

Q&A: Paul Banham

Chief Creative Officer, MullenLowe MENA

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



After leaving the big smoke (of London) for the sandpit (of Dubai), Paul helped FP7 McCann become 'The World's Most Effective Agency' at The Effies 2015 and into the Contagious Pioneers Top 10 of the World's Most Creative Agencies.

Now he's on a mission to elevate MullenLowe MENA to equally lofty heights. Since joining, the agency has picked up over 150 global awards (including several Golds at The Caples) and three Agency of the Year titles.

You're a busy creative leader. Do you have a side hustle? What do you do as a counterbalance to the pressures of your workplace?

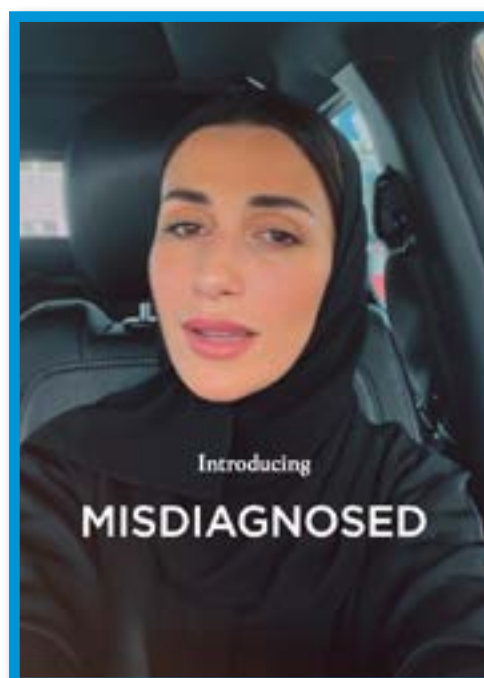
Yes, it is more of a slow hustle, though, a 10-hours-a-month type of thing. Long story short, I've been writing and saving pithy idioms and witticisms for years now; the plan is to turn them into stunning pieces of 3D framed art to exhibit and maybe sell one day.

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

A session drummer or an architect, perhaps, although the seven-year degree course put me off back in the day.

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

Well, I am always most proud of my latest work, to be honest - the older pieces lose their shine almost as quickly as their awards trophies do. But one that's hot off the press and for which we have high hopes this year, is Mis(S)Diagnosed. The brief/challenge? Women are five times more likely to die from heart disease than breast cancer. A statistic made more worrying by the fact that medical data relating to heart attacks comes mostly from male patients. This is dangerous for women because they experience heart attacks differently from men. As a result, the early warning signs of a heart attack are missed in 78% of women. Solution? We documented one woman's journey of medical misdiagnosis across the Gulf region and delivered her story inside specially designed 'Awareness Aid' kits that unveiled the truth behind decades of medical bias. We created mass awareness of the less-known signs of women's heart attacks which is helping close a 20-year medical gender data gap.



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

Double Moon - The UAE's Hope Probe was scheduled to arrive on Mars on 9th February 2021, so we put the two moons in the sky over Dubai's desert on 3rd February. Using super-realistic sky mapping projection technology that had never before been seen in the Middle East with two giant 70-metre cranes and a 40-metre holoscreen, we projected two exact replicas of the Mars moons onto the Dubai sky. The screen and the cranes were invisible at night and the moons – which were visible for miles – looked incredibly realistic. Two days before the Hope Probe's arrival on Mars, by which time the stunt had built up buzz, we made a government announcement via social media and the press, redirecting the attention to what really mattered - the livestream of the Hope Probe's arrival.



'Double Moon' won Gold at The Caples two years ago. Case study [HERE](#)

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'm penning this post watching the Chiefs Super Bowl extra-time win against the 49ers, so I've picked a Super Bowl spot that made me chuckle. Filthy rich? Done. An epic night out with your favourite celebs? Done. The Bud Light Genie's here to make it happen. The minute-long commercial depicts football fans getting their biggest wishes granted by the Bud Light genie and features appearances from Peyton Manning, Post Malone and more. Their wishes include: giant biceps, a sweet ride, for Peyton to be their best friend, and for Post Malone to perform at a party. One fan wishes to be at a UFC fight and Dana White makes a surprise appearance. Toward the end, the wishes get even crazier as one fan has a T-Rex spawn in their backyard. Finally, a fan utters the last wish, "Let's go to Super Bowl 58" Fabulous cast, editing, music and more. Love it.



Watch the Bud Light Superbowl ad [HERE](#)

Can you identify any trends which you and your fellow judges should look out for at The Caples 2024?

The only trends I'm looking for are wonderfully sublime creative ideas. Context: I spent a decade of my career as a top digital creative, and we always pushed the boundaries of tech, coding and alike. But we had a steadfast rule. Never use tech for tech's sake (unless it's a world first). Trends? They come and go but great work stands the test of time.

Are awards important?

Yes. 100%. Awards are recognition of a job exceedingly well done. As such, they represent work that has delivered not just upon the brief but hopefully gone beyond it and surpassed not only the client's expectations but also the business objectives and results. Awards are a by-product usually packaged into a two-minute showcase representing an agency's creative and strategic abilities. They help drive agency reputation and new business and also help attract and retain great talent.

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

This is my second time judging at the Caples and I am sure it'll be just as much fun as the first time. There are always world-class judges, healthy debate and zero lobbying. I think it's one of the few shows that's genuinely all about the work, and that's why I love it.

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?

Robin Wight, John Hegarty, Lee Clow, Tom Carter & Walter Campbell and Jonathan Glazier. I'd ask Robin if he remembered me from WRCS and about his visual exuberance #ExquisiteTailoring, John about his never-ending abundance of energy, the Levi's Effect and his winemaking, Lee about working with Steve Jobs and how he found time to surf every day. Tom & Walter about their ridiculously long list of D&AD yellow pencils. Plus, Jonathan about working with Ray Winston while directing Sexy Beast + Jamiroquai and the Virtual Insanity shoot, for starters.

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

Geico Unskippable. As a digital-first ECD, this one made me highly envious when I first saw it and it still does. Damn, I wish I'd done this one.



Watch Geico's unskippable "Dog" [HERE](#)