

ADWEEK

JUNE 7, 2021

THE AMBER RUFFIN SHOW

THE COMEDIAN IS
TURNING LATE NIGHT
ON ITS HEAD WITH HER
CONVENTION-BUSTING
PEACOCK HIT.

BY KELSEY SUTTON

CREATIVE 100

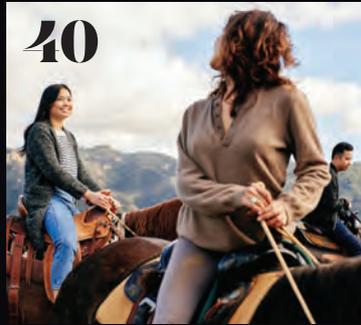
PLUS, THE EXPERIENTIAL AWARDS

FOX

+

tubi

**100% DEDICATED TO AUDIENCES AND ADVERTISERS,
OFFERING NEW WAYS TO BREAK THROUGH.**



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EXPERIENTIAL AWARDS

Adweek honors brands that created standout experiences in trying times.



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How a cat in a shark costume made Roomba a household name.

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Upfront

THE WEEK IN MEDIA AND MARKETING



FREE BEER, ANYONE?

ANHEUSER-BUSCH WANTS TO HELP MEET U.S. VACCINATION GOALS BY JULY 4. BY PAUL HIEBERT

The White House wants 70% of U.S. adults to receive at least one Covid-19 shot by Independence Day, and Anheuser-Busch is here to help. The St. Louis-based brewer has pledged to provide a free beer, seltzer or nonalcoholic beverage to every American aged 21 or older if the goal is met. With more than 63% of adults partially vaccinated, that complimentary Bud Light is just a few percentage points away.

CREATIVITY



GLAAD and Getty Images Partner to Improve LGBTQ+ Representation in Advertising

A new guidebook from GLAAD and Getty Images outlines actionable steps marketers and advertisers can take to increase visibility of LGBTQ+ communities. The resource builds on two recent projects: the Visual GPS survey by Getty Images' Creative Insights team and "The Visibility Project," a campaign collaboration between GLAAD and Procter & Gamble. The guidebook's mission is to instill confidence in advertisers by providing more authentic LGBTQ+ images to use. —Leonardo Fajerman



BIG NUMBER

\$10.4 Billion

SPENT WORLDWIDE DURING PRIME DAY 2020



THIS WEEK'S COVER

AMBER RUFFIN WAS PHOTOGRAPHED FOR ADWEEK BY CREATIVE 100 HONOREE JOSHUA KISSI

MOOD BOARD The Week in Emojis



ETSY
SHELLS OUT \$1.6B TO BUY DEPOP—AND TO REACH GEN Z



HBO MAX WITH ADS
DEBUTS, FEATURING MORE THAN 35 BRANDS



WILLOW
BREASTFEEDING MOMS DECLARE INDEPENDENCE IN FIRST CAMPAIGN

BRANDS

AUTHENTIC BRANDS GROUP TAPS MASSIVE POTENTIAL OF NFTS

Marketing and branding conglomerate Authentic Brands Group returns to the NFT scene to sell a second batch featuring Hollywood icon Marilyn Monroe to celebrate her birthday. The Marilyn Monroe Metamorphosis line featured 13 pieces from various artists, with each NFT auctioning for an average price of \$11,000. The highest grossing artwork was artist Blake Kathryn's "Happy Birthday Madam President," which sold for over \$40,000.

—Richard Collings



TALENT POOL

CARA SYLVESTER

FOR TARGET'S NEW CMO, MARKETING IS A BALANCE OF ART AND SCIENCE.

BY RICHARD COLLINGS

There are few retailers more beloved in the U.S. than Target, which gained some \$9 billion in market share over the course of 2020.

Entrusted with protecting that brand and its \$90 billion business is Cara Sylvester, who was promoted to chief marketing and digital officer in February.

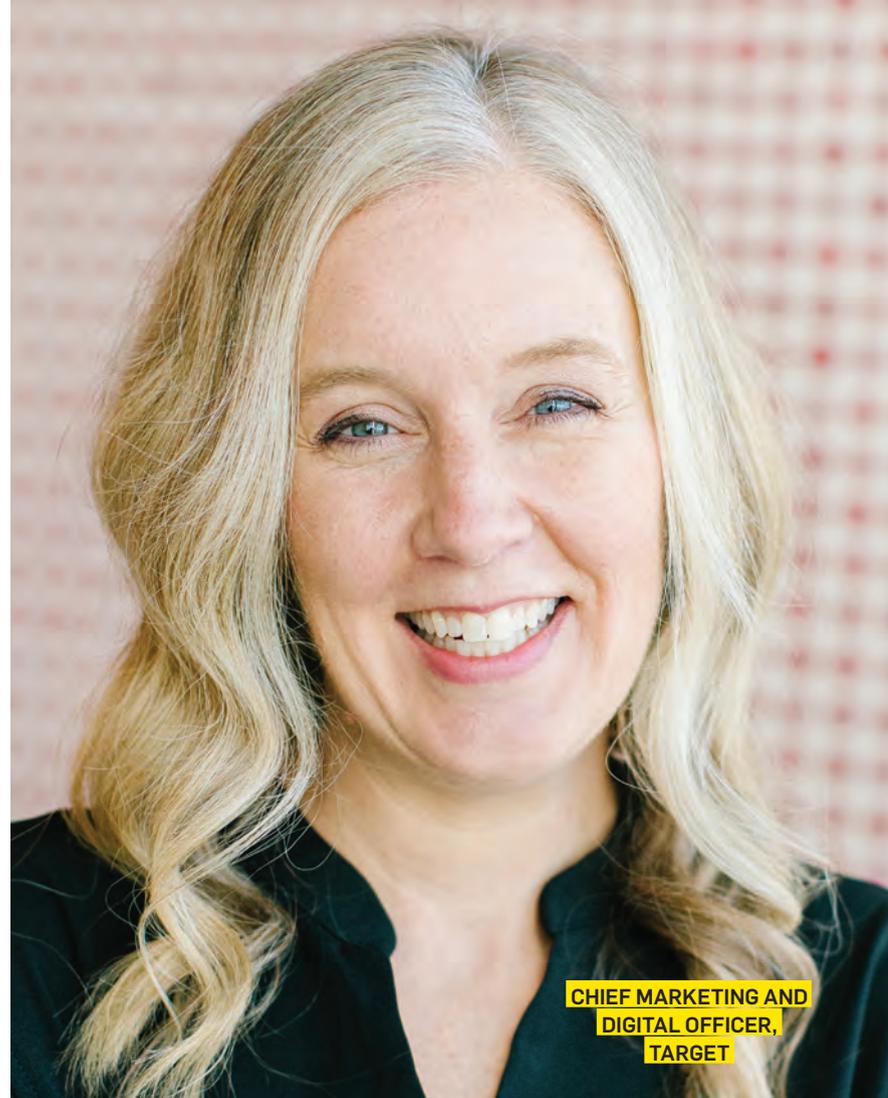
"When I tell people I work at Target, their faces light up. Everyone is excited to share a story about a recent Target find, an experience they had at their local store or a team member that made their day," Sylvester said. "These conversations are incredibly energizing for me and are a big part of what's kept me at Target for nearly 14 years."

Sylvester said that throughout her career, she's learned a lot about the power of possibility, and the opportunity posed by the position of chief marketing and digital officer is no different. In fact, it's those professional experiences that have "forced" Sylvester out of her "comfort zone" that are the most fulfilling.

"It's true that you learn and grow the most when you're willing to say 'yes' to different opportunities and responsibilities that challenge you in new ways," she explained.

One of the things that motivates Sylvester or gets her out of bed every day is her team. "One of the benefits of my role is that I get to work with many different teams across the organization, from merchandising and supply chain to technology and stores."

Indeed, key pillars to her leadership style are empathy and caring for those who work under her, traits she is known for at Target. Though she's only a few months into the role, Sylvester said



CHIEF MARKETING AND DIGITAL OFFICER, TARGET

HOW SHE GOT THE GIG

"Some of my most interesting and rewarding professional experiences have been the ones that have forced me out of my comfort zone," she said.

WHAT EXCITES HER ABOUT THE ROLE

The power of the Target brand and the stories customers and employees share about their experiences with the retailer. She is also excited by her team, which not only delivers for the guests but also cares for one another.

PRO TIP

"At Target, the marketing and digital teams are responsible for orchestrating the Target experience guests know and love, no matter where, how or when they're shopping with us," Sylvester said. "The key to doing this successfully is understanding the guest—who they are, what they're thinking and feeling, anticipating what they might want and need next—and collaborating across the organization to create an experience that will allow you to build and deepen those relationships over time."

she has already learned a great deal from that team.

"Over the last year, in particular, I've been blown away by Team Target's commitment to delivering for our guests and caring for one another, and I believe we've created a really special and unique culture that you can't find anywhere else," Sylvester said.

Sylvester went on to explain that marketing is "a balance of art and science," adding she loves both "the math and the magic." It's important in a rapidly evolving landscape where a retailer must remain nimble and flexible.

As a retailer, it's also imperative to "remain guest-centric." To that end, Target is making strides in personalization, with offers customized for each of its 90 million Target Circle Rewards members, and inspiring discovery with a limited-time-only collection.

"In today's world, both marketing and retail is all about understanding the consumer and pursuing the most meaningful, authentic connections," she said.



Class of 1999

Senior Superlatives

HAGS

NEVER CHANGE
- KEYWORD SEARCH

Most Likely to Take Up Space



Storage

"Hold on to the memories!"

Most Mixed Up



CD-ROM

"I've been burned before."

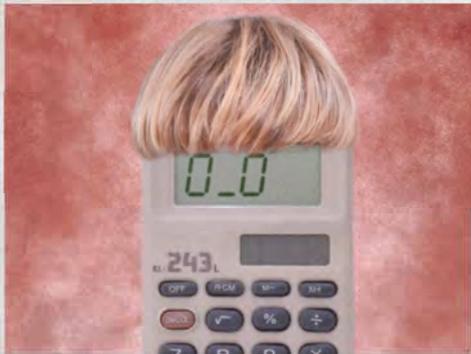
Most Likely to Roam



Cellphone

"Don't call me, I'll call you."

