THIRD EDITION

CUTTING EDGE ADVERTISING

How To Create The World's Best Print For Brands In The 21st Century

JIM AITCHISON

"This may be the best book on advertising I've read — it's certainly the best book on print advertising."

David Abbott

Praise for *Cutting Edge Advertising III*

"There are three books about advertising I'd recommend. And I won't tell you what the other two are."

BOB BARRIE, Fallon, Minneapolis

"More creative inspiration than a ten-foot stack of One Show and D&AD annuals."

BRUCE BILDSTEN, Fallon, Minneapolis

"Jim has taken the moguls of advertising and got them captive for us, so we can take a journey into the deepest recesses of their incredible minds. The book is undoubtedly a bible for all copywriters at all levels. For a start, it will take them back to advertising."

THE BRIEF, India

"It succeeds with gusto ... Aitchison avoids the dull, lifeless form of 'How to' tomes. Intelligently structured ... it is a rare book in its homage to great print ads and how they are made."

BUSINESS REVIEW WEEKLY, Australia

"An absolutely excellent piece of work. Nowadays, young writers and art directors get precious little training once they've joined an agency, and books such as this do all of us in the industry a favour."

ADRIAN HOLMES, Chief Creative Officer, Lowe & Partners Worldwide

"It's the best I've ever read ... Unlike most books on advertising that are the thoughts of one person, these are the collective thoughts of so many great people. This is, in truth, the knowledge ... No writer, art director, account man, planner or client should be without it."

LIONEL HUNT, Lowe Hunt & Partners, Australia

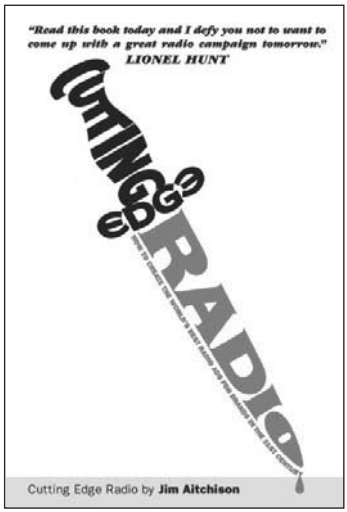
"The multi-talented Aitchison, an Australian, is himself a former distinguished practitioner ... The author enjoys the advantage of not thinking that all the most creative ideas come out of London and New York."

PHILIP KLEINMAN, Market Leader, UK

"All you ever wanted to know, but never knew who to ask – a great read for anyone wanting more from their print advertising."

ANDREW THOMAS, International Herald Tribune

Also in This Series:



This is the first definitive step-by-step guide to creating cutting edge radio commercials, exploring everything from how radio communicates, what kind of commercials work best, how to get great radio ideas and develop them into scripts, how to cast the best talent, and how to record and mix the final track. Learn the trade secrets of radio recording in the world's top studios in page after page of practical and inspiring advice.

Praise for *Cutting Edge Radio*

"Aitchison has managed to create the rare advertising text that simultaneously entertains, educates and most importantly, inspires. Aitchison is clever in intertwining his theory with practical examples – the real secret in maintaining any advertising professional's rapt attention."

ADOI magazine, Malaysia

"Jim Aitchison has done it again. With his trademark style of letting the greats do all the talking, he takes us on yet another journey, this time surpassing himself with an impressive list of 106 heavyweights in *Cutting Edge Radio*. Aitchison liberally sprinkles his book with comment after comment from great radio people. You can almost imagine yourself conversing with such talents as Lionel Hunt, Tony Hertz and Neil French as you read it. In every section, you can find about half a dozen scripts, many of them award-winning ones, as illustrations to Aitchison's tips. Every step of the process is given due thought – including how to sell your radio ideas ... If you're a writer who wants to come up with a great radio campaign, you'd better read it."

ADVOICE magazine, Singapore

"I wish this book had been written years ago. It's long overdue. It's a must for anyone who has an interest in radio advertising and is probably the most valuable investment any young writer could make."

BOB DENNIS, Vice President Creative Services, MediaCorp Radio Singapore

"Jim's new book is much needed and deserves a place on the bookshelf of every ambitious creative team in the region."

DAVID GUERRERO, Chairman & Chief Executive Officer, BBDO/Guerrero Ortega Manila

"... A powerful piece of work! It makes me feel great about belonging to a group of people that shares my passion ... Radio is often a lonely road to travel within the ad business, and although I have always known there are people who feel the way I do, to see them say the same things I say in print makes me feel good about what I do and the way I do it. (My) admiration and gratitude for what you've done, not only for the incredible amount of work and talent you've put in, but also – maybe even mostly – because you so obviously *get it*. You've taken in our passion and made it yours. It should be required reading in all creative departments."

TONY HERTZ, HERTZ:RADIO London

"This book really pissed me off. It pissed me off that it was so incredibly detailed and comprehensive, so practical, so inspiring and so useful. It pissed me off that it took so long for someone to actually write this book. It pissed me off that I didn't write it. But most of all, it pissed me off that I didn't have it when I was first starting out."

AUSTIN HOWE, Radioland Inc. Portland

"What a great book and learning tool. It should be required reading for anyone in advertising. It takes the reader through the process, explains and gives examples and excerpts by those who know. Brilliant."

THOMAS HRIPKO, The Radio Spot Dallas

"Radio is tricky. What's the answer? If you want to to know the good answers, talk to the best people. Lucky for you – Jim Aitchison already has."

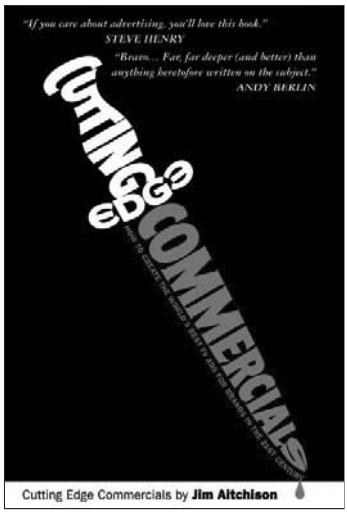
ANDREW INGRAM, Radio Advertising Bureau UK

"By far the most interesting and instructive book on radio advertising I have ever read ... it removes some of the mystery and fear of the medium."

JOHN KYRIAKOU, Creative Director
Young & Rubicam Toronto

"*Cutting Edge Radio* is a burster. Congratulations on another definitive piece on our mad, mad industry. It's one helluva contribution."

