

Q&A: David Harris

Executive Creative Director, Deloitte London.
President of The Caples Awards 2024 jury.

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



In many ways David's career trajectory describes the massive changes that have taken place in advertising over the last 30 years. Starting as an art director in a traditional ad agency, he moved into Direct Marketing as it began to get big, founding Lida, a pioneering agency backed by M&C Saatchi. When data and digital began to transform Direct, he moved to head up Wunderman London. And today he leads the in-house agency at Deloitte London. At every stage he has produced noticeably innovative work.

In this interview, David talks with Caples Awards' Patrick Collister about his career and what he's hoping to see at this year's show in May.

David, You're a top creative director. Do you have a side-hustle? What do you do as a counterbalance to the pressures of your workplace?

I like coming up with ideas, So far they have manifested themselves as: a range of pop-up Easter egg boxes; a foldable rigid boat that would fit in the boot of a family car; two typefaces; a fashion brand (D4V3); a graphic novel (The Aquarium); several screenplays; many short stories (two are now short films); a new art movement (Texturalism); and re-landscaping a modern medieval walled garden. They've never made any money and most are still works in progress.

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

I'm not sure. In a 'Sliding Doors' moment I almost became a landscape gardener. In my dreams I'm a successful novelist. My original ambition was to write a Top 20 hit single and retire by the time I was thirty.

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

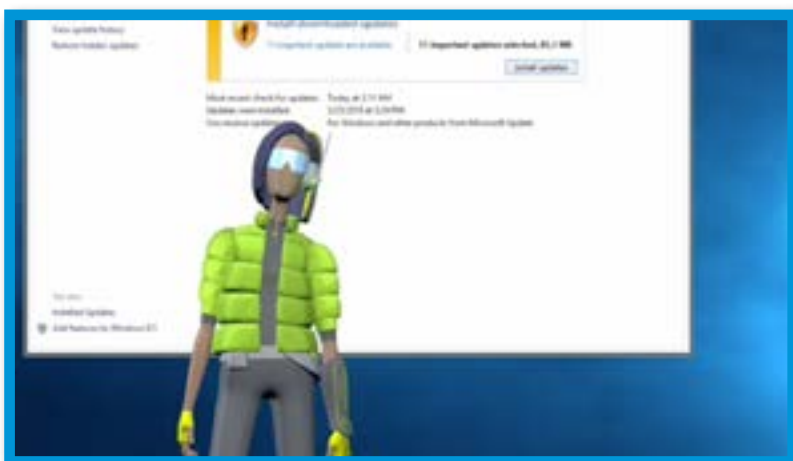
I think of all work as personal. You nurture it, live with it, fight for it, and really care about it. Perhaps ironically the work I'm most proud of is the one that didn't win the most awards or further my career in any exciting way. But it got over 7 million views and helped vaccinate thousands of people from some nasty tropical diseases that killed more people than AIDS and Malaria combined. 'How to Shock a Celebrity' was part of the END7 campaign which I worked on with a great creative team and the film director Richard Curtis ('Four Weddings and a Funeral', 'Love Actually' etc). It was part of the Make Poverty History campaign, a low budget, simple idea that got results. And those results saved lives.



Watch the video [HERE](#)

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

We pull rabbits out of hats daily and I'm always very proud when I look at how the team can consistently come up with brilliant ideas working against considerable odds. One of our most ingenious campaigns was our award winning (creative & effectiveness) B2B campaign for Cyber Security that used the psychology of behaviour change to build awareness of Cyber threats. It worked because it was entertaining, a bit ridiculous and made people think as well as laugh.



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

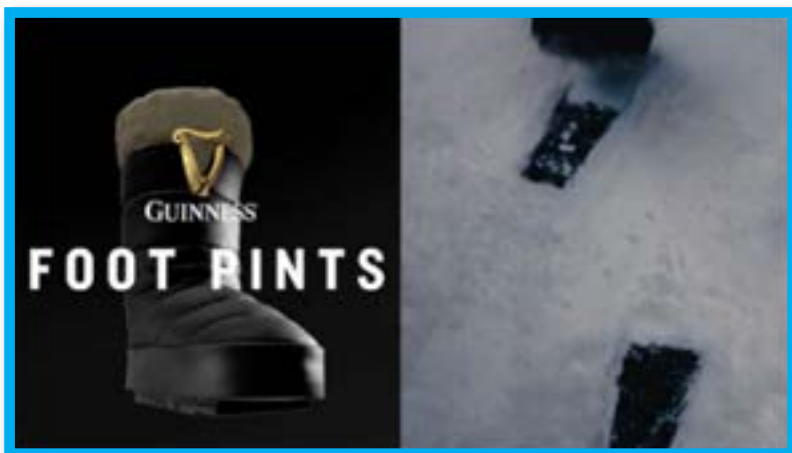
Guinness Foot Pints – topical, funny and different. (AMV BBDO, London)

Chat GPT Burger King/ McDonalds posters – witty and talkable. (David, Sao Paulo)

Mattel Barbie campaign/sponsorship/the lot – totally redefined pink. (Warner Bros Marketing Team, USA)

Ikea/Shelter Real life room sets – builds on a campaign that ran in Toronto and made stories of homelessness real. (IKEA in partnership with Shelter)

Marmite Love it. Hate it. Get it on – fun, different, charming. (adam&eveDDB, London)



Watch the video [HERE](#)

Can you identify any trends which you and your fellow judges should look out for at The Caples 2024? GenAI, perhaps, or new developments in influencer marketing, etc?

Gen AI is already impacting every area of marketing, maybe we should look at where it is helping innovate what we do, rather than just duplicate what we've done before (albeit better and cheaper)? The Caples has introduced a category in 2024 to recognise this.

Short form films are making a comeback at last - I've always been a fan of the discipline of telling a story in 30 seconds. And there seem to be more tasteful product placements within longer-form films and events (brand sponsorship, I guess).

Are awards important?

Yes. Are they always fair? Are they always representative of the best work? Are they valued by clients? Are they considered good value by agencies? Probably not.

But awards are what inspire us to aim for greater heights. Whether it's because of the recognition from our peers, the fact they help make us more employable or the fact that competition helps us try that bit harder, they act as markers to show us how good we are.

The actual award itself is pretty worthless, the lavish black-tie dinners are a rip-off, and of course, some awards are more meaningful than others.

Yes, they are important because they help elevate and showcase the best work.

What does it mean to you to be President of The Caples Awards in 2024?

Of all the awards shows, The Caples has consistently focused on the work rather than the awards circus. The jurors are inspiring and there are no pressures (from sponsors or politics) to award work that isn't up to scratch, so it's consistently great. I'm proud to be part of Caples 2024.



David judging The Caples Awards 2018

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?

What a tricky question. These are all people who I find inspiring who are still alive. They are all ideas people so I guess that's where the conversation will go. They're also quite opinionated so it should be an interesting evening!

Thomas Heatherwick – designer and architect of radically human buildings.

Paloma Strelitz – architect, strategist and social entrepreneur.

Malcolm Gladwell – inspiring and eloquent storyteller.

Matt Groening – cartoonist and creator of The Simpsons.

Greta Gerwig – director of Lady Bird and Barbie.

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

Coco Chanel famously said 'Fashion changes, but style endures'. I feel advertising always changes, but simple ideas endure. There are many campaigns that spring to mind, but for its underwritten simplicity and clever storytelling, in just 30 gripping seconds, I'd go for the Guardian's 1986 Point of view ad.



Watch the commercial [HERE](#)