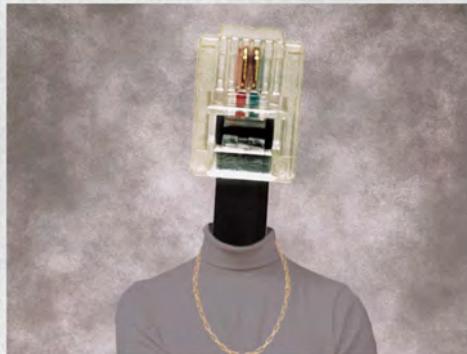
Most Likely to Put 2+2 Together



Calculator

"You can always count on me."

Most Worldly



Internet

"Dial me up anytime, anywhere!"

Most Likely to Have a Ball



Mouse

"Everything just clicked this year."

LET'S LINK UP SOON!

Party at my pad!

K



These classmates have come a long way since 1999 – except one.

Find out who is still stuck in the past at yext.com/reunion



MEET THE CREATORS WHO EXPANDED OUR WORLD WHEN WE NEEDED IT MOST

OUR BIGGEST ISSUE OF THE YEAR.



THE INVITE CAME over text a couple weeks ago—"I'll be in NYC for a few days. Happy hour?"

It was the first time a marketer reached out to meet in person in 15 months, and I hardly knew how to respond. There was a lot to consider. Where would we go? How would we get there? Where had I stored all of my dress shoes? Was it worth the discomfort of inching out of one's quarantine cocoon, even as the vaccine made doing so safe?

A handful of us did venture out to a rooftop in Manhattan's Flatiron District, flanked by the Empire State Building and the city's unchanging skyline, sharing stories about new cities moved to, new brands conceived, new trends waiting to be dissected and understood. The excitement of sharing these details in 3D—the spark of collective creativity and inspiration—was palpable.

Whether you are holding the largest Adweek issue of the year in your hands or reading it on your mobile phone, I hope you feel that spark too. Our goal is to deliver fresh inspiration after a year that has been

equally challenging and exciting for creativity. In art, constraint paradoxically leads to freedom, and I'm inspired by what this crop of 100 visionaries created this year. We never award this honor to the same person twice, which guarantees you'll make some discoveries here.

Don't miss the story about our cover star Amber Ruffin, who went from a writer for Seth Myers to the star



of her own streaming late-night show. Or Brittany Bosco, a musician and creative director who is finding ways to turn experiential activations into long-term upgrades in underfunded neighborhoods. **Or Mo Said, who grew up in post-9/11 Pakistan and used creativity to expand his world when everything shut down.**

If that wasn't enough, we've packed our Experiential Awards into this issue as well. The winners provide a fascinating look into how this emerging field is evolving right alongside other creative disciplines.

As you read, I hope you take a moment to reflect on everything you've managed to create in your cocoon. And as the vaccine makes it safe to meet again, prepare for those ideas to really take off. Keep creating. Keep expanding. We'll be here to witness and celebrate it again next year.

Stephanie

Stephanie Paterik
Editor-in-chief
@stephpaterik



A LIVE VIRTUAL EXPERIENCE | SEPTEMBER 20 - 23

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TRENDS YOU NEED TO KNOW

Insights

BOOZE-FREE GOES MAINSTREAM

CONSUMERS WANT EXCITING OPTIONS EVEN IF THEY CHOOSE TO ABSTAIN FROM ALCOHOL.
BY T.L. STANLEY

Ben Branson wanted a sophisticated and refreshing tall drink—hold the alcohol, please. But what he got instead was “a pink, fruity, childish, sickly-sweet mocktail.”

That was his lightning bolt moment. “It was so terrible,” he said of the Shirley Temple-like concoction served to him at a fashionable London restaurant. “I thought maybe I could figure out a grown-up option.”

That was the beginning, back in 2013, of Branson’s journey into the nonalcoholic spirits category, which was so niche at the time that it was little more than a novelty. But that’s no longer the case, with Seedlip—Branson’s line of booze-free, botanical beverages—blazing a trail in what has become a closely watched and fast-growing space.

Sales are pouring in

Sales of low- and no-alcohol libations, which accelerated during the pandemic, are expected to grow by 31% over the next few years, according to the IWSR Drinks’ market analysis of 10 countries, including the U.S., U.K., Canada and France.

In the U.S. alone, which the research firm called the second-

Seedlip now has distribution in 37 global markets and 20 U.S. states.



largest market behind Germany and “currently the most dynamic,” sales of low- and no-alcohol drinks jumped by more than 30% in 2020. That figure includes zero-alcohol beers and low-alcohol hard seltzers, with the latter continuing their meteoric rise and spawning offshoots like teas, kombuchas, coffees and ranch waters.

The spirits substitute segment, a nascent part of the business with brands like Proteau, Everleaf, Pentire Adrift, Curious Elixirs and Mingle Mocktails, is predicted to have the biggest annual growth in the space—14% between 2020 and 2024—“due to new product development and consumer demand,” per IWSR.

But at the individual brand level, some are reporting dramatic surges, with growth well into the triple digits. Ritual Zero Proof, for instance, grew 214% in 2020. The Chicago-born teetotaler-friendly line, which just added a rum alternative to its faux gin, whiskey and tequila lineup and stripped all artificial additives, saw its revenue jump 452% in the first quarter of this year compared to Q1 2020.

The momentum will likely snowball as bars and nightclubs reopen, with mixologists and servers being some of the most dedicated and influential ambassadors for premium booze-free cocktails. Another future driver? Legacy marketers like Diageo are getting more involved, developing their own booze-free versions of Tanqueray and Gordon’s Gin, for instance, and investing in boutique startups.

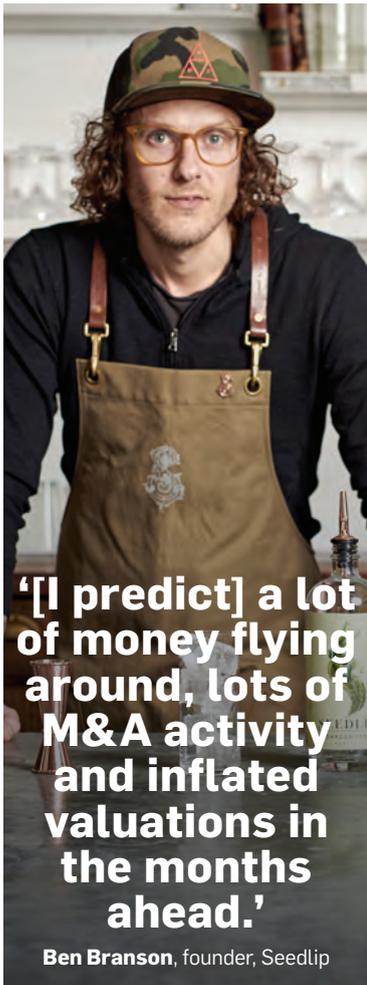
Competition heats up

Catering to what it calls “conscious hedonists,” London-based Three Spirit Drinks infuses plants and herbs into products that aim to simulate the feeling of cocktails but have their own unique flavor profiles.

The brand’s natural caffeine-boosted Livener, mood-elevating Social Elixir and end-of-evening Nightcap use functional ingredients like guava leaf, green tea, lion’s mane mushroom and valerian. From its 2008 founding, its mission has been to find “a better way to feel good that didn’t ruin Monday.”

“People are looking to nature, and they want transparency,” said Tatiana Mercer, Three Spirit co-founder and co-creator of online nightspot finder BarChick. “And the younger demos, if they’re not drinking spirits, will they be looking to imitate something they never had, or will they try something based on new benefits?”

Taking a different approach and closely mirroring rum, whiskey, gin and tequila, Ritual Zero Proof is helping build a “deeply relevant”



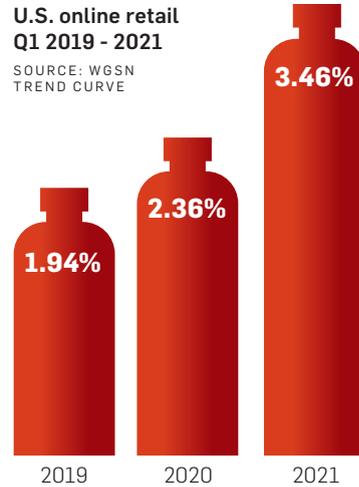
'[I predict] a lot of money flying around, lots of M&A activity and inflated valuations in the months ahead.'

Ben Branson, founder, Seedlip

SHARE OF LOW- AND NO-ALCOHOL BEERS, WINES AND SPIRITS

U.S. online retail
Q1 2019 - 2021

SOURCE: WGSN
TREND CURVE



31%

Expected sales growth of low and no-alcohol libations over the next few years.

ISWR DRINKS MARKET ANALYSIS



Ritual Zero Proof, which recently stripped out artificial additives and added a rum alternative, mimics the alcohol it's replacing, while **Three Spirit** goes the botanical route with ingredients like ginseng, apple cider vinegar, yerba mate and white willow bark.



category, similar to what Impossible Foods and Oatly have done in the plant-based food world, said co-founder Marcus Sakey.

"It's not anti-alcohol—it's giving people healthier choices and sticking to the classic use cases they know, like mixing a drink they're familiar with," he said of the product line he debuted in late 2019, comparing some zero-alcohol fans to flexitarians. "And this is not a fad or a blip any more than dairy or meat alternatives are."

As evidence, Sakey points to the "43 brands that have launched after us," by his last count, with "a new one coming every week. We're in the middle of a sea change in this category," he added.

Meanwhile, the gin-like granddad of the space, Seedlip, has gone from a copper still in Branson's kitchen to distribution in 37 global markets and 20 U.S. states, along with a thriving ecommerce platform. (Diageo is now a majority stakeholder.)

Branson, whose initial concept for a side hustle filled a hole in adult drinks and helped bring the

temperance movement into the mainstream, predicts "a lot of money flying around, lots of M&A activity and inflated valuations" in the months ahead. "I see the Wild West."