STREET REMLEY, Street Noise Adelaide



This is a comprehensive guide to creating cutting edge television commercials, exploring everything from how television communicates, how commercials are structured, how to sell concepts, to how they should be executed. Step behind the famous campaigns at leading agencies around the world, and share the personal experiences of Tim Delaney, Neil French, Chuck McBride, Jim Riswold and over 60 other creative leaders.

Praise for *Cutting Edge Commercials*

"*Cutting Edge Commercials* is brilliant and on my desk."

MICHAEL CONRAD, Former Chief Creative Officer, Leo Burnett Worldwide

"The beauty, and indeed the talent, of Jim Aitchison is his ability to not only let his subjects be heard clearly and sharply, but also to place their opinions in an overall context that guides the reader through the maze of television creativity, and tell a terrific story at the same time."

ROWAN DEAN, Rowan Dean Films and former Chairman, Australian Writers and Art Directors Association

"*Cutting Edge Commercials* is a positive book of TV advertising experiences written with patience, diversity of perspectives and practical insights. Jim weaves his 'resource' for all advertising lovers and practitioners around interviews with creative masters around the world. Jim's book is of real experiences, insights, joys. Each TV advertising insight blows another bubble of hope for advertising everywhere."

ROBERT GIBRALTER in Ad Age Global

"An unusually impressive piece of work, and I shall recommend it widely."

PROFESSOR JOHN PHILIP JONES, Syracuse University NY, USA

"Probably one of the best books ever written, not just about television advertising, but the business in general. I gobbled up each and every word. As it draws you inside the brilliant minds of its sources, it comes across more like a great chat over a couple of beers on the topics of what we do every day. You feel like you're in there with them all discussing opinions. Jim Aitchison has left no stone unturned when it comes to searching out the truth."

CHRIS KYME, AdAsia magazine

"So precise, so real and insightful, the best survival guide ever written for ad men. The only shame is that everyone else can get it, too."

CARY RUEDA, Creative Director,
Dentsu Young & Rubicam Malaysia

"Brilliant!"

SUTHISAK SUCHARITTANONTA,
Executive Creative Director, BBDO Bangkok

Jim Aitchison

PEARSON
Prentice Hall

Singapore New York London Toronto Sydney Mexico City

Published in 2008 by
Prentice Hall
Pearson Education South Asia Pte Ltd
23/25 First Lok Yang Road, Jurong
Singapore 629733

Pearson Education offices in Asia: *Bangkok*, *Beijing*, *Hong Kong*, *Kuala Lumpur*, *Manila*, *New Delhi*, *Seoul*, *Singapore*, *Taipei*, *Tokyo*

Printed in Singapore

5 4 3 2 1
11 10 09 08 07

ISBN 10: 981-06-7888-6
ISBN 13: 978-981-06-7888-3

National Library Board (Singapore) Cataloguing in Publication Data

Aitchison, Jim.
Cutting edge advertising : how to create the world's best print for brands in the 21st century / Jim Aitchison. – 3rd ed. – Singapore : Pearson / Prentice Hall, 2007.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN-13: 978-981-06-7883-3 (pbk.)
ISBN-10: 981-06-7888-6 (pbk.)

1. Advertising. 2. Advertising copy. 3. Advertising layout and typography. I. Title.

HF5823
659.132 — dc22 OCN166867765

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Foreword

"You will, Oscar; you will."

I wish *I'd* said that.

I'm a sucker for quotation anthologies, aren't you? I've got dozens of them, and most are exactly the same.

But still I browse for an original thought, usually while on the bog, and the sense of achievement in finding *exactly* the phrase you're looking for is a pleasure that transcends the most spectacular of dumps.

Sorry, I was away there, for a moment. Happy days, happy days. Where were we? Right. Book review.

You know, when you consider how many excellent writers have spent at least a *little* time in ad agencies, it's rather odd that there are so few good books on the subject.

The first I read, when I was still grovelling for unpaid rents, in Birmingham's red-light district, was Vance Packard's *Hidden Persuaders*. It sounded like being a sort of spy, and I fancied the idea mightily, at the time. (It would sure beat being thumped by pimps on a daily basis, anyway.)

Then, too late, after I joined up, and my job consisted of scrabbling about in a damp cellar, looking for printing blocks, came *Those Wonderful People Who Gave You Pearl Harbour* by Jerry Della Femina.

OK, then! We weren't James Bonds. We were jolly, rollicking, devil-may-care iconoclasts, with a witty rejoinder for the dullest client. Even if we had names like a brand of sanitary napkins. *Much* better.

(I wonder if Jerry ever had to kill a rat with a printing block, to stop it making a nest in the media files. Just a thought.)

It was only *much* later, after I'd graduated to waisted suits with Jason Queen cuffs, that I read David Ogilvy's brilliantly disguised, direct-selling piece for his agency, *Confessions of an Advertising Man*. Even the *title* was a con. You *had* to love the old bugger, for his sheer audacity.

But that's about the lot. There have been others, too many others, but they've all been close relatives of these three. Or deadly dull, and utterly misleading, "How To" tomes that must have been the cause of umpteen failed careers.

But Aitchison has cracked it, I reckon.

Look how thick this book is; Jim actually wrote about a quarter of it, at most. Money for jam!

His annoyingly simple idea was to allow *other* people to write the damn thing for him.

(Note, children, how the writer is finally bringing the piece round to the point where it has some vague relevance to the otherwise baffling "headline". You'll find this tip on ... whatever page it's on. Can't be bothered to look it up. I'm doing this for free, you know.)

Hang on. I've lost the thread again.

OK. Got it. The snag about David Ogilvy's books are that they're the firmly-held opinions of a single mind. However brilliant, that's limiting, by its own definition.

Aitchison has persuaded anyone who's anyone in this racket to turn over the tricks of their trade to him. In fact, if you look at the list of 'contributors' and find any glaring absentees, Jim probably asked them stuff, and they didn't bother to respond. Their loss, I tend to think.

This is destined to be essential reading for anyone in the business or thinking of getting into it. The book would be inestimably useful to any client who wondered how his money was spent, and wanted to get more bang for his buck. (Mind you, in the latter case, he'd have to concede that he didn't already know all there was to know, so perhaps not, after all.)

Finally, the *fun* thing about reading this is that Jim has quoted each contributor verbatim. As he put it to me, "letting the individual vocabularies and rhythms of the actual voices delineate the speakers". (Sorry, what's that in English, James?)

But it works. Only Indra Sinha burbles and booms *quite* like Indra, and you can hear him in these pages. Only Hegarty has *quite* such an icy mastery of clipped syntax, and the studied pause and throwaway; listen while you read.

