries

It's tough being told by your boss that you're a great writer but you won't make a great journalist. So it went for a young Fredda Hurwitz, not long graduated from Berkeley in French and journalism, and sitting with the bureau chief at Associated Press in Paris, thousands of miles from home. Hurwitz laughs as she tells the story. "So I thought, what the hell do I do now?!" As it turned out, follow serendipity. Phoning a contact on the *Harvard Business Review*, she got through to his brother, who was president of Disney Consumer Products Europe and Middle East. That was the last call she made as a journalist. "So I ended up in the corporate world: branding, licensing, strategy and everything else. He gave me my first shot."

Finding the passion points

Hurwitz, global CSO at Havas Sports & Entertainment, which she joined in 2008, is now based in London, but during her eight years in Paris she moved from Disney to work with major brands and in sports sponsorship. "From the Disney days on, it was all about working in teams, collaborating and pulling the work together," she says. "But I don't come from a traditional ad background. Although I've worked both brand and agency side throughout my career, for years now I've worked in sports and entertainment – in sponsorship, branding and strategy. So I have a slightly different perspective to my peers. My mind definitely doesn't work in show reels or TVCs but passion points, engagement – things that people genuinely care about and want to share, experience, play with, add to."

And it's that different perspective she brings

to Dubai Lynx – her second stint in two years, except that this year she is coming as jury president of Branded Content & Entertainment. "We're there to elevate the criteria and level of expectation, the breadth and scale of work in the MENA region," she says, "and to add their value and push and stretch things." Which means letting go of a raft of Western perspectives for a more uninflected view. "What I found most fascinating was the level of insight – a lot of the campaigns were based on a lot of the issues in the region, and how countries, or companies or individuals were taking an endemic problem and finding a way to deal with them without challenging governments. Taking on age-old ways of doing things to put a light on it and say, 'Here's another way.'"


One problem she found, and hopes to see addressed at this year's festival, is defining exactly what "branded content" is. "What we saw was literally everything that had a brand associated with content," she says. "In the MENA region, there wasn't a great understanding of what it is, but for me, it is more of a buzzword than a particular category. Ultimately, it's all about brands finding a way to engage with people over the things they care about, are passionate about."

Standouts from last year include the Always campaign, *Saudi Women's Online March*, from H&C Leo Burnett Beirut – "a march for women – women just walking, going in a line, wherever they were, going about their day". It won 11 awards worldwide. Impact BBDO Dubai's campaign for UN Women to 'give mom back her name' was another outstanding example of region-specific communication.

"In Egypt, when a woman becomes a mother, she's never ever called by her name again," explains Hurwitz, "The children won't even speak their mother's name. So the campaign got young Egyptian men to get past the stigma, and to say their mother's name. It was beautifully done, and I believe it had a positive effect."

The issues facing the MENA countries, stretching from Lebanon to Morocco, are sometimes starkly different from the issues that have traction in the West. Are we asking too much of branded content to effect social change whether in MENA or indeed any other region? "I believe brands can and should have a meaningful role, but we know they are out there to sell a product. But there are ways and means of doing it, of having a positive effect on lives, on equality, on gender, on all sorts of issues, without losing sight of the fact that you want to sell something."

Keeping the locals happy... or lazy?

As for the role Lynx plays in promoting work in MENA territories, Hurwitz sees two sides to the equation. "Agencies want to win awards. They want to feel the money and time they have invested in quality is recognised. The challenge at MENA is that you get big agencies, as well as the more local ones, so there is a competitive element. You're bringing Western thinking, resources and expertise, which helps bring it forward, but there may be a challenge from local agencies trying to break through, and they really embody what their markets are all about. Is Dubai Lynx challenging them to do better, more creative work? Or is it just reassuring them they're on to the right thing?" 



Shooting in Dubai

Ever since 2010, when Tom Cruise dangled off the side of the world's tallest structure, Dubai's Burj Khalifa, while filming *Mission Impossible: Ghost Protocol*, the city's popularity as a film location has been growing. *worldoflocations.com* explores its many riches – stunning architecture and scenery, and advanced facilities

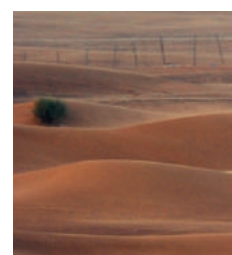
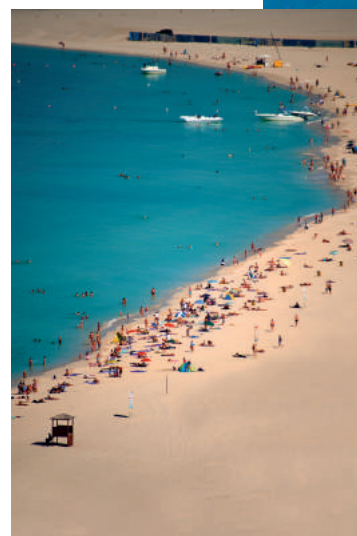


Dubai is a modern and cosmopolitan city best known for its spectacular urban architecture, such as the Burj Khalifa – the tallest building in the world – the luxury, 7-star hotel Burj Al Arab and the Palm Jumeirah manmade island. There are also bustling waterfronts and traditional marketplaces, alongside the modern malls.