Becoming more 'sober curious'

There's no question that people imbibed traditional hooch during lockdown, when "Chardonnay O'Clock" and #DayDrinking were common social media descriptors.

At the same time, many American consumers got serious about health and wellness, boosting the profile of the sober-curious movement and chipping away at the old definition of "adult beverage." Dry January, long embedded in the U.K. population, continued picking up steam in the U.S., with a record high 13% of Americans reportedly participating, according to Morning Consult.

The trend toward zero-proof tipples is largely being driven, not surprisingly, by millennials and Gen Z, who are demanding well-considered brands with artisanal ingredients and beautiful

packaging. They've turned their noses up at the uninspired soda and seltzer offered to nondrinkers in the past, and they're challenging the long-standing notion that celebrations—whether happy hours, weddings or parties—must revolve around alcohol.

"Younger consumers look at alcohol consumption with a more critical eye, and they're pressure testing cultural norms that have been in place for decades," said Bethany Gomez, managing director of data firm Brightfield Group, which coined the phrase, "drinking smarter, drinking less," to describe the phenomenon. "These are bougie consumers, very discerning, who take this lifestyle very seriously."

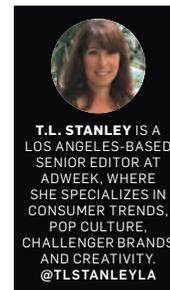
Recent research from Brightfield found that 64% of consumers say they are drinking less alcohol than in the past or have ditched it completely, and notably for brands, 75% of those consumers wish there were more nonalcoholic choices.

Fitter, happier, more productive

Some consumers in this moderation wave are looking to drop some weight they gained during quarantine. Brightfield's study found that 48% of all Americans say they are actively trying to lose weight, and 50% of alcohol consumers share that goal, which may include ditching the calories and carbs found in most alcohols.

Those who abstain, as well as those who just want to pace themselves, are part of the zero-alcohol trend as people look for ways to socialize and relax that don't involve a hangover—or a drink from the kids menu.

"Consumers want to take better care of themselves and wake up with a clear head," said Kara Nielsen, director of food and drink at research firm WGSN. "They also want to mark certain moments with interesting beverages that don't feel like a compromise or a punishment."

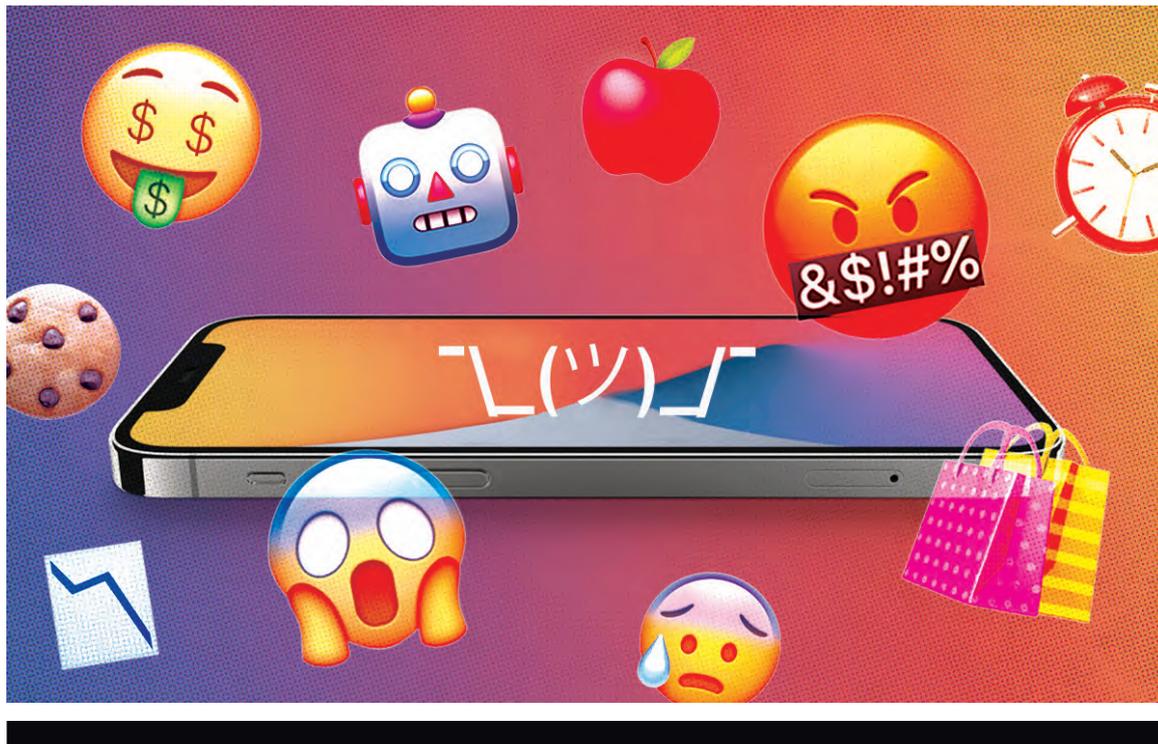


T.L. STANLEY IS A LOS ANGELES-BASED SENIOR EDITOR AT ADWEEK, WHERE SHE SPECIALIZES IN CONSUMER TRENDS, POP CULTURE, CHALLENGER BRANDS AND CREATIVITY. @TLSTANLEYLA

COURTESY OF BRANDS

Apple iOS Sends Advertisers Scrambling

AND SOME WONDER IF MORE IS TO COME IN REGARD TO MOBILE ADS. **BY RONAN SHIELDS**



Apple customers are among some of the most desirable for marketers, given their willingness to pay more than \$1,000 for a cellphone. They also collectively generate more than \$500 billion a year in revenue via in-app billings, a statistic that inspires advertisers to pay top dollar for real estate on an iPhone.

However, on April 26, the device manufacturer added an element that could potentially diminish that allure for advertisers: the long-dreaded release of iOS 14.5. This update, which implemented app tracking transparency (ATT), could result in scarcity of addressable inventory for advertisers.

ATT requires publishers to ask users whether they want to be tracked across other apps and websites they visit through an in-app dialogue box, with language that places cross-domain tracking in a negative light. This means the potential loss of key data insights. And in the early days, it remains to be seen if the

iPhone-identifier IDFA could dissuade advertisers from paying that premium for an iPhone placement.

Adweek spoke with three media experts, who asked for anonymity, to explain what's at stake.

Falling victim to ATT

In recent weeks following the introduction of iOS 14.5, reports of user opt-in rates varied considerably. Flurry Analytics, the mobile tracking division of Verizon Media, reported global opt-in rates of 13%. Although, the statistics paint a more austere picture in the U.S., where opt-in rates were approximately 5% as of early May.

Meanwhile, figures from mobile attribution outfit AppsFlyer saw opt-in rates differ depending on the content category of a particular app. Further analysis showed that 40% of users opted in to tracking during the week of May 17-23, though this figure dipped

slightly to 37% among those using gaming and social media apps.

However, iOS app inventory seems to have held its value in the early weeks after its April 26 launch. According to AppsFlyer, iOS ad spend increased 20% after ATT was enforced by Apple, compared to a 2% increase on Android.

Facebook has arguably been the highest-profile victim of Apple's privacy crusade because it counts the vast majority of its ad spend on mobile, where some of its most lucrative CPMs are on iOS devices. This statistic does come with one caveat: The more people who upgrade to iOS 14.5, the more likely the drop in data signals continues with a (likely) accompanying decline in the price that media buyers are willing to pay for placement in iOS apps.

Facebook has faced scrutiny from Wall Street analysts in every subsequent

earnings disclosure since Apple made its seismic privacy changes public at its Worldwide Developers Conference in June 2020. Eric Seufert of Mobile Dev Memo, the leading expert on iOS 14.5, forecasts that the world's largest social network will experience a 7% hit in its Q2 revenues.

Cautious for the meantime

In the early phases of the iOS 14.5 rollout, advertisers are momentarily adopting a cautious wait-and-see approach as to how they'll use Facebook inventory in their mobile media plans.

One major holding group source, who requested anonymity due to their employer's policy, expressed the desire for additional account support from the social network during the transition period.

While this level of support was not forthcoming to the extent that some media buyers wanted, the social network has advised advertisers to run separate campaigns to measure differences in performance: one targeting just iOS users and one targeting everyone else. Facebook was able to maintain some measure of audience insight during the transition by tracking one event per user who opts out and protecting landing page views as a trackable metric across all users, according to multiple agency sources.

"Knowing not all data will be lost and that Facebook will begin modeling more, we're not expecting an immediate catastrophic loss of efficacy in the platform," Taylor Daly, senior platform media manager at media agency Connelly Partners, told Adweek.

Additionally, separate ad-tech vendors have been attempting to fill the void by launching in-app advertising products that seek to engage iOS audiences by using contextual data, as opposed to the deterministic data, which is still available even if iPhone users opt out of targeting. For instance, software company Verve Group launched ATOM (Anonymous Targeting on Mobile), a tool that strips personal data gathered while an app is in use and then models demographic data in a way that adheres to Apple's privacy policies.

As Apple prepares to host its annual Worldwide Developers Conference, some wonder if the device manufacturer's privacy crusade is just a precursor to Apple making a renewed charge in the mobile ads game, a revenue-generating activity it stepped up last year.



RONAN SHIELDS
IS A PROGRAMMATIC
REPORTER AT
ADWEEK, FOCUSING
ON AD-TECH.
@RONAN_SHIELDS

Express plans to open another seven or eight test stores for its new concept, **Express Edit**, which is approximately half the size of its existing stores.

Legacy Retailers Look For Openings

AFTER A YEAR OF HARDSHIP, OPPORTUNITIES ARE BLOSSOMING AGAIN. **BY RICHARD COLLINGS**

For retail, hell hath no fury like a pandemic.

Nearly 15,000 stores—equal to about 52 million square feet of retail space—were permanently shuttered in the U.S. in 2020, according to real estate services provider Cushman & Wakefield. That's a new record.

Closures were led by retailers such as Ann Taylor's parent Ascena, which filed for bankruptcy in late July, and Zara's parent Inditex, with each slashing about 1,000 locations, per a report from Cushman & Wakefield on the outlook for retail released in March.

