

Cannes Lions: a Fox in France

By [Justin Gomes](#) 30 Jun 2010

First up, well done to all the Saffer [South African] winners at Cannes Lions this year! To give you some perspective on just how tough the competition is, the Press category had 4820 entries alone and of those, 1% went on to convert. So if you're in that 1%, tell your bean-counters you want to crack out more than just the JC I Roux this year. [[poll](#) video [twitterfall](#) [blog](#)]



For those agencies that didn't convert, console yourself with knowing international award shows can sometimes be a downright lottery.



Judging-wise

We in the Press Jury awarded the Grand Prix to a campaign for Scrabble out of Mexico (go to [Ogilvy & Mather's Mattel SCRABBLE Prints](#) and scroll down to Ogilvy, Mexico - A, E and O.) Then an hour before the ceremony, we were told the Scrabble Grand Prix had been pulled because the agency had entered exactly the same campaign the previous year.

Why did the cheeky Mexicans think they could get it away with it? The previous year the campaign didn't even shortlist. From nothing to Grand Prix and then from Grand Prix back to nothing again.

The work needs a bit of explanation so I suspect it got lost in translation in 2009 or the panel didn't take the time to read the explanation properly. For me, the Scrabble work felt like something different - especially when compared to the [Billboard Music Magazine campaign](#) that was elevated to Grand Prix in its place. Sure, it grabs you by the eyeballs but it employs a visual technique we've seen many times before.

If your work does require an explanation, it's well worth putting some time and thought into an AV to accompany the work. You're spending so much on your entry, it makes sense to spend a bit more so the entry is properly understood by a panel of judges whose first language isn't necessarily English.

To see what I mean, check out the superb Grand Prix Gatorade Replay Work produced by TBWA Chiat Day and overseen by our very own Mr John Hunt. The production values on that AV are better than most Hollywood movie trailers - hoendervleis is hoendervleis, in anyone's language.

Speaking of work getting lost in translation, there was a Press Copywriting Craft Category for the first time in Cannes. The organisers will need to relook the way it is judged, because only four of the panel of 20 judges had English as their first language. There was a beautifully crafted campaign out of New Zealand for the Sky Arts Channel, which I motivated to at least make the shortlist. My motivations fell on deaf foreign ears, but I felt some sense of justice when the exact same copy went onto win Gold in the Radio Copywriting Craft Category ([hear it here](#)).

Seminar-wise

Seminar-wise, it was great to hear words of wisdom from the world's top creative directors, but it was actually the words of Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg that stuck with me the most. He said that at the heart of every company there is a product. When that product becomes great, you attract great people and then your company, in turn, becomes great.

Other highlights included seminars from independent agencies Taproot (India), Sid Lee (Netherlands) and Happiness (Belgium). These agencies have proved to their clients that solving business problems start with an idea and not a media plan.

The Gatorade Replay idea is another great example of an idea that dictates a media plan, rather than the other way round. TBWA Chiat had received a brief for a 30-second television ad, it would not have arrived at its idea to replay a drawn high school American football game from 15 years ago. The idea has seen Gatorade receive ridiculously disproportionate return on its investment.

The Yahoo Engage seminar saw Ben Stiller and Jeff Goodby shooting the breeze about the future of advertising and movie making. Ben Stiller opened by saying he was extremely proud to finally be at the Cannes Film Festival, a lifelong dream of his finally fulfilled. And yes, he did pull the Blue Steel for the audience.

Results-wise

Results-wise, Latin America dominated proceedings this year and I spent time picking the brains of the guys from Brazil, Argentina and Mexico. The Brazilian CD from ALMAP BBDO told me kids in Brazil know there are two ways to get rich in Brazil by the age of 30. One is football. The other is Advertising. So it's a top-of-mind career option.

Not only that - I heard the Brazilian government pays for half the Cannes entries out of its country. At our press conference I counted around four journalists covering the country's performance. In contrast, there was not a single journalist from South Africa at the press conference - or even at the festival that I could see.

It was also great to see an authentic happiness from the Latin American countries for each other's success. Brand Brazil, Brand Chile and Brand Argentina are alive and well. Brand Mexico after the Press Grand Prix being pulled - not so much.

For all of us lucky enough to be at Cannes this year, let's harness the energy and inspiration from the festival to take the work in our agencies to the next level. It's all that stands between South Africa remaining competitive on the world stage or falling clean off it.

For more:

- Bizcommunity Poll: [\[Has South Africa been performing well or badly at Cannes Lions?\]](#)
- Bizcommunity Search: [Cannes Lions](#)
- Bizcommunity Blog: [Damon Stapleton](#) - blogging live from Cannes
- Bizcommunity Twitterfall: [South Africans at Cannes Lions 2010](#)
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Originally a copywriter by trade, [\[https://www.bizcommunity.com/Search/196/13/sm+3/r-196/s-Justin+Gomes.html Justin Gomes\]](https://www.bizcommunity.com/Search/196/13/sm+3/r-196/s-Justin+Gomes.html) spent many years working outside of South Africa in Paris and New York before returning to Cape Town to found FoxP2 ([\[http://www.foxp2.com\]](http://www.foxp2.com)) in 2005. Justin is officially ranked in the top 10 creatives in South Africa by the Creative Circle, the South African advertising industry's governing creative body, and sits on its executive committee. This year he was a member of the Cannes Lions Press jury. Contact Justin via email at [\[justin@foxp2.com\]](mailto:justin@foxp2.com) or tel +27 (0)21 424 4802 and follow him on Twitter at [@justingomes](http://twitter.com/justingomes).

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