And apparently only *I* sound like a rambling, babbling, incoherent twat.

Thanks a bundle, Jim.

I hope yer book rots on the remainder shelves.

Neil French
Founder
World Press Awards

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With Special Thanks

To Neil French, for the bloodstained cover concept; to Andrew Clarke for designing the dagger icon; to Jenny Wee, who typed everything between them; to Michael Larsen, literary agent and author, for invaluable advice; to Shutter Bug Photography Services and ProColor, Singapore, for all their professional help; to Kim Shaw, *Campaign Brief Asia*, for his support; and to everyone who generously contributed their time and talent in my quest for information.

Dagger artwork: Paul Clarke

Acknowledgements

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This edition is dedicated to the memory of Norman Alcuri (1953–2002)

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1

Unconventional Wisdom

"The written word is the deepest dagger you can drive into a man's soul."

British writer Indra Sinha should know. His print campaigns for Amnesty International punctured public apathy and raised a fighting fund against oppression.

Ironically, in recent years, print advertising itself has become a victim, burdened with more irrelevant, outdated rules and creative conventions than any other medium. The evidence of intellectual oppression is alarming. Hall of Fame art director Roy Grace calls it "a high level of mediocrity". Others are less kind.

But while print is the oldest advertising medium, it is also the most resilient. In the post-war era, it witnessed the transition from one type of advertising to another. It has again become the front line in the battle between the prevailing wisdom of one century, and the unconventional wisdom of the next.

Print exercises an irresistible charisma. It is the permanence of the page, the romance of paper and ink, the presses thundering at midnight. No television channel would dare call itself a *Tribune* or a *Chronicle* or a *Guardian*, nor claim to speak for the *Times* in which we live. Only the economy of print can *Telegraph* a message. Only the power of print can *Post* an image in the mind's eye. Only the pages of *Time, Newsweek, Fortune* and *The Economist* can report

world events while shaping them at the same time. There could never be a *Viewer's Digest*, only a *Reader's Digest*. If television reduces us, print enlarges us.

"It's interesting that nothing has killed off the printed word," muses Lionel Hunt of Australia's Lowe Hunt & Partners. "Not radio, not cinema, not television, not even the Internet, which is still largely a print medium anyway. Whenever there's a new medium invented, there are always these dire predictions about the demise of the earlier ones, but it just doesn't happen. OK, so silent movies aren't that big at the moment, but Marcel Marceau still makes a living."

"It's not a crime to love print more than any other medium. I do," affirms Graham Warsop, chairman and executive creative director of South Africa's The Jupiter Drawing Room, ranked among the five most creative agencies in the world by *Advertising Age Creativity*. "Paper is the home of the written word. It has an impeccable pedigree. Equally, images on paper are like images on canvas. They have a formidable legacy of persuasion."

Print creativity is not the result of mystical inspiration. It is an art and, like every art, is the result of conscious effort and preparation. Developing a conscious understanding of the medium and its possibilities is the first step; individual ability and fickle inspiration will remain unconscious factors in this equation. At least for the time being.

Dimension

A cynic once called television a medium because it is neither rare nor well done. Yet, in comparison, print is often regarded as a passive, one-dimensional medium.

"It's a cretinous thing to say," asserts Sinha. "How much depth is there in one page of the *King James Bible*? How much depth is there in the opening line of *Lolita*?" Sinha believes the printed word has a greater capacity to free the imagination than television does. "Television imposes a visual on the viewer. It doesn't allow him the choice of imagining the world to be the way he wants it to be. Print can actually liberate the mind and create far more intense

illusions, far deeper experiences, than any television or film ever will."

Australia's foremost social researcher, Hugh Mackay, agrees. "The words are asking *me* to make up the pictures, so they're *my* pictures. There's a creative act within the reader. On television, the work's all done. I only receive; I don't construct and create the way I do with print."

Britain's David Abbott of Abbott Mead Vickers BBDO London regards print's effect as an all-encompassing stimulus. "It's because of what words do. They engage the *whole* mind, and you don't think or feel in one dimension. Generally in advertising, I think it's the words you remember."

At Leagas Delaney, London, Tim Delaney argues that print's strength lies in its involvement with the reader. "Print is different from television and radio in that it's slower, more rational, in a number of areas. If you're trying to create a personality, or sustain a personality, print takes longer because of its rationality, because you need to engage the reader in more than just an assertive, image-based discussion. You've got to give them something which makes them stop, look, and respond. The whole process seems to be slightly *tougher* on the recipient. Because it's tougher, it's also *deeper*. If you do care to stop, if you do want to read, if you do get into an ad, even if you just look at an image and there are no words on it, just a logo, it's somehow deeper and more rewarding than something that lasts a few seconds on television or radio."

Perhaps the silence of print reinforces its depth. The reader's mind can concentrate on what is written, and on what is written between the lines. Print permits more subtlety, more verbal and visual nuances – what Britain's most highly awarded art director Neil Godfrey describes as "an elbow touching you".

"A print ad is a journey," says Mary Stow, head of planning at the original Howell Henry Chaldecott Lury & Partners London. "You can read through it, flow with the logic. In print, things are written down in black and white. It means that people are much harder on print. You've got the evidence in front of you. With television advertising, people quite willingly accept what's being done to them. They collude with it. But if you're sitting reading a newspaper, the context all around the ad is pretty hard. Real life

stories, facts. Therefore, the advertising has to acknowledge people are in that state of mind. They're not reading in the same way they watch TV."

"Print ads have incredible power of advocacy and persuasion," believes Mark Tutssel, chief creative officer of Leo Burnett Worldwide. Tutssel's awards include a Cannes Grand Prix, a Clio Grand Prix, and four D&AD Silver Pencils. "The written word is alive and thriving. Magazine sales boom, as does text messaging, while the Internet is really one piece of copy. A great print ad makes the reader look at something in a whole new light or touches the reader in some fundamental way that alters their understanding."

Passive or Active? Public or Private?

Print is the only medium we can hold and touch. Communication is one-to-one. The only barriers are those erected by advertisers, art directors and writers.

The physical reading experience, admits Neil French, former 'Worldwide Creative Godfather' to all the companies in the WPP Group, has coloured the way he creates for the medium. "Reading is governed by the length of your arms. Old blokes like me have either got their nose pressed up against the print, or they're holding their heads back and their arms out straight like they're driving a racing car." As a result, French believes these intimate, individualistic traits make print a very private medium. "The relationship between your eye and the page is a personal one. That's why people get stroppy when you read over their shoulders. It destroys the privacy of the moment."