But 2021 could provide some relief to the commercial real estate sector as the economy reopens, even though experts expect more stores to shutter. Conditions are ripe for retailers looking to grow, including ample real estate options, cheaper or more flexible rents and consumers willing to spend.

Conditions are ripe for growth

"We're seeing great success in stores as they open up. People want to get shopping again," said Jen Foyle, global brand president of Aerie and chief creative officer for parent AEO.

Indeed, legacy brick-and-mortar apparel retailers such as American Eagle's Aerie, Express and David's Bridal see opportunities to expand this year. American Eagle in particular

is aiming to open around 60 Aerie stores in 2021 in addition to about 30 locations for its activewear business, Offline, a sub-brand of Aerie.

"It's a good time to not only support our mall-based friends but also grow our footprint in Aerie," Foyle said. "Physical stores are still equally as important because we have two fit-intensive businesses."

In fact, customers who shop both in-store and online are American Eagle and Aerie's best customers, Foyle said. "We still have new markets to enter," she explained. "Once we open, we see a nice play on the digital side. The effort there is to open the market from an omnichannel perspective."

Stores remain an important touch point

Meanwhile, David's Bridal, which emerged from bankruptcy just over two years ago only to see the number of weddings fall by between 40% and 60% in 2020, is also eyeing growth via brick and mortar.

"We know we've got markets in the U.S. where there's an opportunity to do service," Jim Marcum, the retailer's CEO, said.

Though ecommerce played a dominant role last year, physical stores remain important for a retailer like David's Bridal, where in-store

fittings and customer service play a crucial role in the overall business.

That's particularly true as pandemic-related restrictions ease and weddings return, with pent-up demand boosting sales.

Even Gap, which was scaling back its physical presence, plans to open between 30 and 40 Old Navy stores per year in small, underserved markets, while adding 20 to 30 locations per year for its Athleta banner for a total of 100 new stores, according to the retailer.

Perfect time to test new concepts

With Express close to completing the closure of the 100 stores it said it would mothball at the beginning of 2019, the retailer is now turning its attention to "fleet optimization," CEO Timothy Baxter said. This includes opening seven or eight more test stores for its new Express Edit format by the end of the year as the retailer figures out how to reach customers differently in the future.

The new format, which may be a harbinger of where apparel stores in general are headed, is less than half the size of an average Express location. It also has a smaller product assortment curated to local tastes, is primarily situated in non-mall locations, has a shorter term lease and is cheaper to build due to its simpler design.

"It's not really about the physical store being a showstopper; it's about the product really showing up in the location," Baxter said. "The idea is to be able to reach customers where they are," targeting shoppers who don't make it to malls as often.

The shorter-term leases give Express more of an ability to test and learn, he said.

"I do think opportunities will present themselves very differently than they have in the past due to the amount of available real estate, particularly in cities like New York," Baxter noted. Express is currently looking for new locations in New York and the surrounding areas to reestablish the brand's presence after permanently closing its Fifth Avenue, Madison Avenue and Manhattan Mall locations.

"It's understanding how our consumers want to use and interact with physical locations, but it's also very strategic for us in terms of building brand relevance, acquiring new customers and getting a greater share of wallet from our existing customers," Baxter explained. "Stores are still a great way of marketing the brand."

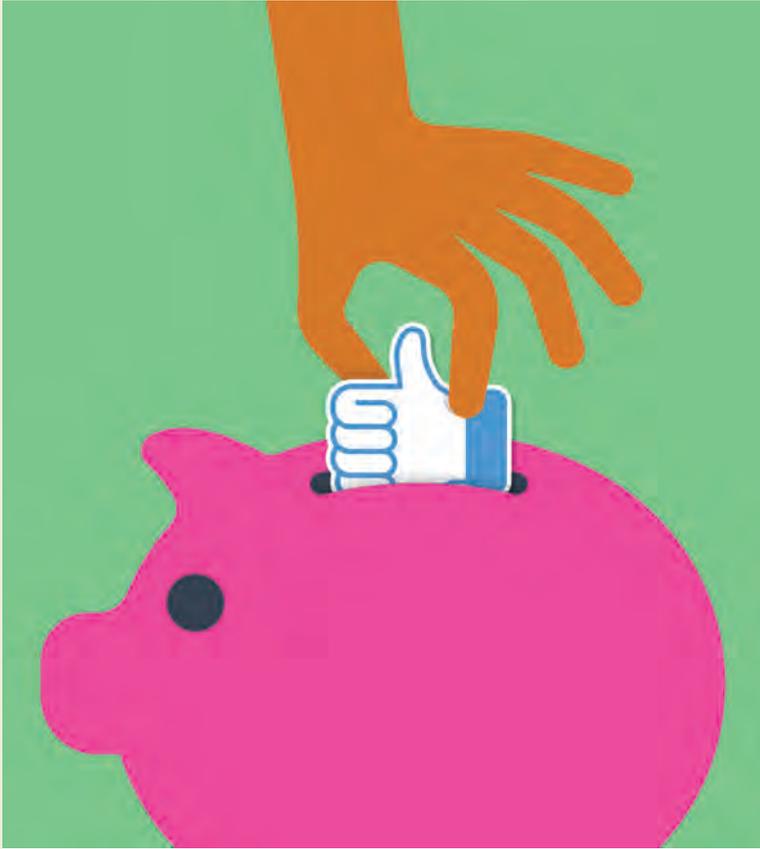


Activewear label **Offline**, a sub-brand of intimates banner Aerie, plans to open about 30 stores this year.

David's Bridal sees an opportunity this year to add physical locations, which remain central to the retailer's provision of high-touch customer service.



RICHARD COLLINGS IS A RETAIL REPORTER AT ADWEEK. HE PREVIOUSLY REPORTED ON RETAIL AND CONSUMER PRODUCTS AT PUBLICATIONS SUCH AS THE DEAL AND THE STREET. @RICHCOLLINGS



Everyone's an Influencer. Now What?

OVER TIME, AD REVENUE WILL BECOME A LESS RELIABLE SOURCE OF INCOME.

BY JAMES CADWALLADER

Everything most likely has been, or will be, democratized by the internet. The same can be said about status.

Pre-internet, the concept of status was more polarized. You either had it or you didn't. A handful of celebrities, mostly actors, TV stars, musicians, authors and the odd business personality, boasted notoriety. It was incredibly difficult to build back then. The walled gardens of traditional media kept the barriers to entry high, and the only way to build status outside of the arts was by writing columns, making TV appearances or signing book deals. It was a slow and painstaking process.

Status as a concept was much more abstract 30 years ago than it is today, when someone's status can be tangibly measured by followers and engagement on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, Twitter and YouTube.

Today, we live in a world where 24.3% of Instagram's 1 billion monthly active users have over 100,000 followers, and close to 5 million accounts have over 1 million followers. It has become easier and faster than ever to achieve status. Traditional institutions like WME, CAA and UTA are laser-focused on signing and repping new social media talent and generating huge revenues in return.

This shift has only been accentuated by the emergence of TikTok, a platform that prides itself on creating fame overnight due to its "lucky dip," algorithm-driven "For You Page" feature, which can take a "nobody" and catapult them into superstardom almost instantly. Charli D'Amelio, who became the poster child of overnight celebrity when she burst onto the TikTok scene, gained 100 million followers in just over a year.

The future of social media

Being an influencer today typically means regularly posting content to keep a fan base engaged and then monetizing that audience with an array of slightly arbitrary revenue streams such as merchandise lines, advertising deals and maybe a Patreon subscription for die-hard fans.

As more Gen Zers gain access to smartphones, the supply of influencers is only going in one direction: up. Last year, a reported 86% of young people said they want to be a social media influencer. Having status creates a huge opportunity—irrespective of how one chooses to use it—and Gen Z clearly understands the value and wants to take advantage of it.

With more people creating content than ever in an arms race to build status, it doesn't take an economic genius to predict that this ever-increasing supply of influencer inventory will eventually have an impact on the rates charged for sponsored posts. Advertisers are already swamped with choice, and it's only increasing. It is therefore

'As more Gen Zers gain access to smartphones, the supply of influencers is only going in one direction: up.'

likely that over time, advertising revenue will become a less reliable source of income for influencers.

Worth building the status

Influencers become self-contained businesses in their own right, building products, services and brands that leverage status to grow big, fast.

YouTube star Logan Paul sells \$5 million worth of NFTs directly to his audience in a day, while YouTuber MrBeast set up a wildly successful ghost kitchen on a national scale. And 19-year-old TikTok star Josh Richards used his teen-icon status to launch a production studio with Mark Wahlberg.

As we see influencers become businesspeople, we will also see businesspeople become influencers. Savvy entrepreneurs are realizing the benefits of social media status to provide a powerful business advantage: Elon Musk now has the 25th-most-followed Twitter account in the world, with just shy of 50 million followers, and he uses his platform daily to build buzz around his businesses in real time. Dave Portnoy, founder of Barstool Sports, has become arguably more influential as an individual than the media company he built.

Ten years ago, the term influencer was virtually nonexistent, so we are still in the early stages of understanding what it means to be one and how to draw value from having unfiltered access to the eyes and ears of millions of people. As this marketplace evolves, the focus will shift from the act of influencing itself to the utility of status. I'm excited to see today's young, bright minds utilize the power of democratized status to propel their success.



Specs

Claim to fame

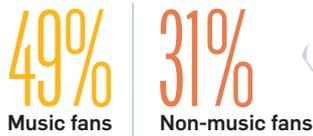
James Cadwallader is co-founder and chief creative officer at Kyra Media. Cadwallader is obsessed with TikTok, sometimes spending five hours a day on the platform.

Base New York

ILLUSTRATION: VLADST/GETTY IMAGES

DATA POINTS

Music fans say they will return to live events/experiences within a month or sooner after being fully vaccinated.



Music fans plan to attend as many experiences/events as possible even if only a casual fan/mildly interested.



Summer of Experiential

COOPED-UP CONSUMERS ARE CHOMPING AT THE BIT TO ATTEND EVENTS AGAIN. **BY NICOLE ORTIZ**

After the CDC's recent announcement that vaccinated people don't need to wear masks indoors anymore, the live events space is having its reckoning as it determines how to safely open again.