Sheikh Zayed Road, the main artery of the city, offers some of the most popular visuals of this modern metropolis, while a more traditionally Arab aesthetic can be found in the dazzling Gold Souq, the Spice Souq and the historic Bastakiya quarter. Outside the city, to the south east,

producers can find the stunning Margham desert as well as mountain scenery around Hatta.

Dubai is a thriving commercials production centre and is most successful at attracting Bollywood films and other productions from the Indian subcontinent. The city had a high-profile Hollywood visitor for two weeks in 2016 when Paramount Pictures' *Star Trek Beyond* chose it as a stand-in for a sleek spaceport. Other productions that have shot scenes here include Universal Pictures' *The Bourne Legacy* and Paramount's *Mission Impossible: Ghost Protocol*, which shot a centrepiece action sequence at the Burj Khalifa. **S**



Filming in Dubai

The Talkies

Contact: Jay Nehme
Loft Office 2, Office 116,
Dubai Media City,
Dubai UAE, PO Box 500447
Tel: +971 4 367 1107
email: info@thetalkies.com
www.thetalkies.com



Founded in 1988, The Talkies has produced many award-winning commercials. Its facilities include a 1,640 sq ft studio, a casting department, set-building workshop and recording studio.

Having offices in Beirut, Cairo, Dubai, Casablanca and Riyadh that are staffed with experienced multilingual and dedicated producers and production managers makes The Talkies an ideal partner when it comes to shooting in the Middle East.

All five of The Talkies' offices have partnered with international agencies to provide them with high standards of production services and they're able to see a project through from the start to a successful finish.

Dubai Film and TV Commission

Contact: Saeed Aljanahi
Tel: +971 4360 2022
email: info@filmdubai.gov.ae



Need to know

- DO** visit the souks in Deira.
- DO** dress modestly in public – this applies to both men and women and includes clothing, such as shorts.
- DON'T** eat with your left hand, ie. hold the fork in your right hand.
- DON'T** offer to shake the hand of a Dubai woman unless she initiates it.
- DON'T** drink too much in public, as this can get you arrested.
- DON'T** engage in public displays of affection with partners or dates. Anything more than holding hands is generally frowned upon.
- DON'T** bring a coat – it's hot!

World of **locations**



The Lowdown

Financial incentives

Dubai does not offer a formal filming incentive support programme, but bespoke offers are available through direct contact with Dubai Film and TV Commission. dubaifilmcommission.ae/filming-in-dubai/incentives

Infrastructure and crews

Dubai is home to numerous advertising agencies and has a wealth of production talent. Dubai Media City is a tax-free zone that's home to 1,300 media companies. It also incorporates Dubai Studio City, a production facility that offers three soundstages, two of which can be combined to create a 50,000 sq ft filming space. Producers have access to water tanks, workshops, production offices and a backlot covering 3 million sq ft. Dubai Film and TV Commission offers logistical support and is the sole body authorised to issue shooting permits for the city.

Size matters

Dubai covers 2,428 sq miles, making it slightly smaller than Hong Kong and Luxembourg. Public transport by road and metro train is extensive and efficient and there are numerous marine stations.

Jeffrey Chernov, EP of the film *Star Trek Beyond* said of choosing the location, "Dubai represents the future, what the frontier would look like in our film, and is an excellent place to shoot as well. Dubai's great visuals really fit the story."

worldoflocations.com

"Dubai represents the future, what the frontier would look like in our film [*Star Trek Beyond*], and is an excellent place to shoot as well. Dubai's great visuals really fit the story."

Jeffrey Chernov, executive producer, Star Trek Beyond

LAWRENCE KENDRICK
Sound engineer, Jungle Studios London

FAVOURITE KIT



1 Sony MDR-ZX770BN

My latest acquisition. With Bluetooth, noise cancellation, hands-free calls and 13-hour battery life. Perfect for the commute to and from work every day and I can plug them into a standard audio jack if the battery ever runs out or if I need higher quality than the Bluetooth can manage. Excellent sounding cans with a ton of nice features.