Gerard Stamp, former creative director and chairman, Leo Burnett London, says print can be more intimate. "It *isn't* addressing an audience. It's speaking to an individual."

Describing print as a private, exclusive channel, Mackay cites research on the levels of involvement with advertising. "With the Internet, and with print, the message is very close to you. You're only about twelve inches away from the page or the screen. Both are very active communication experiences. You're reading what is on the screen, manipulating the mouse or the keyboard, or you're

turning the pages, a very active relationship with the medium. Whereas with television, most of the time you're just sitting there, you're not even sitting forward, and the audio-visual waterfall just flows over you. Sometimes you're alert, sometimes you're quite soporific."

The intimacy of the relationship between the reader and the page does not exist between the viewer and the television screen. According to Mackay, another reason why readers love reading is their control of the process. "It's all on their terms. They're utterly in control. If I don't like you, I'll just turn the page and you're gone."

Control

If the reader has control, so too do creatives. Each time a page is turned, a curtain rises to reveal a fresh scene. Print is a stage, a personal stage, where creativity can be stamped with individuality and soul. Creatives are alone and naked on that stage. Pretentious creativity is exposed. Superficiality becomes transparent. The inept cannot escape their fate.

"There you are, you alone, your idea, a blank page and the readers," Marcello Serpa reminds us. Serpa is executive creative director of AlmapBBDO Brazil, the world's most awarded agency in the 2004 and 2005 Gunn Reports. Serpa was the first Brazilian to win the Grand Prix at the Cannes International Advertising Festival and a Gold Pencil at the One Show. Unlike television, Serpa says, in print "a half-developed idea cannot be hidden behind a famous director, the music of the Beatles or lines spoken by Anthony Hopkins."

There is *nowhere* to hide in a print ad, stresses Hunt, who is deeply suspicious of creative teams that only want to do television. "When I am interviewing writers or art directors, particularly art directors, I always ask to see their print work first. When you see a good TV spot, it's difficult to be sure who's responsible. It can be the writer, the art director, or both, or the director, or the talent. It doesn't matter for the end result, but it does matter if you're thinking of hiring someone on the strength of it."

"Although I like TV, I'm always drawn back to print," confesses Godfrey. "I think it's the control one has. Inevitably, a

TV commercial is never quite like what you'd imagined. In print, I'm in control. It's my baby. All the decisions are mine."

In print, creative shortcomings cannot be ascribed to the director, the casting department, or even the catering company. "If there are flaws in your concept," cautions Sinha, "they're your flaws, your faults. If you take the client out of the equation, there's no one to blame but yourself. Everything is under your control and therefore can be changed and adjusted if you wish it to be so."

Being armed with absolute control over infinite possibilities is a tantalising prospect. Words can be words, words can be visuals. But the toy shop is not all it appears. If print creativity offers such freedom and depth, how does that explain the plethora of mediocrity and incest?

The next stage of conscious preparation should be to draw some parameters; to identify what constitutes great, cutting edge print.

Great Print: What Is It?

Bartle Bogle Hegarty's John Hegarty is convinced that print has to do more, to work harder, to get noticed. "You could argue that it has to be more provocative. So if being more provocative means being more creative, then you have to be more creative in print."

Delaney looks for stopping power in either the headline or visual. "Not something gratuitously wacky, but something strong and relevant. And it isn't always that the strength of a line or image solves a problem. Life is more complex than that. Sometimes it's about the sixth ad in a series that stops you and clicks in."

For Abbott, the greatest print ideas are those which contain a human insight; an insight into human behaviour, for example, with which a reader can relate. "A spark of recognition is there at the root of most good communication," Abbott explains. "It's true of a painting or a novel. It's true of great advertising too."

Nick Cohen of New York's Mad Dogs & Englishmen defines a great print ad as one that connects with people. "It's not about one that's simple, or one that's got a clever twist in it. It's one that

people look at, that starts a relationship." In fact, Cohen sees connecting people with brands as the essence of all great advertising. "People have more choice than they ever did, but in the end, they vote with their dollar. They pick brands that they relate to, and that relate to them."

Insightful, impactful, provocative, connective: deceptively simple words, and any number of workmanlike ads could be rationalised to comply with them. But such debates are becoming increasingly academic. Print creativity is redefining itself.

A new generation of advertisers, the emergence of radical new marketing paradigms, the advent of planning, and a new wave of cutting edge agencies and creatives are challenging and changing the old, established order of things.

"Unlike television, print is *a written contract with the consumer*. It has an inherent integrity; it is not a good liar," maintains Steffan Postaer, chief creative officer at Leo Burnett's LBWorks. Postaer won the Kelly award for his Altoids print campaign. "Good print is not a storage space for logos and products and phone numbers and URL addresses; those ads look like an eight-year-old's closet. Print is not a political tool meant to appease some brand manager and his boss. Print is a sales tool that needs to invite and seduce a person into buying or doing something. That tool needs to be sharp and simple, not fettered by a myriad of things." Nor is print static television, says Postaer. "Some agencies literally pull frames from their TV commercials and call it a print ad. I call it a travesty. I always tell my guys to do the print first. Print is its own thing because it endures. It does not go away like television, like a thief in the night."

Godfrey, whose career spanned over forty years at the cutting edge of British advertising, provides a craft perspective: "When I started, we were turning a corner from one type of advertising, mainly slogans and illustrations, to another. We needed to move away from the 1950s' dry brush illustrated feel where everything was a slogan that was shouted, to something much more modern. When I worked at Doyle Dane Bernbach (DDB), we did the very first full page ad. Until then, the biggest ads people had bought were half pages; mostly the ads were things like twelve-inch double columns, tiny ads. I remember doing the first double page spread in

Avis is only No.2 in rent a cars. So why go with us?

We try harder.

(When you're not the biggest, you have to.)

We just can't afford dirty ashtrays. Or half-empty gas tanks. Or worn wipers. Or unwashed cars. Or low tires. Or anything less than seat-adjusters that adjust. Heaters that heat. Defrosters that defrost.

Obviously, the thing we try hardest for is just to be nice. To start you out right with a new car, like a lively, super-torque Ford, and a pleasant smile. To know, say, where you get a good pastrami sandwich in Duluth.

Why?

Because we can't afford to take you for granted.

Go with us next time.

The line at our counter is shorter.

Avis can't afford dirty ashtrays.

