

Cracking the Cannes Lions nod

 By Leigh Andrews

16 Jun 2015

Exclusive insights from four of this year's nine SA judges at Cannes Lions

Four of the local advertising industry's best known names - Pepe Marais, Chief Creative Officer of Joe Public; Jonathan Deeb, Executive Creative Director: FCB Joburg; Joanina Pastoll, Executive Creative Director Design Cross Colours, part of Lowe Johannesburg; and Graham Lang, Chief Creative Officer South Africa & Africa at Y&R Advertising - are fittingly four of nine South Africans chosen to sit on Cannes Lions judging panels this year.



Marais, Deeb, Pastoll and Lang demonstrating the many emotions experienced as a judge

They give us a glimpse of their experience as Cannes judges, as well as the importance of human connection, creativity and relentless commitment from the entire team in coming up with a Cannes Lions-winning campaign...

1. Always an honour to be asked to judge international work - how did you celebrate the news?

Marais: I am in the wonderfully demanding, crazy world of advertising, where we hardly have time to do what we love properly, let alone take time to celebrate our small victories. That said, I am indeed very proud to judge in Cannes this year and I'll be sure to savour every moment once I get there.

Deeb: I wish I could say with a bottle of French Rosé! But the week I heard the exciting news, we were deep in two of the biggest pitches of my career, one of them the prestigious South African Tourism account, so there were no celebrations - only long nights of hard work! I'll just have to have a glass (or a bottle or two) of the real thing with our teams in Cannes.

Pastoll: It is just so awesome to be included in the judging panel. What an honour and career highlight! I am so looking forward to immersing myself in all the work and meeting all the judges from all over the world. It's going to be great to hear their perspective on creativity and discuss the influences and similarities from their regions.

Lang: It's a great honour indeed. I celebrated with some long hours at the office and a few business trips to Johannesburg. No time to celebrate these days. But I'm sure I'll have a few moments to take it all in when I get there.

■ **2. Tell us what it takes to actually create a winning Cannes Lions campaign.**

Marais: Human connection.

Deeb: It's simple really... First we consulted with God on how to make a Rainbow, then we sold the idea to Coca-Cola. Okay, not really. I wish it were that easy! In truth, an iconic "never been done before" creative idea requires a lot of craft, relentless commitment from our entire team and the ability to overcome every obstacle. All the usual ingredients.

Pastoll: Profound conceptual ideas! Creativity is the biggest scoring factor. The execution needs to be world class. Crafting is very important. The details. And also the impact - the effect the piece of work had.

Lang: I'm not sure. Every year I think I know, but the industry changes so fast. There are also so many good ideas out there. Not to mention all the different categories nowadays. At the centre of every great campaign lies a simple idea that connects with people. So just aim for that and you'll have a chance.

■ **3. Cannes Lions entries closed in March and the actual Festival is just days away now - has it been a mad flurry of activity since then? Describe the judging process...**

Marais: We've just concluded the first round of judging, which is done remotely. There are three layers of criteria: definitely a finalist or even a Lion; maybe a finalist; and definitely not a finalist. In these rounds, because it's done in isolation, I normally err on being more lenient with my view, so I assume about 40% of the work will fall out at this stage. That said, the overall standard is extremely high and, in general, the ideas are punching at the same weight. But great ideas always stand head and shoulders above the rest - those ideas based on a simple insight, expressed beautifully. The ones we aim to do with every brief we get. The ones that, in the end, will be awarded.

Deeb: The mad flurry came before the deadline. In terms of preparation for judging, this is my first time judging Cannes, so I am extremely honoured and excited for the experience. From judging other awards shows, I've learned that it's important to be up-to-date with the work that is being produced globally - what's winning, what's proving to be successful for clients and what trends seem to be emerging in each category. The Press Jury panel that I'm sitting on has 4,400 entries this year, so it's going to be a very long, but very exciting week.

Pastoll: Going through hundreds, if not thousands, of pieces of work. Making sure the best remains and that work that might have fallen away by accident does not. One splits into sub-juries as there actually is too much work for one person to go through it all. After having gone through the bulk of entries and the 'ins and outs', shortlist judging is done by the whole team and of all the work, together. A lot of deliberation and discussion can take place. One is not to influence or vote for your own work. Then there is a discussion session in order to award Gold, Silver and Bronze, and the Grand Prix!

Lang: It's been crazy. The organisers had us doing some preliminary online judging. I received a batch of work to look at and was quite relieved at first, but did not realise that it was batch "1 of 7". So I guess Cannes has already started for me...

■ **4. Is the fact that we have 9 South African judges for Cannes alone this year a trend towards celebrating SA's own advertising effectiveness?**

Marais: Shows like Cannes and even our very own Loeries have become far more about creative effectivity. More and more marketers are attending these shows, as there is more and more hard evidence that great creativity sells harder. Which is counter-intuitive, because great creativity is often softer. Less intrinsic, "hard selling" reasons to believe and softer, emotional reasons to connect to products and brands. These shows are also there to inspire us to greater heights. There's just too much mediocrity and really poor advertising out there and award shows become the filter that eradicate the crap, allowing us to take a moment to breathe in fresh ideas; ideas that move people, ultimately all the way to purchasing our clients' products.

Deeb: South Africa continually proves its creative metal on the world stage. As a country, we are constantly pushing creative boundaries and creating work that stands out - and the world has started to take notice. A number of top-level global creative leaders were born in South African ad agencies, our local creatives have been awarded top honours at numerous international awards shows and global brands are starting to look to us for creative input and ideas. FCB Joburg being asked to take part in the pitch for the new Global Coca-Cola campaign is proof of that. All in all, it's a very exciting

time to be in the South African ad industry and I think we have a lot to be proud of.

Pastoll: South Africa is a force in the global industry. We produce work that is of the best in the world. We have a heap of talented and opinionated people- all of who we can be proud of.

Lang: Well, we are a great advertising nation. We punch well above our weight and you can see us winning across many different categories. So I'm not surprised we have more than a handful of judges representing. I seriously rate each and every one of the judges picked this year. There is some fantastic talent representing SA on the juries this year. It's important, because we need to be championing South African creativity and hopefully we'll be shouting about it from the rooftops of the Carlton and Martinez this year!

There you have it. We'll have more exclusive insights this week as well as exclusive feedback from [Ann Nurock](#) next week, who is attending as our first media correspondent on the ground this year! Watch our special Cannes Lions section, as well as our [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) accounts for all of Nurock's updates...

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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