2 Aether Cone

A Spotify Connect-, Bluetooth- and AirPlay-enabled speaker. It has eight hours of battery life so you can use it in the kitchen while cooking, then plug it in to charge and play tunes while you eat. You can control it online so I can be on the bus and still bully my missus at home by setting it to play Rick Astley on a loop.

3 Raspberry Pi 3 Model B

A credit-card-sized open-source PC with Bluetooth, wi-fi and a 64-bit quad-core processor. It's the cornerstone of a bunch of tinkering projects. I was using it as a jukebox until I got the Aether Cone, so it's being repurposed as a little home security box at the moment.

4 Zoom H2N

This neat little field recorder travels with me everywhere to record bits and bobs that will be useful in the studio or to pair with my GoPro for more crispy audio. I've been collecting some great surround-sound ambiences with it lately. It's recently been updated to be compatible with YouTube's Spatial Audio spec so it's handy for playing with virtual reality audio too.

5 GoPro Hero4 Silver

My trekking-around-the-world camera. I've got a bunch of batteries and SD cards in my bag so I can document my travels and fun times. I'm currently trying to edit down about 100GB of footage from my trip to Canada. The GorillaPod tripod is great for jamming it in a tree, subsequently forgetting I left it there and panicking while trying to find it again.

6 Tern Link P9

I chose this nine-speed folder as a sturdier and more full-featured alternative to a Brompton because I wanted a light touring bike as well as a commuter. It has survived a 250-mile cycle to Paris, including an accidental six-hour detour, and (perhaps more surprisingly) my travels around London.

7 Lenovo thinkPad X230

I have a MacBook Pro sitting at home, but it's the ThinkPad that lives in my bag and comes with me every day. I use it for producing electronic tunes in Ableton, editing video in Premiere and a little animation in After Effects. It's an indestructible little tank!

8 Samplr

My current app jam and an addictive example of how multitouch can enhance an interface. I can load an audio sample in from my H2N field recorder or a synth, and bend and mangle it until it's something new. A brilliant bit of software. **S**



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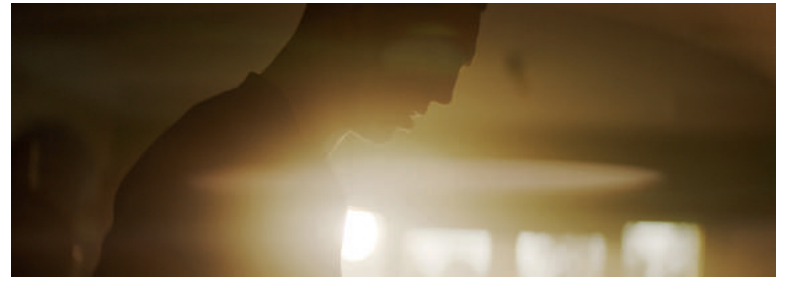
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DOING WHAT YOU LOVE

A brace of new directing pairs is joined by a long-time-coming overnight directing sensation in *shots*' survey of fresh eyes behind the camera. A couple of former rugby players honour their sport in a spot for Gillette, a duo of workers from advertising's coal face put words on film and a German student wows YouTube with an emotional spec ad for adidas



Michel+Nico

TV & CINEMA



Gillette

The Honest Player

For their first commercial job, new directors Michel+Nico have dipped into a world they know very well: the world of rugby. Both Michel and Nico Arribehaute, two brothers from Biarritz in France, played the sport to a very high level in their home country and began their filmmaking journey by making, at first, short personal projects about the game, followed by a longer documentary which was picked up by Red Bull. Their background is not that of traditional filmmakers; Michel, the elder brother by three years, was a social worker while Nico was an architect, but, says Michel, "We were these guys always in search of creativity... I learned editing and post via web tutorials, Nico learned sound design and mixing and the idea became an obvious one. We were made to tell stories".

Deciding that commercials were the way forward, the duo was signed to Bandits in France but soon decided to broaden their horizons and seek representation outside their country, signing with Believe Media in London after MD James

Covill visited them in their home town. Three weeks later they got the Gillette job. The film, called *The Honest Player*, stars British rugby international George North giving his all as he trains in a variety of locations. The stylishly shot film intercuts between North and old footage of British & Irish Lions games, featuring both highs and lows, overlaid with a rousing speech by famous Scottish rugby union coach Jim Telfer.

