

Agency expectations with... NATIVE VML

In our feature running until [Loeries Creative Week](#) in Durban this August (yes, August, not September and Durban, not Cape Town!), we find out what NATIVE VML's Co-Founder, Ben Wagner, expects...



1. What's your official job title and how long have you been at the agency?

Wagner: I'm Co-Founder at NATIVE VML. I've been with NATIVE VML since its doors opened four years ago, and before that I was CEO of Stonewall+ Digital Marketing, which merged to form NATIVE VML.



2. How long has your agency been attending the Loeries?

Wagner: Not long enough!

Part of me wishes I'd witnessed the mayhem of the Sun City days, awash in iconic work as well as crazy debauchery.



From NATIVE VML's perspective we're only four Loeries old, but I've been attending for around a decade, including as 2006 Jury Chair (Interactive) in Margate. Each year carries its own madness and outrageous shenanigans, but what I love is the ritual of coming together as an industry to pay respect to the best communications work on the African continent.

3. What's your biggest Loeries highlight of years past?

Wagner: Undoubtedly last year.

We managed to win an incredible double, giving us campaign golds in the Digital Integrated category and the overall Integrated category for Nedbank Ke Yona Team Search. This was an incredible achievement in many respects, firstly as a younger agency, secondly to win across two tough categories and most importantly winning against a tremendous cross-section of digital and traditional agency heavy-weights. It made all the hard work so worthwhile.

Needless to say, the after-show experience became a highlight all on its own!

4. What are you most looking forward to from Loeries Creative Week 2015, set to hit Durban in August?

Wagner: For me, irrespective of the year or venue, I always find great excitement in seeing the level of bravery, creative excellence and strategic thinking growing.

I take a particular interest in seeing how brands and their agencies are accessing the zeitgeist (in South Africa we have plenty to choose from) to forge creative ideas that move the needle forward for their clients.

5. Tell us some of your own agency work you're entering this year!

Wagner: 2015 isn't an awards year for us, it is an investment year. We have been fortunate to win several big pitches over the past six months and we are focussing on bedding down those relationships. Rather than spending money and attention on entering awards shows this year, we will be focusing on doing great work for our expanding roster of clients, with an eye

The many faces of Ben Wagner

to making an impact on the awards scene in 2016.

6. Who do you predict will win big this year, and why?

Wagner: Personally I feel King James is in for a big year. I think [The One Rand Man](#) is a fantastic piece of work that stretches across a couple of categories and is bound to do very well. The second piece from King James that I think will do very well is Santam's "[One-of-a-kind](#)", which is a phenomenally well-timed ad for South Africans who need to see the bright side of our country's idiosyncrasies. Beyond that, Joe Public will carry on where they left off last year. Their standout piece for me is the work they've done for [Dialdirect "The Notebook"](#), which again is a superb emotive story, beautifully told.

Lots to look forward to, it seems. For more on what to expect from this year's Loeries' Creative Week, visit the [official Loeries website](#) or our special [Loeries Creative Week](#) section.

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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