According to data from experiential agency Momentum Worldwide, which polled more than 1,700 people in early April, music fans in particular cannot wait to head back to indoor concerts and other events, with 49% saying they would return to experiential events within a month of being vaccinated. They're two times more likely than non-music fans to participate in experiences that push them out of their comfort zones (45%) or challenge them to try something new (52% compared to 30%). But that doesn't mean they aren't also open to hybrid models, with 54% saying they like the flexibility of being able to choose how they'll enjoy an event.

According to Chris Weil, chairman and CEO at Momentum, "Brands have the opportunity to enhance and engage with a captive audience like never before as long as they truly understand how music fans' focus has shifted during the pandemic."

In fact, this demographic is even saving up their hard-earned money for upcoming shows. Music fans are more likely to try new experiences, attend events more frequently and spend more money than their non-music-loving counterparts, the research says.

They have realized how much they have missed events.

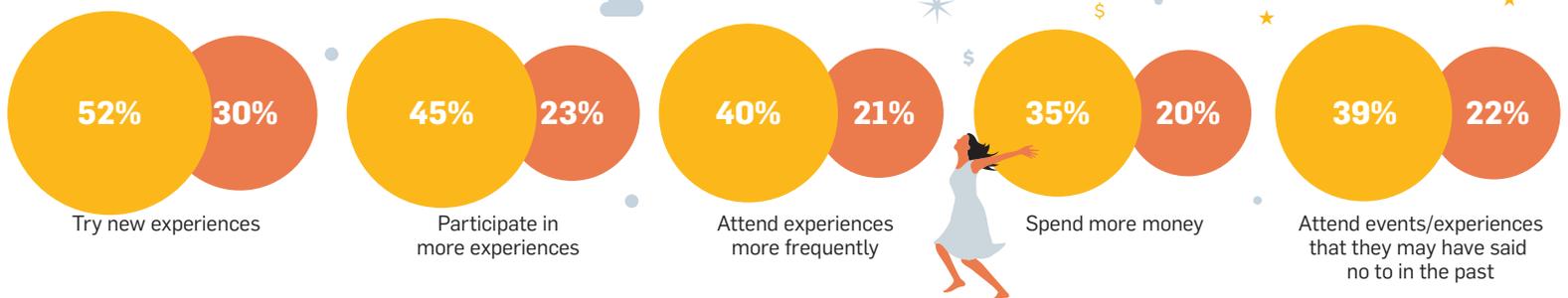


They can't wait to spend money on fun, exciting things that get them out of the house.



Music fans are significantly more likely than non-fans to want to go out and embrace life after a year of lockdown:

● Avid music fans ● Non-music fans



They'll be hosting parties/barbecues this summer.



Music fans are more likely to seek out Instagrammable moments.



INFOGRAPHIC: CARLOS MONTEIRO; SOURCE: MOMENTUM WORLDWIDE

INNOVATORS

KEN GIBBS

HEAD OF SERIES SOCIAL AT AMAZON

By Julian Gamboa

How did you get to where you are today? Any noteworthy “aha” moments along the way? Through hard work and help. As a young person, I had a tireless work ethic but no idea what the path to where I am now looked like. I was lucky enough to meet good people along the way, like [former vp of commercial partnerships at Universal Music Group] Theda Sandiford, [former evp of Warner Music Group] Kevin Liles and others, who were kind enough to help me see those paths. I think the leaders that recognized my work ethic and talent took steps to put me in certain rooms and introduced me to certain people [and] helped me mold and focus my work ethic.

What new or up-and-coming innovation are you most excited about? How will it change the future of marketing? [Artificial

You need to contribute to the conversation on social, as opposed to interrupting it.

intelligence because] it's not the best consumer experience right now for people to have their heads buried in their phones, especially when it stops them from socializing with people in their physical presence.

As social media marketers, we're focused on generating more

evidence of individual engagement on the platform. AR could allow us to create marketing experiences that allow fan communities to engage and socialize in real life, while still creating compelling content they will want to share.

What's one piece of work from your career that you're proudest of? When I got the entire red carpet of the Soul Train Awards to do the mannequin challenge, including the host Erykah Badu. When you're leading social for a brand, you're often bombarded with ideas because everyone is on social and wants to contribute to the latest trend. This was a rare opportunity to have everyone involved in a social stunt that was able to build long lead awareness for the show on social, but also be integrated into the cable broadcast.

Was there ever a time where you questioned your career path?

Yes. I walked out of school into an incredible startup situation where we were acquired and got relocated to [New York]. Within months, almost the entire team was let go and new leadership brought in. I was one of the few remaining original team members and an anomaly. I was terrified that I'd find myself without a job and be forced to go home to Boston.

I doubled down on proving my worth to new leadership, who were traditional journalists without much knowledge of digital strategy, which I could offer. Not only did it work, but I learned new things from them and [was] eventually promoted.

How do you pick and develop the talent on your team?

I look for people who have an organic love, understanding and curiosity for social media, and then work with them to understand how all elements of that love translate into the business. The social space is in a constant state of change, and I think it's important to find people who are intrigued by that.

What is one thing marketers who are not in social should know about?

The audience has flocked to social media to escape the traditional methods of marketing and advertising. You need to contribute to the conversation on social, as opposed to interrupting it as you do on TV, print and radio.

What's the best advice you've ever received? Did something great? Do it again. Consistency is one of the most important things in business.

INSIDE THE BRAND SERIES

CMO MOVES

INNOVATORS

WOMEN TRAILBLAZERS

GEN ZEOS

CHALLENGERS

MENTORSHIP

SEE THE LATEST ON ADWEEK.COM.

PRESSURE AND PERMISSION TO EVOLVE AS A CMO

SADIRA FURLOW

HAPPY MONEY CMO ON TRUSTING THE LEADERS WHO PUSH YOU AND MANAGING REMOTE TEAMS.

BY HEIDE PALERMO



EMBRACE THE PRESSURE AND PERMISSION TO EVOLVE

Being a CMO is different for everyone. I don't know if there are too many roles or positions out there that are as dynamic as the CMO role. What I've come to learn and love about the CMO role is the pressure and permission to evolve. You've got the pressure because you're dealing with a consumer, a business and the role marketing plays in terms of the accountability for growth. And then the permission because the space and the consumers are dynamic. I don't know any other role where you get the gift of both permission and pressure.

BUILD A ROBUST REPUTATION

In my five years at PepsiCo, I had five roles across three divisions. What led me there was raising my hand and saying, "Yeah, I'll take on that crazy challenge." As I've done that, I've built a reputation around being a bit of a utility player. I have a robust set of skill sets that can be applied to a variety of challenges. When you think about the breadth and scope of responsibility in a CMO role, you really need this multidisciplinary background and these experiences to continue delivering on the pressure of changing to keep up with consumers.

TRUST THE LEADERS WHO BELIEVE IN YOU

There are times where you find leaders who see your potential and they see your capabilities and strengths before you do, and they take chances on you. They put you in positions that stretch you and make you uncomfortable. It wasn't just me raising my hand at PepsiCo—it was also those leaders bringing the opportunity to me. Having that conviction and belief is equally important because there will be others who see things in you that you don't see in yourself. We sometimes need those people to push or pull us into those [roles].

TUNE INTO CUSTOMER CONVERSATIONS

In terms of understanding what our voice was, one of the things I noticed was how much conversation is happening around money. Everyone had a recipe for how to hack debt. It's like having a recipe for meatloaf. And once you have gone through the process of being in and getting out of debt, you want to tell everyone about it. That was a big part of [figuring out] our recipe: What are our hacks for helping people? We're also normalizing conversations on money. People want to have a better experience. We want to be a part of the solution and those conversations.

PULSE CHECK TEAM MOTIVATION

I've never come into a new role or organization in a remote environment. How do you keep a pulse on your people? Because you don't get to see if someone is struggling; you always see what is presented on Zoom. I've instituted as a part of my Monday weekly meeting a pulse check and have people (including myself) drop emojis in the chat box. And we use the emojis to facilitate discussion and for me to understand where someone's mindset might be from week to week without it feeling so rigid. It's really helped open up more dialogue and discussion.

CHECK OUT THE CMO MOVES PODCAST AT [ADWEEK.COM/CMOMOVES](https://adweek.com/cmomoves) 

CREATIVE 100

NOW IN ITS SEVENTH YEAR, ADWEEK'S CREATIVE 100 IS AN ANNUAL CELEBRATION OF TODAY'S MOST FASCINATING AND ENVIABLE CREATIVE PROFESSIONALS, RANGING FROM INFLUENTIAL ICONS TO EMERGING GAME-CHANGERS. OUR EDITORS NEVER HONOR THE SAME PERSON TWICE, GUARANTEEING THAT EACH YEAR'S LIST OFFERS A TOPICAL ARRAY OF NAMES YOU SHOULD KNOW. HERE'S A LOOK AT THIS YEAR'S CREATIVE 100:

Leo's Trio



Kadeem Roper
Copywriter



Chaka Sobhani
Global CCO



Kristen Walters
Senior Art Director

**Congratulations for being named
Adweek Creative 100 honorees**

Leo Burnett



RUFFIN PHOTOGRAPHED
IN NEW YORK IN MAY 2021.

JUST RUFFIN IT

THE COMEDIAN'S UNCONVENTIONAL APPROACH TO LATE NIGHT MADE THE AMBER RUFFIN SHOW AN UNEXPECTED HIT—SURPRISING EVEN RUFFIN HERSELF.

BY KELSEY SUTTON • PHOTOGRAPHED BY JOSHUA KISSI

AMBER RUFFIN REALLY DIDN'T THINK THIS WAS GOING TO LAST.

In 2019, when the comedian and *Late Night With Seth Meyers* writer got the green light for her own Peacock late-night series, *The Amber Ruffin Show*, it was hard to ignore that late-night shows on streaming services don't exactly have a stellar track record of success. Shows like *The Break with Michelle Wolf* and *Patriot Act with Hasan Minhaj* didn't find lasting traction on Netflix. But Ruffin, ever the optimist, figured she'd have fun with it anyway.