The film is a raw and inspirational 90 seconds, created through Grey London. "When we saw the script with George North and the history of the British Lions, we knew this project could not be done without us and we had to do everything possible to make this opportunity a reality," explains Michel. "So, with James's help we were able to meet Jonathan Marlow and Charlotte Marshall at Grey and instantly had great chemistry with them and we were all equally enthusiastic about making this film."

The hardest part of the project, says Michel, was the edit. Trying to choose the shots was difficult

because there were "so many beautiful moments". The passion and intensity of the brothers' Gillette film is matched by their own enthusiasm for their newfound career behind the camera.

"A few months ago we were two brothers with two Lumix cameras filming nothing and everything at the same time, telling stories from the heart with passion," says Michel. "Now it's different - we are still two brothers telling stories, with heart and passion, but now with fucking awesome people!" **DE**

"We were these guys always in search of creativity... I learned editing and post via web tutorials, Nico learned sound design and mixing and the idea became an obvious one. We were made to tell stories."



Eugen Merher

TV & CINEMA

 **adidas**
Break Free (test)

Deciding on directing as a career choice isn't easy, particularly with pushy parents who'd prefer you to study a more traditional subject. Such was the case for Moldova-born Eugen Merher who initially settled on communication science at university because he felt he lacked the experience to pursue his true passion for filmmaking.

Ever since discovering his love of directing on a family vacation aged 11, when he first picked up a camera, claiming he had nothing else to do, he has longed to convert his interest in filmmaking into something more professional. Which is why he began "officially" directing more than six years ago, realising it was the industry he wanted to get into, after he found himself shooting short films instead of revising for his exams. Merher enrolled at Germany's Filmacademy Baden-Wuerttemberg in 2014, where he is still a student.

Keen to establish himself as a commercials director, he admits he's learning to listen to his instincts and follow his intuition. "I try to listen inside myself to find out what kind of story I want to tell and what feeling I want to convey," he says, describing his creative process. "Then I find a product and/or brand that matches that feeling and I start creating an idea."

The school regularly sets its students practical assignments and it was Merher's spec spot for adidas, *Break Free*, that caught the attention of the creative press. Since it was uploaded to YouTube in December last year, it has amassed over 11.5 million views, trended in YouTube's top 30 videos and continues to be shared – not bad for a film student's spec work.

Set in a nursing home, the spot follows an elderly man who struggles to accept his restrictive

and depressing surroundings. Pining for a run, he frequently looks longingly and regretfully at his old running shoes. Inspired to go for one last run he is constantly thwarted and restrained by the care home staff.

The main character's fellow residents also show echoes of the former lives they've lost... and perhaps not realised: watering the home's TV

"Being a director helps me dive into the perspectives of different characters and worlds, which I love. And I've realised it's a lifelong learning process to become really good at directing."



set rather than their old garden, dancing in their rooms with imaginary partners.

"Being a director helps me dive into the perspectives of different characters and worlds, which I love," says Merher. "And I've realised it's a lifelong learning process to become really good at directing."

He admits that he's a bit of a people-watcher: "I'm mostly inspired through real-life encounters with extraordinary people, human weirdness and my own daydreams," which is perhaps why the creative industry appealed.

This year, he's got more work planned – shooting a commercial for match.com in March, a sci-fi short film in July and working on a feature film screenplay. It's early days, and Merher continues to study and refine his craft, but at least he can tell his parents he's on the right track. **OA**



Jamil & Pat

SHORT FILM



**Things I Carry
Into the World**

It's not uncommon for people in the industry to meet, click and start a side project together, often because they have contrastingly-complementary skills which, when combined, allow them to create the full picture. But in the case of new directing duo Jamil McGinnis and Pat Heywood (aka Jamil & Pat), the opposite was true as they both had little experience working as directors.

However, having met through their advertising day jobs – McGinnis is associate broadcast producer at Droga5 New York; Heywood is a sales coordinator at Smuggler – the pair knew they wanted to enter the world of directing together.

When Heywood's boss received an email from non-profit arts organisation Motionpoems, looking for directors to turn poems into films, "Pat approached me about it and said he would do it only if I would do it with him," says McGinnis. "And from that, our directing duo was born."

Scouring the list of 50 or so poems from which to choose, they agreed to pick their top five. By chance, *Things I Carry Into the World* by Cynthia Manick appeared on both lists. Their filmic adaptation of the poem explores what it means to be a young black creative, weaving the stories of four real-life poets among images of calming wildlife and unusually peaceful buildings buried in the city.

"What you're seeing on the screen are moments from adaptations of [the poets'] own poems," says Heywood. "So, in essence, the film explores four poets' poems and experiences through the lens of another poem."

This subtle and dreamy overlap reflects the pair's intrigue in the production process and their meticulous attention to detail.

