

Cream of the creative crop 1

ECDs and CCOs from six of the top-achieving agencies at the recent Creative Circle Ad of the Year Awards share what it took to shine for the tough judging panel and share some industry love for local work they love at the moment.

 By Leigh Andrews 18 Apr 2016



McPherson, Reilly, Kennedy, Ireland and Glover

My online panel comprised: Publicis Machine's executive creative director, Gareth McPherson (Trivial Pursuit's [Close but no wedge](#) came out tops for print); Net#work BBDO's ECD, Brad Reilly (Chicken Licken's [Bang Bang Mix '15 Bucks'](#) came out tops for integrated with its [15 bucks analyst](#) was third for experiential); King James Group ECD Devin Kennedy, (tops in the TV, video & cinema film category for Santam '[One of a Kind](#)'); founding partner and chief creative officer of Ireland Davenport Philip Ireland (Salvation Army '[#TheDress](#)' came third in digital); and Jenny Glover, ECD at TBWA/Hunt/Lascaris (City Lodge Hotels' '[A Room For Everyone](#)' tied second in print with its work for Doom Insecticide's '[Sexy Times](#)'. This campaign also came [third in radio](#), with the agency's work for Flight Centre's '[Travel Before it not fun anymore](#)' topping the radio category.

1. How exactly does the Creative Circle's Ad of the Year rankings work?

McPherson: The categories of TV, radio, out of home or outdoor, and print – covering newspaper and magazine – are judged every month. All the monthly award winners in all the categories are then entered in the Annual awards, and a panel of 18 senior creatives judges all the work, selecting a winner from each category, to become Ad of the Year. Work that is either awarded a 1st, 2nd or 3rd place in the monthly Creative Circle awards, automatically goes on to qualify for Ad of the Year. These are deemed finalists, and of the finalists, an overall winner in 1st, 2nd and 3rd place get awarded in each of these categories.

Reilly: The Ad of the Year judging then actually took place two days before the award night but none of the judges knew what had won until the award ceremony. All the work that had won at Ad of the Month went forward for us to judge as potential Ad of the Year winners. The process was simply watch all the pieces and then tick the one you feel is best – no discussion, no debate, no defending.

Kennedy: Yip – as there was no discussion or deliberation amongst the judges, the results were a surprise to everyone.

Ireland: I was on the jury but had to withdraw due to work commitments, so I don't have any fly on the wall insights as to the judging unfortunately. However, what is key to remember is that ad of the month is judged by a different jury every month, and the ad of the year jury gets to see it all at once.

Glover: As voting is 'blind' results were kept secret. The judging panel is made up of top ranked ECDs, CCOs and CC board members and it's an interesting voting process because you view all the work in the category and vote for just one piece. Usually, awards judging scores every piece but this is about picking just a single outstanding piece.

2. What's your favourite creative work in these categories at the moment?

McPherson: Print has always been a strong category for the Creative Circle Awards, and there's a lot of good work out there. Favourites for us would be the City Lodge Hotels campaign – "A room for everyone" An honest take on the City Lodge chain of hotels. Clear, simple idea and each execution had a fun twist. There's also been some good work done on Landrover over the last year or so.

Reilly: Locally, there are fairly slim pickings in this category – it is the type of work that takes a long time to produce, which is why it is only judged at Ad of the Month every three months. Besides our work, (which would be unfair of me to choose), I think the work that has been done for Sanlam on the 'One Rand' idea is great and very well packaged.

Kennedy: As far as integrated goes, maybe there aren't as many big standout pieces at the moment like Old Spice or Harvey Nichols "I spent it on myself", but I love brands that differentiate themselves from the rest. Like REI, an outdoor outfitter that decided to close their 143 stores on Black Friday with their #OptOutside campaign that encouraged people and their staff to get outdoors. At a time when everyone else was trying to get people to spend, this really stood out and worked brilliantly for the brand. I also think Volvo is doing some really interesting work at the moment.

Ireland: "[Grazed on greatness](#)" for MJ Bale is just spot on.

Glover: The work that was awarded is work that I'm enormously proud of. It's work that I loved from script and scamp stage and that as with all great work, the teams all put an enormous amount of effort and personal investment. Great work is never easy. People have been working really hard over the past year to make great work and myself, Rui and Pete have been pushing them to the limit and these awards are the result of all that effort and commitment. I'm enormously proud of the people I work with!

3. Do you agree that coming out with a good hand at our local Creative Circle bodes well for these same entries at the international award shows?

McPherson: Coming out tops in the Creative Circle Awards really shines the spotlight on our agency, and this bodes well for the international awards. Historically, Creative Circle has been very effective in evaluating creative work and awarding projects that go on to win at International shows. It's a great benchmark to see how work will perform internationally and I think it's reflective of our strong creative talent in this country. The quality of judges and the council's management of industry talent keep the overall level to a very high level. As a rule of thumb, if your work goes on to win at Creative Circle, the odds are good that it will feature or

the international circuit.

Reilly: I think it has very little bearing on the international results and, in fact, tends to work the other way – what gets kudos overseas generally has an impact on what you see winning back home. So, the winners you see at Cannes this year will undoubtedly have an effect on Loeries results. But at the end of the day, if the work is great, the work is great and any jury worth its salt should be able to recognise that.

Kennedy: It's not always a given and really depends on the ad or idea. Take Santam One-of-a-kind and O Rand Family, for instance. One-of-a-kind pretty much won everything locally but nothing internationally, as it is filled with cultural nuances like “chop and dop”, which only South Africans understand and find funny, while One Rand family has done well internationally. But it does give one hope that if it stood out here, it may just cut through the clutter at other award shows.

Ireland: I agree that the reverse is true, unfortunately: Work that is endorsed by international shows is very likely to repeat that success locally, but work that features locally is much less likely to influence international judges' awareness of the work. That said, great work does have a habit of winning in front of whatever jury looks at it – universality is one of the defining characteristics of great work!

Glover: Our radio work has already done well at Cannes 2015, two golds (Doom) and two silvers (Student Flights). You can never guarantee that any work is going to win awards. Awards are fickle. The best approach is to keep your focus on doing great work for your clients, work that you love and believe in. In my experience, if you do that, the awards will follow.

Seems these are the ones to watch, whether they shine again on the international circuit or not. [Click here](#) for a gallery of this year's winning work and [here](#) for a reminder of this year's winners. Watch this space for more insights from Creative Circle 2015 winners later this week!

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of inclusion, belonging, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! Now follow her travel adventures on YouTube @MidlifeVander.
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