"Let's be honest, many late-night shows get created just to die," says Ruffin, who leads *Adweek's* Creative 100 Class of 2021. "We thought, we're going to go down swinging. When we started, we thought, all right, party time! Let's ride this until the wheels fall off. And I thought the wheels would have fallen off by now, but they have not. It's still party time."

Ruffin's infectious positivity is present throughout her weekly series, which debuted last September and is designed less around late-night conventions than it is around making her small team of writers—which includes fellow *Late Night* writer Jenny Hagel, Demi Adejuyigbe, Shantira Jackson and Dewayne Perkins—laugh. While the show is boisterous and silly, it often turns deeply serious, with monologues focused on race and social justice sandwiched between sketches and musical numbers.

That unconventional combination has turned *The Amber Ruffin Show* into one of the most buzzed-about shows on NBCUniversal's 1-year-old streaming service and a success story that has even trickled to linear, where NBC has aired the show a few times after *Late Night With Seth Meyers*. Ruffin, who still works on *Late Night* and also found time to co-write a book with her sister, Lacey Lamar, about Lamar's experiences with racism, chatted with *Adweek* about debuting her series without a live audience, finding ways to show her

viewers she loves them and why she does a double take whenever she is outside Rockefeller Center.

(This interview has been condensed and edited.)

Adweek: How do you balance writing for Seth Meyers' show and also doing your own show every week?

Amber Ruffin: It is not bad. [Head writer] Jenny Hagel and I really thought we could do this show because we write a bunch of sketches every week and there are 14 of us [on the *Late Night* writing staff], and so much of whatever we write is going into the garbage just because of time. We thought if we used just the things we wrote, we could put on a whole show—and it's not just us either. It turns out to be not that heavy of a lift at all, which is pretty surprising. With each show, it gets easier. Soon, we'll just be phoning it in.

"BECAUSE YOU HAVE VISIBILITY, YOU HAVE POWER, AND WE HAVE CHOSEN TO USE THE TYPE OF POWER WE HAVE TO MAKE SURE PEOPLE ARE CARED FOR IN THE TINY LITTLE WAY WE CAN."

How do you decide what goes into your show and what goes into Seth's show?

I give Seth everything I don't like and then I keep everything I do like. Just kidding! I haven't been very intentional with it. If I come up with it on the day where I am supposed to pitch it to Seth, then I'll pitch it to Seth. And if I come up with it the day where we have to pitch, I pitch it to me. I really should put more thought into it. But I think of people as idea fountains. When you're a writer, especially in comedy and sketch, behind every idea is five more

equally hilarious ideas. I don't feel like anything is precious at all. I just pitch everything that I can as soon as I can. I feel like the second you think of it, it starts to die. You've got to get it out real fast. It's like a cake—it can only stay good for a little bit.

So it's no good holding onto this idea for three days until you're ready to pitch it.

No way. I can't stand it. I've got to get it out as soon as I can.

With every episode of the show, you can really tell that you're having a good time—you and [announcer] Tarik Davis are riffing and laughing your way into your next segment. It's infectious. Did you expect you were going to have a live audience when you were thinking about making this show? What has it been like not having an audience?

Initially, we thought we were going to have an audience, but that was way early. Then we thought, we'll do the show when audiences can come back. They're still not back. What does it feel like to have an audience? I've completely forgotten. It feels so natural to not have an audience. It's this private, weird, silly time instead of a big performance. It's like this goofy little playtime, which has informed what the show has become. I am sure if we are still around when audiences come back that the show will change again so we can get the most enjoyment that we can out of having an audience. We're going to chase their laughs, and we're going to chase the audience feelings, whereas we've been chasing our own. Hopefully when the time comes and people come back, we will be so anchored in who we are that the audience will bend to us and we won't have to bend to them.

There are a lot of conventions in late night in terms of the format and the regular segments. How did you

identify what you wanted for your show and what conventions you wanted to turn on their head? You don't have an interview format, for instance. You have a lot of musical numbers.

Our plan was always to have a late-night top of the show and then, after people were convinced that this was a late-night show, to do whatever we want. That's the real reason we have a monologue at all—so that we can set a tone that we can destroy. We do fit in a late-night genre almost, but really, we're just a variety show with a monologue. When you have a monologue, it gives you a lot of leeway. We only pick things that make us laugh or make us feel proud or give us a lot of feelings. We are creating this show from that perspective. What will make us giggle with pride?

"WHAT DOES IT FEEL LIKE TO HAVE AN AUDIENCE? I'VE COMPLETELY FORGOTTEN. IT FEELS SO NATURAL TO NOT HAVE AN AUDIENCE. IT'S THIS PRIVATE, WEIRD, SILLY TIME INSTEAD OF A BIG PERFORMANCE. IT'S LIKE THIS GOOFY LITTLE PLAYTIME, WHICH HAS INFORMED WHAT THE SHOW HAS BECOME."

Throughout each show there are also very serious moments, like your segment on the Derek Chauvin verdict. But then you come back from commercial break with a big smile and you jump right into something silly. Why is it important for you to offer those emotional moments on your show?

We didn't want people to feel gaslit by being an American. When the show started out, we wanted to have fun. Then that became: "We love these people." And then that became: "We want to show these people that we love them." If we want to do that, we have to tell the truth, and we can't let people be gaslit or let their feelings be ignored or believe lies. We like to carve out a piece of the show where we can make sure that we are caring for people as best we can. We can goof around and have fun, and that's nice, but because you have visibility, you have power, and we have chosen to use the type of power we have to make sure people are cared for in the tiny little way we can. That's where those more serious pieces come from.

I never really think about the tone shift that much. I worry about having too many dark or serious or sad things, but I don't worry about shifting from thing to thing. If you're a Black person walking through America, you're like, "Oh, my gosh, this is my favorite song." And as you press play, "Oh, I just got a notification from CNN that the cops have murdered another child." All of these things happen to us all at once all day, and it's weird to pretend like it doesn't.

2020 was such a difficult year for so many reasons. For a lot of people, it just felt like punch after punch was landing. How did you center yourself in your writing sessions to stay laughing?

It wasn't that hard because we're all going through it. It would be different if I was like, "Oh, my favorite uncle died and now I've got to go to work." But all our favorite uncles died! That's what 2020 was. We were all going through the exact same thing, which made it more of a sad camaraderie. We didn't feel like it was a jokeless place to be because we are naturally comedians, and that's how your true feel-

AMBER'S ADVICE COLUMN

WHAT'S THE BEST ADVICE YOU'VE EVER GOTTEN?

[Actress and writer] Christina Anthony once said, "When you look around and you're the only Black person, don't let it scare you. Let it prepare you." She told me that a long time ago and boy, oh, boy! If that little saying didn't come in handy, I don't know what did.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOUR YOUNGER SELF?

I would tell my younger self that the amount of fun she is having is OK, and it comes in handy. I would tell her, "You're never going to believe this, dude, but people are going to pay you to just party down all day, and it's the best." I wouldn't have believed that.

WHAT'S YOUR ADVICE FOR HANDLING PRESSURE (LIKE BEING THE FLAGSHIP TITLE ON A BRAND-NEW STREAMING SERVICE)?

I do live life like we have to have the best time we can possibly have. That, to me, is very important. I think when you start chasing what other people want from you or what people think they want, your work becomes worse.

ings come out. That's the program we're set to. It wasn't different or special. It just became a public, easy way to deal with life, really.

When did you realize that your show was catching on, or are you still realizing it now?

I am still kind of realizing it right now. It feels exciting that we're still here and people seem to like it, so that's great. There is this display in front of Rockefeller Center that says things like: the home of Jimmy Fallon, SNL, Late Night With Seth Meyers. And I would pass that every day for seven years when I went to work. Now it's the home of Late Night, SNL, Jimmy Fallon and Amber Ruffin. That is the coolest thing, and I double take every time I walk by.

What kind of feedback have you gotten about your show? Do you get audience breakdowns or number breakdowns from Peacock?

No one ever gives me a breakdown! Who knows who watches this show. No one has ever said, "Amber, your key demographic is this." I'd probably forget it the second they'd tell me. Once someone did say, "You're doing well." I said, "Do you know the number of people who watch the show?" And they were like, "We don't like to share that." And I was like, "Is it more than 40 people?" And they were like, "Yes, it's more than 40 people!" And I was like, "Great! That's more than an improv show, so I'm doing good."

What are you hoping to do in the future on The Amber Ruffin Show? Are there any topics you haven't covered, jokes you haven't told, things that you want to do on the show that you haven't yet?

No! We would like to continue doing what we're doing and stay open to things that we like. I really thought I was going to sing one song one time and some adult was going to say, "You are not a singer. Please stop it." And no one has! We are drawn to what is the most fun, full stop. I do think the way this ends is a full bar and a karaoke machine. That is the natural evolution of this show.



NBC has aired The Amber Ruffin Show a few times after Late Night With Seth Meyers, for which Ruffin still writes.

GETTY IMAGES

ICONS AND INFLUENCERS

GET TO KNOW THE CELEBRITIES AND SOCIAL MEDIA PIONEERS GETTING AUDIENCES' ATTENTION

LIL NAS X

RAPPER

HITS UPON HITS: After becoming a viral sensation with his song "Old Town Road," which spent the longest time at No. 1 on Billboard's Top 100 list in its history, 22-year-old Lil Nas X seems to reach virality with every new song. He's teasing his latest album with new singles that are continuously topping charts, such as his newest, the raw and honest "Sun Goes Down," and his fiery and saucy "Montero (Call Me by Your Name)," which featured the rapper in thigh-high boots on a stripper pole and giving Satan a lap dance.

CARVING OUT A PATH: Lil Nas X is the only openly LGBTQ+ Black artist to win a Country Music Association Award, and he was also the most nominated male artist for the 2020 Grammys. The rapper came out publicly in 2019 with a tweet, referencing a single from his debut EP that he said was about his sexuality.