"For us, making this film was about making something people could watch and be able to step outside themselves, empathise and recognise experiences that aren't their own."

How did they find the experience differed from their day jobs?

"Making a film is less rigid," says Heywood. "The thing about making a commercial is that there are so many cooks in the kitchen. You're always trying to please someone or make some sort of creative compromise. Oftentimes the results are great, but it's just the nature of the beast. For us, making this film was about making something people could watch and be able to step outside themselves, empathise and recognise experiences that aren't their own. The freedom of expression in filmmaking is such a wonderful thing."

Things I Carry Into the World taught them numerous life lessons, like the importance of letting go and getting on with a project, no matter what obstacles crop up, and how to raise \$15,000 to fund the film's production, and the importance of leaning on their database of advertising contacts for help.

Now that they've tasted life behind the lens, the future seems bright for Jamil & Pat, who are already working on a couple of follow-up secret projects, as well as seeking a music video job.

But for now, they're happy exploring whatever comes their way. As McGinnis concludes, "There are really no constraints that hold you back from making what you love." **OA**



CZAR Amsterdam director, *Rogier van der Ploeg*, looks back on pachyderm punches and the beauty of simple in his 1996 Grand Prix-winning spot

ON REFLECTION

Rolo Elephant

When I got the job, I had very little commercial experience, though I'd been making music videos as a one-man-band for a long time. My passion was to make things come alive in moving images, and commercials seemed like a nice and lucrative sidestep.

There wasn't even a real budget for *Elephant*, as Lintas, the agency, had another Rolo script [for *Cinema*, which also won a gold Lion] that was more important. It was our first time working with the agency, so we went all out to make it work. We tagged the *Elephant* shoot onto the *Cinema* shoot and, with a mini-crew, me doing my own camera work and the animal handler tossing in a free camel, managed to shoot it in a simple way.

The elephant's revenge is such a classic story, and somehow combining children and animals seemed like a nice challenge for a film production. Whatever the saying, neither animals nor children tend to overact in commercials, and therefore I find both of them rewarding to work with.

Casting the kid (and his older 'self') was a challenge. We had a lot of kids in, but one stood out: he was really cocky and wasn't fazed by the cameras. Finding an 'older' version was harder. The actor that finally nailed it managed to get the same look in his eyes. Of course we helped [the resemblance] a little by giving them both a funny knitted waistcoat.

The shoot itself was blessed with sunshine (which is unusual for Holland!). The opening scene was at a zoo in Ede, where a baby elephant had just been born. There was no budget for any animal training; the zookeepers just followed my directions and helped move the elephants around. I had made a very simple shot list, which left room for improvisation because we couldn't foresee how the baby elephant would react. Finally, we asked our kid to hold out the Rolo. As if by magic, the elephant came over, looked at the kid, and immediately after we had the shot, fell asleep. You need to be lucky in animal photography...

We used a school group on their lunch hour as free extras for the parade scene in Nieuw Sloten [an area of Amsterdam]. We had an animal handler who brought the adult elephant and a 'free' camel. He had a black panther, too, but when we noticed he had a huge bandage on his left arm and asked him how he got it, he said the panther couldn't always be trusted. So we kept it securely caged.

Normally in commercials the story has to be made as inoffensive as possible. In this case it was the opposite - the main man from Nestlé told us that the final blow to the head by the elephant should be

vicious. We happily complied, and pummelled our poor British actor numerous times with a fake elephant trunk. To save money, we put him on a flight back to the UK that same afternoon. He must have arrived home with a very swollen face.

We had no idea if the commercial would be a success. In fact, we asked random people to step into the edit to see if they 'got' the story, and when it was finished I was reluctant to put it on my reel, as I felt a little embarrassed about my camera work. But in the end I think the simplicity of the visuals was key to its success.

I had always dreamt of shooting in the US, so after *Elephant* aired I went over to LA in 1995 to visit 10 big American production companies. Although people laughed at the spot, they also commented on the lack of production values. So, in the end, I left the US with no representation. Then came Cannes 1996, where *Elephant* won the Grand Prix, and CZAR won the Palme d'Or for best production company. This time I went back to the States with only a rep, a producer and my own production company, and shot something like a hundred commercials in a couple of years.

Last year *Elephant* was voted the best commercial of all time in Holland, which seemed a bit much, given the great campaigns from [insurance company] Centraal Beheer. But we gladly accepted it. For me, success in advertising is always a shared effort (as is failure) and *Elephant* is a good example of that: a script with great potential, a client that lets you run free and a production crew that pulls out all the stops. The final lesson? A simple little story told in a simple little way can result in something big. **S**

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