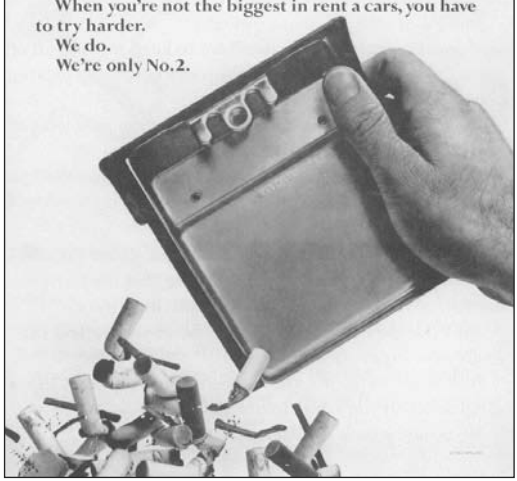
Or to start you out without a full gas tank, a new car like a lively, super-torque Ford, a smile.

Why?

When you're not the biggest in rent a cars, you have to try harder.

We do.

We're only No.2.



When you're only No.2, you try harder. Or else.

Little fish have to keep moving all of the time. The big ones never stop picking on them.

Avis knows all about the problems of little fish.

We're only No.2 in rent a cars. We'd be swallowed up if we didn't try harder.

There's no rest for us.

We're always emptying ashtrays. Making sure gas tanks are full before we rent our cars. Seeing that the batteries are full of life. Checking our windshield wipers.

And the cars we rent out can't be anything less than lively new super-torque Fords.

And since we're not the big fish, you won't feel like a sardine when you come to our counter.

We're not jammed with customers.

No. 2ism. The Avis Manifesto.

We are in the rent a car business, playing second fiddle to a giant.

Above all, we've had to learn how to stay alive.

In the struggle, we've also learned the basic difference between the No.1's and No. 2's of the world.

The No.1 attitude is: "Don't do the wrong thing. Don't make mistakes and you'll be O.K."

The No.2 attitude is: "Do the right thing. Look for new ways. Try harder."

No. 2ism is the Avis doctrine. And it works.

The Avis customer rents a clean, new Opel Rekord, with wipers wiping, ashtrays empty, gas tank full, from an Avis girl with smile firmly in place.

And Avis itself has come out of the red into the black.

Avis didn't invent No. 2ism. Anyone is free to use it.

No. 2's of the world, arise!

Doyle Dane Bernbach's print advertising changed advertising forever. The agency's We try harder *campaign for Avis is still an industry icon.*

a newspaper, in colour, for Lufthansa. As the dimension of the ads grew bigger, we had to design a more angular, impactful way of doing them, no longer based on prissiness but said in a really strong way. We came into a period where we had something to say, not just showing the product."

Many of Godfrey's campaigns have become icons for the industry, slavishly imitated to this day. Yet Godfrey himself admits that if he were doing them now, they would probably look different. "I'd have to think in a completely different way, according to the style and mentality of life today. It's really quite different. There's a much broader, younger market. Things are sold directly to teenagers and younger children which, in the old days, were aimed at mothers and fathers."

John Salmon, creative director at London's Collett Dickenson Pearce, presided over that agency's golden years of creativity. His department was the legendary domain of Britain's reigning creative elite. "The advertising business is subject to fashion, there's no question about it, and a lot of the products that advertising sells have to do with fashion," he observes. "However, there are certain sorts of agencies who inch products into this arena of fashion, *regardless*. Cars, for example, are now sold on their visual appearance alone. The performance characteristics of the car, the price of the car, what the car will do for you, these things have been subordinated to the salesman." The implication is that advertising creativity in many categories will be led by external forces like the fashion industry. In certain categories, though, Salmon foresees no change. "If you're selling plates with rabbits on them, and selling them off the page, there'll be a lot of copy and the ads will look pretty much the same now as they looked ten years ago, and ten years on I'm sure they'll still look very much the same."

"I think print advertising changes *superficially,*" reflects Abbott. "We go through fashions: borders, typography, coloured type, or whatever. Techniques change, but I don't think that the enduring principles of good communication will change that much. I haven't noticed them change that much in all the years I've been doing it. I don't see why they should change because it's all about human behaviour and reaction."

If Abbott is right, and human behaviour *is* immutable, will the fundamentals of great print creativity remain the same?

Delaney sheds further light: "It's not that there's one way of doing something that's right, and another one that's wrong. *It's what's appropriate at the time*. There are some learnings, and some things that people say. You still like Volkswagen ads because they're intelligent, and they show how simple a thought can be, and yet how compelling it can be. It isn't a rule, but it's certainly something you want to try and emulate. The writing on Avis was fresh and interesting, intelligent and accessible, and all kinds of other things that most ads still aren't today. They stand as campaigns that mean something to people because they've done what everyone else has done, but they've done it in a simple way."

Appropriate at the time. If Volkswagen and Avis were appropriate in Bill Bernbach's time, what is appropriate now?

New Rules?

There are no rules. Sooner or later, everything must become institutionalised and formulaic. At that point, creativity must move on. Fundamentals do not change; the way we address them does. Therein lies the problem.

Advertising has existed for centuries. As Sinha reminds us: "Advertising is the second oldest profession and it arose directly out of the needs of the oldest."

Hegarty traces print advertising's lineage in order to identify the accumulation of conventions: "One can argue that the first poster was a food ad. It was a cave painting of a bison. Since that time, print has gathered around it a series of rules and attitudes that can be quite limiting to its development. As much as some people deplore the Apple Mac, it broke down the conventional layout that we'd all been paying homage to, the great Volkswagen layout done by Helmut Krone, the big picture, the small headline, the three columns of copy and the logo in the bottom right-hand corner. The versatility of the Mac broke that down. Things could be done in a different way."

Hegarty includes books and pamphlets in print's lineage. "Print is burdened by writing in a very profound way. There's a

methodology about it which doesn't necessarily relate to the way the modern consumer approaches and touches advertising."

Hegarty argues that the art of advertising is about *reduction*: the ability to write less and say more.

"As an industry, we occupy the margins, the bits in between the editorial content, the bits in between the programmes. Therefore, our creativity is a kind of *guerilla* creativity. It comes in, makes a hit, and goes out again. It strikes me as odd that so often we make our work longer, rather than make it shorter. The French philosopher Pascal once wrote: *'My apologies for this letter being so long; had I more time, it would have been shorter'*. The fact is, it's harder to write less than it is to write more. Yet in our industry there's an idea that, somehow, length has a value. What we should be doing is reducing, because when you do that, you create an idea that is actually more powerful."

