

Q&A: Stephen de Wolf

National Chief Creative Officer, DDB Group Australia



Wolfie has made a habit of being named the world's Number One Creative Director. When he was at Clemenger BBDO Melbourne, 'Hungerithm' for Mars Snickers was the second most-awarded campaign in the world in 2016. Irritated, the following year he was part of the team behind 'Meet Graham' for the Transport Accident Commission of Australia, which did get to the very top.

He's won all the awards, he's got all the accolades and yet he's managed to avoid turning into a pillock. Even in this little interview he's giving one of his colleagues a plug.

1. You're a Chief Creative Officer with all the pressure that the job entails. What do you do as a counterbalance to the demands of your workplace?

A side hustle? Sadly, I don't have one, but a far more talented creative in our Sydney office does, so I'll use this forum to promote it. Lucy Hay and her sister have developed a product called CLUTCH. A replacement for Hollywood tape, it's a glue that keeps your outfit in place, your skin safe, and comes out in the wash. It's sustainable, vegan, and made right here in Sydney Australia. Check it out at <https://clutchglue.com>

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

Believe it or not, there was a time I wanted to become a physiotherapist. Turned out you needed to be good at maths and science, then get into university – I had no chance.

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

I'm not really the sort of creative who looks back. It sounds cliché, but I wake up every morning thinking our best piece of work is yet to come. That said, it would be wrong of me not to acknowledge 'Meet Graham' for the Transport Accident Commission in Australia. 'Graham' is still touring Australia and has even ventured overseas, educating all of us of our vulnerability on the roads.

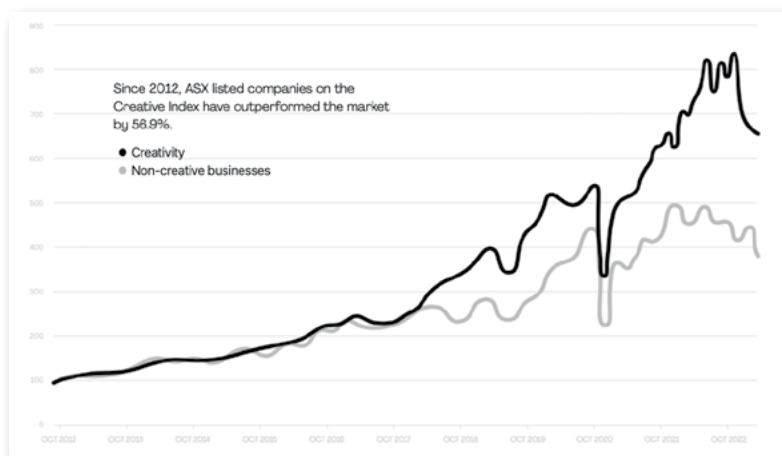


How do you get people to realise how vulnerable we are? By making a sculpture of the sort of body you'd need to be able to survive the average car crash in Australia. Then sending it on tour around the country.

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

Australia is known for agriculture, mining, tourism. But there is an industry often overlooked, never talked about, and integral to all our futures. It also happens to be one of most valuable, and it's creativity. DDB Melbourne wanted to start shifting that perception, by putting a tangible value on creativity here in Australia. The idea is called 'The Creative Index' and it's a live market value of ASX listed businesses that meet the 'Creative Index' criteria. I'm super proud of this idea as it's already started numerous conversations around the power and value of creative problem solving. I figure showing this can only be good for all of us and our industry.

You can check it out at <https://creativeindex.live>



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?

'Ha ha you just ate vegetables' for Wholly Veggies, done by Partyland in the US. Outside of one of the best lines in a long time, it's a campaign not taking itself too seriously. We need more of that in our world!

6. Are awards important?

I think award shows are important in creating a benchmark and celebrating our thinking and our craft. For me they should always be a byproduct of striving to do great work that works for our clients.

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

Being asked to judge the Caples is a privilege - seeing work from around the world and learning from it and the other judges is one of the greatest highlights of my job.

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

It's neither. On behalf the organisers, it's very generous and super important. Being free to enter means creative businesses of all shapes and sizes can get involved – not just the big ones that have the money to pay huge entry fees.

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?

No one from advertising. Alain Ducasse, Anne-Sophie Pic, Marco Pierre White, Heston Blumenthal and Gordon Ramsay... and then I'd ask them all to bring a plate. Selfish? Yes, but it's my house and my rules.

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

To this day, Honda 'Grrr' is my all-time favourite piece of advertising.

