

Q&A: Matt Batten

Executive Creative Director, Momentum Worldwide, Australia

10 answers to 10 questions that let us peer into the mind of one of the world's leading creative directors.



Matt is a restless creative. That's not to say he has to keep moving agencies and countries, though he has worked in the UK (ECD of Wunderman London, helping whack revenue up 95%) as well as his native Australia (Wunderman Australia, Edge and now Momentum Worldwide). No, he has a restless mind, an inquisitive mind. He's worked out how you can detect cancer using your mobile; he's created bio-organic ink; he's hacked a Fitbit to record all the biometric data of a dog; and he's had his name on a Coca-Cola can. He was part of the team that developed the original 'Share a Coke' campaign that sold over 250 million personalised Cokes. And as if that's not enough, he writes and directs short films. Oh, and he's just written a novel.

1. You're an Executive Creative Director with all the pressure that the job entails. Do you have a side-hustle? What do you do as a counterbalance to the demands of your workplace?

Write. I've written screenplays, both shorts and features, produced and directed a few of my own short films, and picked up a few laurels. And during the season of lockdowns I finished my debut novel (currently seeking a literary agent if any are reading this). The advertising industry isn't as creative as it used to be or should be, so my big ideas are immersive stories about broken, challenged characters struggling to stay alive in a troubled world. Just like advertising really.



See "Hunt", written and directed by Matt at <https://vimeo.com/141883113>

2. If you hadn't ended up in advertising, what would you be doing instead?

Filmmaking. But I'd be bringing to life my own stories that are designed to translate to multiple media: film, books, TV, games, merch.

3. In your career, what one piece of personal work are you most proud of?

'The Next Photo' campaign for Childhood Eye Cancer Trust (CHECT) in the UK. An incredible insight unearthed from a throwaway line in a conversation led to an innovative print campaign that showed people how to detect a deadly and aggressive cancer in children with just an ordinary mobile phone. It won a slew of awards and was Drum's Campaign of the Year, but about a year later I learned a mother in Melbourne rang a radio station to tell them she had seen the campaign on social media, done as instructed, and discovered a tumour in the eye of her baby. Keep the trophies. We saved a life.



The copy explains that if you take a flash photo of your child and the retina is white rather than black, that's an indication they might have retinoblastoma.

4. What work has your agency/team produced you're particularly proud of?

The best work Momentum has done was during the very first lockdown when all the bars and pubs closed, and it suddenly became impossible to launch a beer sampling campaign in venues. So the team built a pop-up bar experience in which industrial robotic arms were programmed to serve chilled Heineken Zero to consumers through a window, completely with zero contact.

5. What recent work have you seen from another agency (or agencies) that you would really like to see entered into The Caples? And why?

I have two gamer-based campaigns:

#GenderSwap for WomeninGames.org was a profoundly clever and simple way to dramatise an endemic cultural problem.

But if it's about shifting product, then 'Hidden Spots' for Heinz was an innovatively engaging campaign to put a product where it really shouldn't be... but also should be.

6. Are awards important?

The (ahem) older you get, the less important they become on a personal level. But for anyone building a career, they absolutely improve employability and opportunities. Same goes for anyone building an agency. While many clients might not care about the actual awards (until they win one themselves), the accolades provide agencies with more moments of public recognition for producing outstanding work which attracts business. And talent.

Awards = attention = credibility + capability = more talent = more business = \$\$\$

7. What does it mean to you to be a juror of The Caples Awards in 2023?

My very first international awards were Caples trophies 18 years ago. I've been a juror of The Caples Awards a few times since then and have seen it shift and change over the years, even go through the wringer and come out the other side as a much bigger and better industry icon thanks to the dedication of a small group of people. Today, on the other side of two and a half years that decimated our industry, I'm immensely excited to be part of the Caples Awards 2023 and helping some young teams get their very first international awards.

8. The Caples is free to enter. Is this brave. Or very, very stupid?

It's a testament to the dedication of the organisers. And it's proof that awards cannot always be bought. The whole industry is aware of the cost of the big shows, and the vast amounts of wealth poured into them by the big networks. Wealth that could be redirected to the talent, resolving systemic issues in their workplaces, furthering careers, or aiding NFP brands, rather than stacking the decks to ensure a big haul that keeps C-suites rolling in bonuses.

Or maybe it's very, very stupid.

9. If you could have five creative luminaries sitting around your kitchen table, having a drink and a chat, who would they be? What do you think you'd talk about?

Tina Fey, Taika Waititi, Banksy, John Krasinski and Julia Louis-Dreyfus. They choose the conversation. Hopefully about my exceptional cocktail-mixing skills.

10. Impossible question. But what is your one all-time favourite piece of advertising, the idea you most wish you'd done yourself?

Fuck you for asking that question. There's so many to choose from. #LikeaGirl. 1984. Whassup. Cog. Bear Fight. I Shipped My Pants. Terry Tate Office Linebacker. And the proof all the above are the greatest is that I don't even have to mention the brands. But to choose just one... Epic Split.

Matt designed this poster for Médecins Sans Frontières but when a MSF doctor got held at gunpoint, the work was pulled. 16 years later, MSF Spain found Matt online and asked him to produce it again for them. "Some jobs take longer than others", Matt says.