Hegarty's logic is that the only space he is trying to buy is inside the consumer's head. "The access point to it might be a print ad. If you take an idea down to its essentials, it has a chance of going in *faster*. The faster I can get my idea to go in there, the more likely it is to open out in there, like a seed. That's the place I want an idea to open out, *not* on the page. When I see ads where it's all written out, it's all long and complex. Sometimes, that's very much the case of what you need to do. But when you see awards for copywriting in the annuals, they always give it to a piece of long copy. They never actually give it to a very short piece of copy. If you believe Pascal, who is probably a more profound thinker than most people in advertising, it's the opposite of what it should be."

Sinha also questions current industry conventions. "We're talking to ourselves. We tend to be writing for award juries. After twenty years' experience of British advertising, anyone who says it isn't so is a liar. What you see is innovation often happening in fringe media, like compact disc sleeves; then it becomes trendy, then advertising picks it up. The distressed typefaces that punky publications put together with chewing gum and string ten years ago, which were picked up by art directors in trendy agencies five years ago, are now being picked up by art directors in mainstream agencies. It gets so boring. If we stopped being so self-regarding, so inward-looking, and looked at what

the *consumer* is about, we will find new ways. If we set ourselves impossible tasks, if we tried to communicate things we might have thought were impossible to communicate, if we tried to achieve a level of impact we might have always considered to be impossible to achieve, if we made those our goals, we'd find that traditional methods are inadequate to cope with them. Therefore, by definition, we'd have to find some new ways to do it, like water running around an obstacle."

What, in fact, we are witnessing now is not so much a superficial, stylistic period of change in creative terms, but a revolution against self-imposed conventions and self-inflicted handicaps. Advertising methodology itself is being challenged, not merely its creative manifestation.

At New York's Kirshenbaum Bond & Partners, Bill Oberlander sums it up: "The Harvard Business School-Procter & Gamble matrix of how to do advertising that sells brands is *broken*. A lot of people are realising that books like Ogilvy's, and Leo Burnett's rules, even Doyle Dane Bernbach's rules, are *obsolete*. They're antiquated. There are sets of new paradigms about how to speak to consumers. You have to look at the entrepreneurs, the brands like Coke. These guys are the SWAT teams, the stealth bombers, of how to speak to consumers."

There is an ugliness about advertising too, a crassness, which not only consumers reject.

"I'd call our philosophy *environmentalist*," says Jeff Goodby, chairman of Goodby, Silverstein & Partners, San Francisco. "I believe that advertising, like architecture or urban planning, is an unavoidable part of our environment. Thus, we want to create advertising that's intelligent, humorous, beautiful and moving. In general, a welcome and *respected* part of what we all have to walk through each day." Implicit in that belief is a rejection of the simplistic and banal. "It begins with a determination to find the *highest* common denominators, rather than the lowest, as most advertising unerringly does. We try to approach people with respect, out of a belief that if we expect a certain intelligence, attention and sense of humour on their part, we'll get it. There's a part of the circle we always leave for them to complete, which involves them in the advertising and makes it a more memorable

experience." Goodby's philosophy opposes another pillar of formulaic advertising: mind-numbing repetition. "Our approach results in a kind of advertising that works, we think, without lots of repetition or exposure. As the infamous San Francisco copywriter Howard Gossage said, how many times do we have to read a book or see a movie? Once, maybe twice, even in the best cases. *Why* do we suppose that advertising must be seen over and over again to have an effect?"

Goodby's point is valid. We cannot divorce ourselves from what we inflict upon society. We should aspire to create and approve advertising that we are not ashamed of.

If we agree, then it is not an option; it becomes a responsibility.

For advertisers, agencies and creatives, the game is indeed changing. Long-held tenets and industry dogma distort our perspective, cobwebbing our view of what might be and what should be. All very well, but what is going to replace them? Anarchy?

In the search for cutting edge wisdom, it seems the new rule book has yet to be written. There is more scope for intuitive thinking, for experimentation, for innovation. The fact that advertisers themselves are very often leading the charge has accelerated the revolution.

As Kirk Souder of Santa Monica agency Ground Zero observes: "If you ask people to create advertising, that's exactly what they'll create. If you ask people to do something more, then they'll do something more."

The question is, what are we consciously asking ourselves to do and be?

Why Be Creative?

Hegarty views creativity as the essence of humanity. "Humanity's leapt forward because it was creative; it could think, and it could put different thoughts together and come to different conclusions. It's part of what makes us what we are. It's always odd when people say to me, 'Oh, you're creative', as though you're a different species." In Hegarty's book, everybody is creative. "You're creative when you put your clothes on in the morning,

when you comb your hair, when you decide what car you're going to buy, what drink you're going to drink. It's all part of our creative persona."

Souder contends the reason for being creative has absolutely nothing to do with creating great advertising. "Being creative is about why we're here. The primary directive of existence must be growth. The moment that stops, we die. Either physically, intellectually, or spiritually." Souder draws an analogy with water. "Running water promotes life, stagnant water suffocates it. We can continue to grow by being like running water, through the experience and assimilation of new things. *By going where we haven't gone before*. That could be the execution of an ad, finding a new way home from work, or selling everything you have to live with an isolated tribe on a remote tributary of the Amazon for three years. Because the more things we *see,* the more things we *taste*, the more things we *try*, the more accurate our personal model of the universe is, and the closer we get to ultimate truth."

If Hegarty and Souder are right, and creativity is at our core, why is it that so many creative people seem prepared to accept a lesser standard?

Creativity is subjective. Some believe that writers and art directors are motivated by ego and awards. Others argue that achieving creative breakthroughs is a responsibility to their clients; the awards will follow, as French once said, like end-of-term prizes.

Cohen does not think people are happy to achieve mediocrity. "It's a very hard industry. You deal with a lot of rejection and therefore your optimism gets sucked out of you. You start second-guessing your clients, second-guessing what's possible. It grinds you down. I think they give up a little bit; they lose their optimism about why they got into the business in the first place."

Gary Goldsmith at Lowe & Partners Worldwide, New York, pinpoints unrealistic expectations and pain. "Young people coming in assume that there are great clients and bad clients, and if you happen to get a great one you'll do great work. They're really all the same; you just have to make something of it. It's very hard to do good work. There's a certain amount of pain involved. You've got to force yourself into a discomfort zone of working on something,

day after day, and not having it. We all want to relieve that pain, so we come up with something and we convince ourselves it's pretty good and we move on to the next. You also tend to rationalise; you tend to look up and down a hallway and say, 'Well, my work's better than the guy's in the room next to me', or 'My work's better than some other agency's work', or 'That client will never buy anything good'. So you take the pressure off yourself and put it on anything around you, instead of forcing yourself to confront the fact that if it's not good, it's *your* fault."