MASTER OF MEMES: Not only is Lil Nas X a major fashionista—from his stylish cowboy chic to his "Montero" heels—but he also owns his style in his social media presence, along with embracing whatever memes are born out of it. He understands pop and internet culture enough to stay on top of quickly changing memes and keep his songs and messages ingrained in those areas. —*Nicole Ortiz*



LIL NAS X: CHARLOTTE RUTHERFORD



JASON SUDEIKIS

ACTOR, WRITER AND CO-CREATOR OF TED LASSO

ORIGIN STORY: NBC viewers first saw the character Ted Lasso nearly a decade ago as part of the network's promotion for English Premier League games. Those commercials, featuring then-SNL cast member Sudeikis, laid the foundation for Ted Lasso, the Apple TV+ series, in which Sudeikis stars as a fish-out-of-water American football coach transplanted to the U.K.'s cutthroat pro soccer world.

PANDEMIC BALM: Sudeikis, who recently racked up Golden Globe, Critics Choice and Screen Actors Guild awards for the show's first season, has said he tapped into his nice-guy Midwestern roots and drew inspiration from Obi-Wan Kenobi

for the relentlessly upbeat role. He understands why audiences saw it as TV comfort food when it dropped last August during lockdown. "Hope never goes out of style," he told Entertainment Weekly. "Hope and optimism and empathy have a good exchange rate."

MORE, PLEASE: Sudeikis, whose resume includes a fan favorite stormtrooper cameo in The Mandalorian and movies like Horrible Bosses and We're the Millers, is currently working on Season 2 of Ted Lasso, which debuts July 23, and Apple TV+ has already picked up the underdog comedy through Season 3. —T.L. Stanley

ZIWE FUMUDOH

COMEDIAN AND TV HOST

THE HOTTEST HOT SEAT: Fumudoh's no-holds-barred interview style has put guests like chef Alison Roman, feminist activist Gloria Steinem and New York City Mayoral candidate Andrew Yang in the hot seat—first on the Instagram Live version of her comedy show Baited, which went viral last summer, and now on her own late-night series on Showtime, called Ziwe. Her willingness to prod at the absurdities around racial power dynamics makes her guests squirm while offering some of today's sharpest, funniest social commentary. Her Showtime show, which debuted May 9, goes a step further. In it, she explores beauty standards in a plastic surgery clinic, analyzes what it means to be a "Karen" and creates pop songs based on Reaganomics and the infantilization of women.

BEHIND THE SCENES: While her on-air persona is intimidating, pointed and searingly funny, Fumudoh tells Adweek her personal mantra is much calmer: "I am at peace." The new show was filmed at a breakneck speed, which meant that "time is not a luxury we have," she says. "I have learned to pick my battles and not sweat the small stuff. 'I am at peace' means that I accept things as they are."

ADVICE FOR ASPIRING CREATORS: "Create what you want and invest in yourself. It took years before anyone noticed the work I had been doing. But had I not been refining my voice over time, I would not be prepared to have an audience on this scale." —Kathryn Lundstrom



BOSCO: JEFF VESPA

ARTISTS AND AUTHORS

DISCOVER THE WRITERS AND VISUAL CREATORS MAKING SENSE OF AN INCREASINGLY COMPLEX WORLD

BRITTANY BOSCO

MUSICIAN, CREATIVE DIRECTOR, ENTREPRENEUR

CREATING HER OWN SPACE: Known in the music world simply as BOSCO, she has launched a creative agency, a record label and released two of her own albums in the past five years. As a fashion design student at the Savannah College of Art and Design years ago, she noticed that Black women artists were often pigeonholed into a few predetermined careers. "Either you do fashion, you do hair, you be a nurse. I didn't know what it meant to do branding and art direction and creative direction and marketing and ideation," she says. Starting her agency, Slug Global, was initially a way to bring together like-minded artists to carve out a space for collaborative, creative ideas.

REIMAGINING THE MAKEUP OF THE CREATIVE AGENCY: Despite its close working relationship with big-name brands like Instagram, Foot Locker and Snap, Slug is "not a traditional agency at all," Bosco says. "I needed to create a universe and a world that I felt like I could thrive in and that creates a sustainable ecosystem of artists that just really help each other."

EXPERIENTIAL WITH A PURPOSE: Over the next five years, Bosco hopes to redefine the purpose behind brand activations—using them to remodel playgrounds and parks in underserved neighborhoods. Rather than just building activations that are "cool for the moment," she says she wants to use them to enact "environmental justice and green access for marginalized neighborhoods."—K.L.

JONNY SUN

AUTHOR, TV WRITER AND ARTIST

WRITING OUT HIS FEELINGS: In April 2021, multitalented Canadian Sun saw the publication of his latest book, *Goodbye, Again*, a collection of personal essays, poems and illustrations “that circles more ephemeral ideas of liminality, displacement, identity and memory,” Sun tells Adweek. The book has already been included on bestseller lists for *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, the *Los Angeles Times* and more. His first published book was *Everyone’s a Liebn When Ur a Liebn Too*, an illustrated work that followed a character he created on Twitter: an alien tweeting about its journey navigating life around humans.

MAKING HIS DREAMS COME TRUE: Sun says he always dreamed of being an artist and writer, and that when his works were noticed, he already had an idea of the type of creator he wanted to be. He is also currently a doctoral candidate at MIT, where he studies virtual places and online communities, which inspired his 2018 *The Laughing Room* exhibit, and he was also a writer for the sixth season of Netflix’s *BoJack Horseman*.

ADVICE FOR ASPIRING CREATORS: “Find out what you genuinely care about and are interested in, and hone that—understand why it interests you, what about it makes you excited and how it was made to make you excited.” —*N.O.*



KENNEDI CARTER

PHOTOGRAPHER

A BOLD DEBUT ON THE GLOBAL STAGE: The latter half of 2020 saw Kennedy Carter, at just 21 years old, become the youngest photographer to ever shoot a *British Vogue* cover—and of Beyoncé, no less. Though the photographer herself said it felt as if the opportunity had “dropped out of the sky,” in actuality, her portfolio of Black portraiture made her perfect for the job, as her work frequently centers a Southern narrative and facets of the Black experience that often go unnoticed.

WIDENING HER LENS: In one of her most recent series, “Ridin’ Sucka Free,” Carter traveled across the country to capture communities where Black cowboys roam in order to contribute to an otherwise predominantly white narrative. While she has had her art featured in publications like *Vogue* and *Rolling Stone* as well as in solo exhibitions and collaborative print sales, Carter has ultimately avoided museums so her art can remain accessible to the audiences she intends to serve. —*Taylor Dua*

ALEX PRAGER

MULTIDISCIPLINARY ARTIST

RECREATING PRE-PANDEMIC SCENES: As the Covid-19 pandemic took hold, Prager, known widely for her lifelike sculptures captured in photographs and films, adapted to the new reality of lockdown by writing heavily and creating a topical commission for Miller Lite, featuring original sculptures for a caricature of the classic American office party that no one would be experiencing in person. “The ‘people’ became life sculptures,” she says. “We literally built humans because we couldn’t have people next to each other yet. We had to invent new ways to continue making art amid so many uncertainties.”

IGNITING, NOT INSISTING: Though she had worked with miniatures and models before, the commission let her display them for the first time outside of film or photography and gave her a chance to home in on intimate details. “A lot of what I’m talking about in my work is about current culture, challenges we face and questions I have about society—when I provide a seemingly safe space to talk about these things, I feel it’s more effective to ignite conversation and let people have their own ideas sparked rather than being so literal and therefore becoming preachy,” she says. —*T.D.*



SUN: ROZETTE RAGO

EXPLORE THE FULL CREATIVE 100 LIST AT ADWEEK.COM

ICONS AND INFLUENCERS

AMANDA GORMAN
Poel and activist

DWAYNE "THE ROCK" JOHNSON
Actor, athlete and entrepreneur

DWYANE WADE AND GABRIELLE UNION
Power couple

NAS
Rapper, writer and activist

EMERALD FENNELL
Actor, director, writer and producer

IMANE
"POKIMANE" ANYS
Streamer

ARTISTS AND AUTHORS

KADIR NELSON
Artist, illustrator and author

JAMILA ROWSER AND ROBYN SMITH
Comic book writer and artist team

RUTH E. CARTER
Oscar-winning costume designer

ERIN SULLIVAN
Photographer

QUIL LEMONS
Photographer

TEMI COKER
Multidisciplinary artist

MEDIA INNOVATORS

FADIA KADER
Head of media partnerships and creators, Clubhouse

STEPHANIE JENZ
Vp of new series, Wondery

BENJAMIN BLANK
President of media, Warner Music's WEA

MAX FOSTER
Anchor and London correspondent, CNN

BARATUNDE THURSTON
Podcast producer and host, How To Citizen

BRANDON BUTLER
Executive director of Butter. ATL, in-house media channel of Dagger

SHERRELL DORSEY
Founder and publisher, The Plug

AGENCY LEADERS

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Ecd, Grey New York

JOE NICKSON
Co-founder and CCO, ConCreates

DEREK L. WALKER
Owner and instigator, Brown & Browner Advertising and The Creative Kumite

RESH SIDHU
Ecd, Barbarian Group

GARRICK SCHMITT
Evp, global head of experience, Essence Global

KEVIN MULROY
Ecd and partner, Mischief @ No Fixed Address

CHARLES HODGES
Founder and ecd, Arts & Letters Creative Co.

HILLARY COE
Principal, experience, AKQA

WILLIAM GELNER
Founder and CCO, Special Group U.S.

ERIN LYNCH
Svp and ecd, R/GA New York

AMBER JUSTIS
Head of creative, The Many

VISIONARY DIRECTORS

BRYCE DALLAS HOWARD
Director, actor, writer, producer and founder of Nine Muses Entertainment

ANTHONY JASKA
Director and co-founder, Rally Studios

MAYA TABLE
Director, Sam Frank Productions

AGENCY TALENT TO WATCH

JASON GAN AND CLARK CHAMBERLIN
Art director and copywriter, Goodby Silverstein & Partners

SERGIO TAKAHATA
Senior art director, David Miami



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BRANDED CONTENT INNOVATORS

LEARN ABOUT THE CREATIVES WHO SET THE BAR FOR BRANDS WHEN IT COMES TO QUALITY AND ORIGINALITY

KR LIU

HEAD OF BRAND
ACCESSIBILITY,
GOOGLE BRAND STUDIO

A PROVEN CHAMPION: Diagnosed with severe hearing loss at the age of 3, Liu has spent more than two decades amplifying the need for disability inclusion in technology. From working with U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Warren's team to pass the Over-the-Counter Hearing Aid Act in 2016 to speaking at the White House, United Nations and Capitol Hill about why it is crucial to build a more accessible world, Liu has long been a vocal advocate for disability rights.

