

Liam Wielopolski of DDB on South Africa's world-class radio spot writing

 By [Ann Nurock](#)

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Liam Wielopolski, Executive Creative Director, DDB South Africa, was part of this year's Radio judging panel at Cannes Lions, where South Africa saw its first 2015 Gold Lions, awarded to Ogilvy and TBWA/Hunt/Lascaris respectively. Wielopolski talks us through the 26 hours of judging...

Our media correspondent on the ground in Cannes, Ann Nurock, interviewed Wielopolski to find out more about the Radio category. He talks on other countries' envy at our stellar radio writing skills and dispels the myth that radio spots are judged in a dark room.

Nurock: What stood out for you in the judging process, what did you find most interesting?



Liam Wielopolski

Wielopolski: Again this year, there were a lot of really, really good traditional radio spots, I think this is where South Africa stands really proud as a nation. It was fantastic, even on the first day of judging, some of the judges were coming up to me and asking 'How do you guys (South African agencies) do it?' They've been hearing the spots and commenting that they're so well written, so well produced.

After hours I was even being asked about certain individuals and whether they would ever consider going to work for a big international shops. So there's a lot of focus on us, and a lot of pride, from my side, in judging this year's radio entries, it's really, really great.

Nurock: How did you find the judging process?

Wielopolski: I think in the past, a lot of judges thought radio was the boring part to judge, you basically sat in this dark room with earphones on listening to radio spots all day. There was a really good atmosphere amongst the judges this year, they put beanbags out for us to sit on, on the balconies, it's all digital now so we judged on iPads, which was great as we had a radius to work in, so we could sit on the steps outside in the sunshine while judging.

There were just over 1,700 entries, up 20% on last year, so all together it was around 26 hours of radio we had to listen to. Lots of things really stood out, one in particular, which won the Grand Prix, was very different for radio - we even suggested they change the name of the category from Radio to Audio!

Nurock: Would you agree that we are pretty much the leading country in writing radio?

Wielopolski: Most definitely. Everyone's been feeling pretty bleak this week. When I have the chance to go out and network, all the South Africans comment that we're getting heaps of Bronzes but nothing more than that - luckily that all changes after the radio awards ceremony!

Nurock: There are lots of happier South Africans in Cannes now. What do you think we're doing right with radio?

Wielopolski: Just from the initial idea, a lot of the work has a nice strategic insight, and is written exceptionally well and crafted to perfection, there are certain writers in our country with a certain style that really resonates with people. I think in South Africa we often think 'Oh we've heard this before', but on a global scale, it's still very fresh.

We have to give a lot of credit to our studios doing incredible work, I'm constantly asked what studios we use and other

countries are saying maybe they should be recording in SA and even using local voices, local talent, which is quite surprising as South Africans are also looking for something new and considering using voices from elsewhere.

Nurock: Have you had any chance to be at the Festival, any of the seminars, to enjoy part of it?

Wielopolski: None. Absolutely nothing.

Nurock: OK then, what has been your favourite question here apart from judging?

Wielopolski: I'd have to say networking. We often don't have the time, with our families and busy lives, to network. Like Loeries, Cannes is the one event where we can let our hair down and really network. Loeries is a little different as it's our own local turf, so there's lots of good rivalry - here we're all flying the flag so we want any SA agency to do well.

Nurock: From all the work you've seen, not just radio, what's the most interesting piece or trend you've seen at Cannes?

Wielopolski: At the press conference for Radio, Design, Product Design and Cyber, I was privy to the Product Design wins. It's something you'd think needs to be totally high-tech and revolutionary and world-changing that wins, but in the end it was something so simple, probably the most low-tech idea that won, but has had an amazing impact in the country it came from.

Nurock: Thanks so much Liam, enjoy the rest of your week!

[Click here](#) for a reminder of the 2015 Cannes Lions radio wins, and [here for an interview](#) with Pete Khoury of TBWA/Hunt/Lascaris on SA's uplifting Cannes Radio wins.

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