"There is a kind of predisposition towards the acceptable rather than the remarkable," considers Salmon. "The emphasis of a lot of clients is not harnessed to the content of their advertising so much as to the economy of it. The emphasis is on buying media economically, on ads that are not going to be controversial, and on ads that will research well. Very few clients now have the ability to say, I know a good ad when I see one. Consequently, this has an effect on creative people who say, well, they'll never buy that, and on account people who say the same, without giving the client a chance to say whether he'll buy it or not." One result of this, Salmon believes, is the stress placed on visual techniques. "If an ad has a very uninteresting content, they hope it can be overcome by visual impact."

A month before starting legendary Australian agency OMON, Siimon Reynolds said that the two most popular words in his country's advertising industry were *"That's nice"*. "You show someone an okay job and you get 'That's Nice'. Ten times a week I hear it, that's nice, did a nice idea yesterday, that's nice! Nice, nice, nice, that's nice. And in a funny way, 'That's Nice' says everything about what *isn't* nice about our industry. There isn't enough 'Is it Great?' being said. 'That's Nice' has become the criteria at which we can stop work, satisfied."

David Droga, founder of Droga5 New York, was the former executive creative director, Saatchi & Saatchi London, and then global creative director of Publicis Worldwide. He warns that mediocrity is contagious. "It's easy to get opinions, it's hard to get great opinions. You've got to surround yourself with people you respect. If you surround yourself with morons who say everything you do is brilliant, you'll end up being just like the morons."

Roy Grace is a veteran of the Bill Bernbach-Volkswagen era at DDB. His stance is uncompromising. "A lot of creative people are capable only of mediocrity. They take perfect aim at it and hit it right between the eyes. Mediocrity is easy. Mediocrity means being easy on yourself, taking the easy way out, not suffering, not being obsessively and compulsively focused on excellence." Grace equates cutting edge work with basic talent, drive and intelligence. "I always wanted to be the best. In my mind I said I've got to be the best, I *need* to be the best."

The choice is clear. Creative people can leave behind landmarks in their industry, or spend a lifetime in bland obscurity. There are no ifs and buts, no shades of grey.

Beyond individual aspirations is a bigger picture. Creativity is the external face of the advertising agency. Creativity is the external manifestation of the agency's culture. Every piece of creative work builds the agency's brand as well as the client's brand. Therefore, it is an inescapable fact that every lesser ad lessens the agency's brand in the market as well as the client's brand. The results of agency brand building can be measured in five ways: by the number of clients who stay or leave; by the number of pitches to which the agency is invited; by the calibre of people the agency can attract; by what the agency's competitors say about it; and by the awards the agency wins.

It is no coincidence that those new agencies which registered meteoric growth in the past three decades have all been creatively driven: America's Chiat/Day, Fallon and Wieden+Kennedy; Britain's Saatchi & Saatchi, Abbott Mead Vickers and Bartle Bogle Hegarty; France's BDDP; Australia's Campaign Palace and Brown Melhuish Fishlock (BMF), and South Africa's Hunt Lascaris and The Jupiter Drawing Room. They, and dozens more, have cut through the ranks of the establishment with unconventional campaigns for blue chip advertisers.

Their voices will be heard in the next chapter.

Why Buy Creative?

Ed McCabe said: "To produce great advertising, you need three things in an agency. The management that wants it. The creative

people who can produce it. And most important of all, the clients who will buy it."

What *are* clients buying?

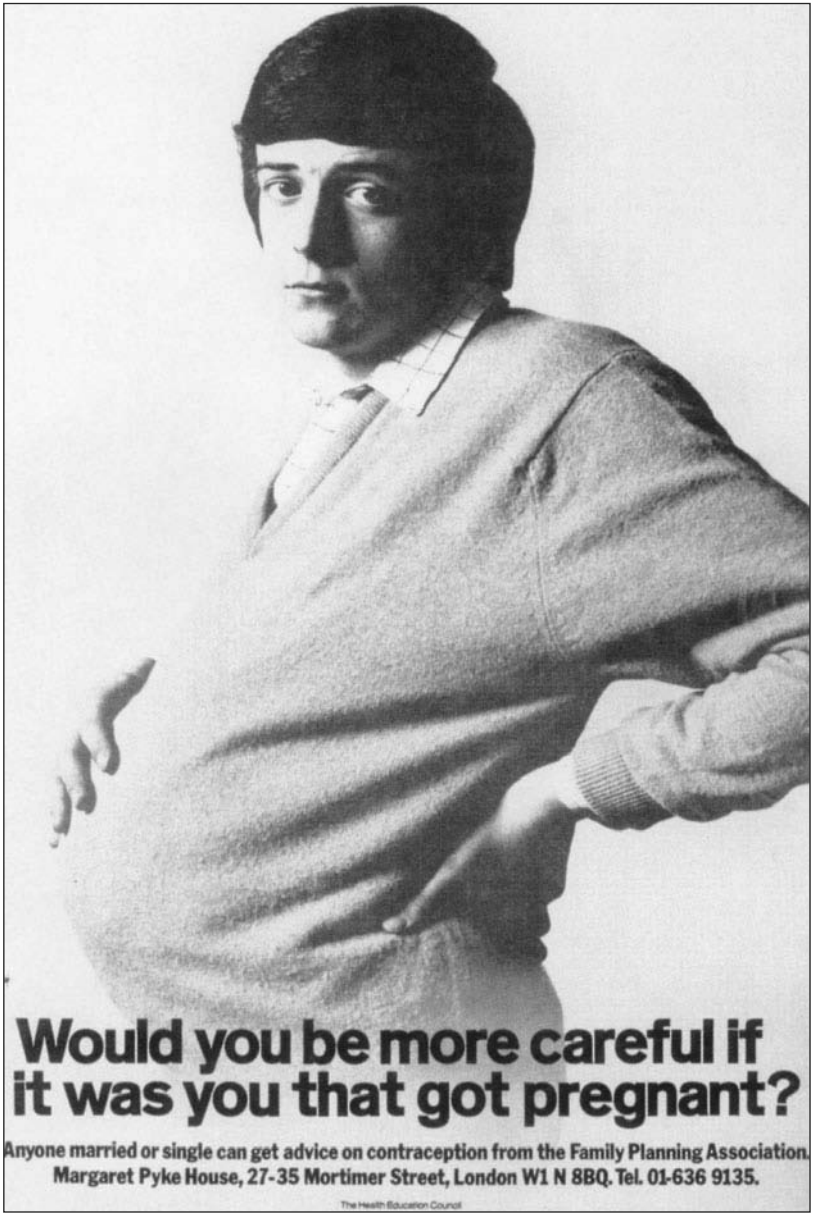
Rather than view creativity as dangerous, many advertisers now deem it mandatory. Apple, Nike, Benetton and Absolut have become household names as a result of breakthrough advertising ideas.

