

Redefining promotions

By  Ann Nurock

20 Jun 2016

Eoin Welsh, chief creative officer at Havas, was part of the Promotion & Activations [jury at Cannes Lions 2016](#). He spoke with Ann Nurock about the quality of work and how South African agencies can improve in this area.



Nurock: What did you judge this year at Cannes, and what was the process like?

Welsh: I judged the Promotions & Activations category, and the process was exhausting but incredibly exciting and exhilarating at the same time. We judged most nights till 8, 9 o'clock, even till 2:30 in the morning, purely because of the sheer volume of work. I mean at Cannes there's something like 43,000 entries with 3400 in our category, and that was after the pre-judgement which screens out a lot stuff. So just the volume of the work and because the category has several components to each entry such as case studies, we have to watch it, think about it, discuss it - so just to get through the work takes a lot of time.

Nurock: What was the quality of the work like?

Welsh: Well, the best was absolutely fantastic, the worst was absolutely awful, and there was a lot in the middle. So overall I would say the work was actually really good, and what was really interesting especially in the Promotions part of the category is how it is being totally redefined. When we think of promotions we think of 'two tins for the price of one', but in the promotions category we were seeing entries such as a huge American outdoor brand who decided to close on Black Friday, to a Beer company who found a way to transform their waste products into eco-friendly petrol, so there message was to 'Drink beer and save the world' which was fantastic, as well as a mobile video game that tracked people's

movements on the game to collect data which was then used to study dementia.

Nurock: What were the South African entries in the category like?

Welsh: They weren't great. I think we have a lot to learn. It's a broad category and with the amount of amazing, innovative and interesting things you can do, I think that mind-change hasn't filtered down into our reality just yet. The real mission for me is to go back with all this knowledge and say that Promotions is not what you think they are, or not what they used to be, the possibilities are limitless.

Nurock: Were there any themes that came through from the entries?

Welsh: From the start our jury president, Rob Reilly from McCann, was quite specific about what we should push for, and we all agreed so were happy to follow his agenda which was basically to reward big brands and be tough on charities. Charities are great, everyone wants to do good and that's awesome, but there is a tendency that it's long-hanging fruit for award shows – it's much harder to do that level of work for massive brands. He also made a great distinction between what he calls purpose-based advertising and charity. So purpose-based advertising is a genuine big brand that does something amazing on a social scale, but still with a business intention even it's a brand building one, it's making people feel good. There a lot of big brands leading the way in purpose-based advertising.

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ABOUT ANN NUROCK

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