"It's great clients who make agencies great, *not* the reverse," points out Ian Batey, founding chairman of Batey Ads, Singapore. "*They've* got to take the risk, *they've* got to buy the stuff and run with it. If you look around over the last twenty years, and look behind the great advertising, you'll find a great company. And behind the great company will be a great man. If you can find those guys early on, you've struck gold," says Batey. "A lot of clients treat advertising as a necessary evil. You could go through life as an advertising agency, having all those grey, boring accounts, but you've got to earn a living, so you do a decent job, the stuff works. Sometimes, in fifty or sixty accounts, there might be only ten that are really dancing, but those ten keep you electrified. Those guys knocked on your door as much as you knocked on theirs. You connected with each other, you can relate. They've got to have trust in you, and vice versa. The entrepreneur who wants to lift his game also stimulates you. It *can't* be a one-way thing."

"At a lot of agencies," Goodby muses, "the clients are invariably treated as Neanderthal adversaries. Not only is life too short for that, but I've found that clients often have very good ideas that you can listen to, appropriate, and ultimately get credit for."

Abbott believes agencies *cannot expect* their clients to be courageous. "You must interest them in being effective, and educate them with evidence by the way you work with them. They are not in business to be brave."

Abbott sees a duality of interests in the agency-client relationship. "The clients you get in the early days are clients who come to you because you're small and you've got a reputation. They know that they need great work to compete, to make their pound or their dollar go further. I think the hard phase is when



"Possibly the best press ad of all time," says Steve Henry.
The Pregnant Man *written by Jeremy Sinclair at Cramer Saatchi, London, in the late 1960s for the UK Health Education Council.*

clients come to you who have got enough money to *blast* their way to recognition. Nevertheless, you want to use that budget, because you're the agency you are, to further your own creative reputation. You still believe that if you can make forty million look like eighty million, it's just as good as making two million look like four million."

Persuading a client to run cutting edge advertising, in Abbott's view, centres on trust. "It's about winning their confidence; it's about maybe proving yourself on some small things; it's about trying to think in terms of campaigns and not just ads, so that they understand this isn't just a one-shot piece of brilliance. It's also being careful about what clients you take; it's being honest about what you're good at, and what you're not good at. I always try and view new business in that light. 'Could we do a good job on it?' is one of the questions I think you should ask yourself, and you should be honest enough, if you say it's not really your bag, not to go for it."

The Cutting Edge. Sometimes, It Can Hurt.

Life at the cutting edge is a heady mix of sacrilege and sacrifice.

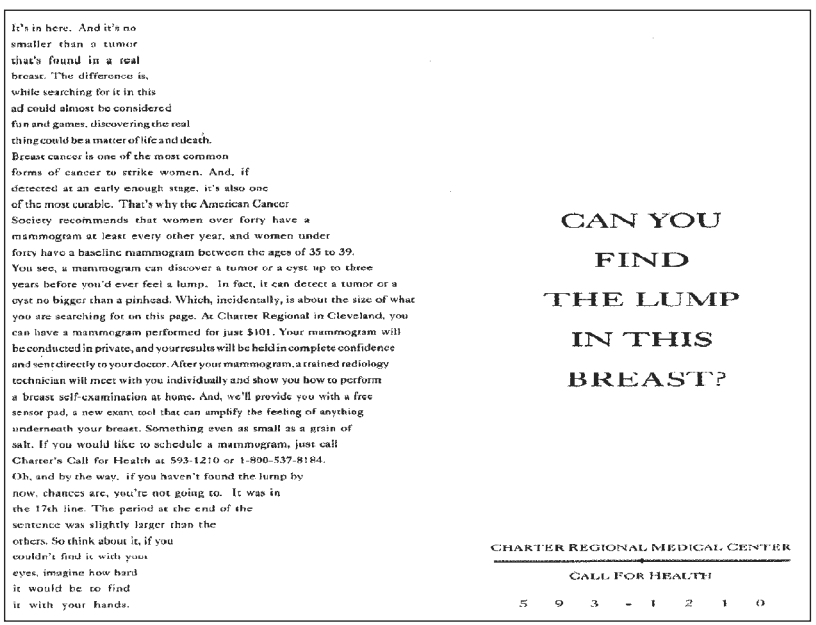
The sacrilege first. Creativity is a destructive process, tearing down what has gone before and rebuilding afresh. We have to shift gears from logic to intuition, and adjust perspectives in line with new realities. The fundamentals of human behaviour have not changed; simply the environment in which we find them, and the creative means by which we access them. To quote Delaney, it is what is appropriate at the time.

And so to the sacrifice. To create cutting edge work, to make a difference, you must first make a difference within yourself. You will need a strong, intense base for your advertising ideology. That follows in the next chapters. But do not expect an easy ride.

Sinha's advice says it all: "If you really, really, *really* are determined to get into advertising as a writer or an art director, then you'll find that you are entering a world where there are all sorts of conventions and rules already set. You can either play by those conventions and rules and try to win yourself fame and

fortune that way, in which case you may not be stretching yourself. But if you're someone with protean creative urges inside you, someone who really wants to break the mould, and you want to do something that no one's ever seen before, then you've got to be prepared that the industry will not help you, because it's full of extremely conservative people who know the way it's been done since the year dot. Creative directors who have seen awards won on things for many years by doing it *their* way; clients who see that results are produced by doing it *their* way. And if you come in and say, I want to do it some *new* way that comes out of your spirit or some intuition of yours, there'll be a hell of a lot of resistance.

"But, by the same token, the people who do follow their own instincts, and fight for them, and *prevail,* they're the people who break new ground and end up setting the new standards and showing the new way forward. Like Graham Fink, they'll be the figureheads for the future."



Print creativity defies all rules. Words can be words, words can be visuals. There are no limits, as Henderson Advertising, Greenville, South Carolina, proves.

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