AN 'INCREDIBLE OPPORTUNITY' AT GOOGLE: Beginning as an adviser to Google in 2018 during the creation of its Live Caption, Liu joined the company as its head of brand accessibility in 2020. "In an industry where media representation of people with disabilities is extremely low, we have an incredible opportunity to champion deep compassion, empathy and understanding of the disability community in our work," Liu says.

ON THE POWER OF STORIES: "Everyone has a story, and storytelling is a powerful way to connect people, change perspectives and create movements. That story could even be your own." —*Sara Century*



FELIPE FERRARI AMBRA

GLOBAL VP, CORONA

GLOBETROTTING CAREER: As a 20-year veteran of Corona parent company AB InBev, Ambra has traveled the world as he climbed the corporate ladder, going from sales trainee in his native Brazil to increasingly higher-profile media and marketing gigs in Peru, Central America and the Caribbean.

GREAT OUTDOORS: Now based in New York on Corona beer, the avid surfer and nature lover greenlit "Rediscover Paradise" last year as a way to stimulate local tourism and boost eco-friendly hotels hit hard by the pandemic. The travel incentive program, and its Wieden+Kennedy Portland-produced short film "Never This Beautiful," generated 10,000 stays in 10 international markets.

PART BRAND, PART PUBLISHER: Ambra led the creation of Corona Studios, the brand's in-house content division. "We challenged ourselves to behave less like a brand and more like a publisher, creating relevant content that our consumers would choose to watch instead of content they were forced to." The eight digital episodes of its first original series, "Free Range Humans," celebrates people who have shed their buttoned-up careers and followed their back-to-nature dreams. The series has logged more than 1 billion media impressions and 70 million views. —*T.S.*



GUILLAUME HUIN

SOCIAL MEDIA DIRECTOR, MCDONALD'S

PROFESSIONAL JOURNEY: Huin says his career has been shaped by "a mix of chance and conviction." Born in a tiny village in northern France, he studied literature and philosophy before attending business school to learn the "underestimated" art form of advertising. McDonald's has always been a part of his career, beginning with his first internship for an agency that designed Happy Meal toys for McDonald's France. Eventually Huin would create a dedicated social media team for the brand's French presence in lieu of its previously fragmented teams, before stepping into the role of social media lead for the U.S. market in 2019.

NEXT-LEVEL PARTNERSHIPS: Hallmarks of his social strategy include steering hype around J Balvin, Travis Scott and BTS' celebrity meals, along with McDonald's free "Thank You Meals" for health-care heroes during the pandemic. Huin and his team have also seen great success embracing the brand's relatable "fan truths"—such as enjoying the last fry in the bag or mistaking the McFlurry spoon for a straw—and reshaping McDonald's social presence to reflect them.

ADVICE FOR MARKETERS AND SOCIAL MEDIA PROS: "A good idea can survive a bad execution. A good execution will not save a bad idea. Focus on the idea first, always." —*Jess Zafarris*

EXPLORE THE FULL CREATIVE 100 LIST AT ADWEEK.COM

MICÖL RANKIN
Associate
creative director,
Majority

ASHLEY RUTSTEIN
Associate
creative director,
LRXD

JORDAN DINWIDDIE
Copywriter,
Wieden+ Kennedy
Portland

ROMEO CERVAS
Creative director,
RPA

ARMANDO SAMUELS
Creative director,
Deutsch L.A.

JED COHEN AND
JEREMY WIRTH
Creative directors,
TBWA\Media
Arts Lab

PILAR A. MCQUIRTER
Cultural
strategy director,
MullenLowe L.A.

MATTHEW LOW AND
KRISTIN CLARK
Associate
creative directors,
BBDO New York

BARRY KATZ AND
ALEX KAPLAN
Freelance group
creative directors

ROGER HAILES
Senior copywriter,
The Martin Agency

MARYBETH LEDESMA
Creative director,
Droga5

CASTRO DESROCHES
Creative director,
Translation LLC

MINA MIKHAEL
Creative director,
Johannes Leonardo

NICK HOWARD
AND NICK STONER
Creative directors,
DDB Chicago

BRANDED CONTENT INNOVATORS

JULIA CAMPBELL
General manager,
The Branded
Content Project

VICTORIA TRAN
Community
director, InnerSloth

JENNIFER COTTER
CCO, Peloton

EVAN WEISSBROT
President, 180
New York

RICARDO
VIRAMONTES
CCO,
The SpringHill
Company

JOSH STEIN
Communications
manager, Xbox

DAVID MA
Director and
food visualist

INTERNATIONAL AGENCY LEADERS

HRAFN GUNNARSSON
Creative director,
Brandenburg

CRISTIANA
BOCCASSINI
Global CCO,
Publicis Italy
and Le Pub

FERNANDO DUARTE
AND HENRIQUE
DEL LAMA
Creative directors,
AlmapBBDO

BADONG ABESAMIS
AND HERBERT
HERNANDEZ
Founding
partners, Gigil

JESSICA APELLANIZ
CCO for
Ogilvy Mexico
and Ogilvy Latam

ERIC SCHOEFFLER
CCO for Germany,
eod for Europe,
Havas Creative

SWATI BHATTACHARYA
CCO, FCB India

NILS LEONARD
Founder and
CCO, Uncommon
Creative Studio

AURÉLIE SCALABRE
AND OLIVIER
AUMARD
Creative directors,
BETC Paris

JYRKI POUTANEN
CCO, TBWA\
Helsinki

ANDRÉ TOLEDO
AND SAULO ROCHA
Ecds, David Madrid

ALICE CHOU
CCO, Dentsu
McGarrybowen
Taiwan

TV AND STREAMING INNOVATORS

JASMYN LAWSON
Content executive,
Netflix

JED MERCURIO
TV writer, producer
and author



Great
TAXIs
need
great
drivers.



Congratulations to Alexis Bronstorph
on being named to the **Adweek Creative 100**.

AGENCY TALENT TO WATCH

KEEP AN EYE ON THESE TALENTS AND DUOS BELOW THE RANK OF EXECUTIVE CREATIVE DIRECTOR

ADAM LOCK

GROUP CREATIVE DIRECTOR, VAYNERMEDIA

RECENT WORK: "The Future Official Sponsors of the NWSL" for Budweiser: "My VaynerMedia team created a campaign that set out to fill the sponsorship gap in women's soccer. We did so by creating nine placeholder products for some of the biggest sponsorship categories in sports, everything from toiletries to timepieces. We developed an online marketplace where people could pledge to purchase our Future Official Products and tag the brands they wanted to fill the vacancy. Thousands of fans ran with the campaign, and in the end, six brands answered the call and became official sponsors for the league. This also contributed to a 19.3% increase to the NWSL's salary cap."

ON GROWING UP IN AUSTRALIA: "Mum and Dad gave me permission to be creative. In fact, they encouraged it by playing along and coexisting in my many made-up worlds. Without this room to be able to dream, draw and make-believe as a kid, I'm not sure I would have maintained my childish wonder and excitement for ideas."

PERSONAL MANTRA: "If your ideas don't excite you, they have no chance with anyone else."
—David Griner



GABRIELLE SHIRDAN

VP AND CREATIVE DIRECTOR, MCCANN NEW YORK

HER SPRINT INTO THE INDUSTRY: "I fell for this industry as a freshman in Philly when I got the opportunity to intern at LevLane. ... I was offered a full-time role and won my first ad award before graduating. After rising from intern to acd and two agencies later, I moved to Brooklyn to work with cultural icon Spike Lee at Spike DDB. I then went to 72andSunny as creative director."

RECENT WORK: "This year, we launched 'Sound It Out,' a national campaign for Ad Council to help kids find the words to express their feelings when talking to their parents about mental health by tapping into a language both parents and kids speak fluently: music. ... This work wasn't for the awards, but for the kid in Brooklyn just trying to tell his father how he feels."

ON ELEVATING BLACK VOICES: Shirdan helped create Ulta Beauty's MUSE platform "to magnify, uplift, support and empower Black voices in beauty. It wasn't just a film, but with a \$25 million commitment in tow, this work is working to shift the narrative in beauty and culture."
—David Griner

LAUREN C. SMITH

GROUP CREATIVE DIRECTOR, 72ANDSUNNY LOS ANGELES

RECENT WORK: "Fantastic Voyage" for Adobe Photoshop: "We were supposed to shoot it in Prague, and the borders closed due to the pandemic literally a day before our shoot. Figuring out how to remote shoot, remote VFX with our post-house Mathematic, remote work with our internal team over Google Hangouts while at home with a toddler and no childcare while also pregnant, as both 72andSunny and Adobe figured out how this remote work was actually going to work, was full of twists and turns. I'm so proud of our team and the Adobe team for putting something so wildly beautiful and creative out into the world given everything thrown our way."

ON CREATING THE ADOBE STOCK FILM FESTIVAL: "We pitched Adobe the idea at the beginning of the pandemic as shoots were canceled and ways of bringing creative ideas to life were challenged. We went to a collection of diverse filmmakers, gave them access to our stock library of footage and music, as well as the creative freedom to tell whatever stories they wanted. It's so rare in this industry to hand over the creative reins and stop creative directing and simply let creativity flourish. What we got was a collection of stories that are poignant, funny, mundane, worldly and weird—so much more than could just come from our brains. It was a wonderfully moving experience to watch them."

ADVICE FOR ASPIRING CREATIVES: "Creativity can be hard. You're not alone. Hit me up if you ever feel alone! And while making great work feels amazing, making great friends feels even better."
—D.G.



WALTERS/ROPER; REMY JAMES



KRISTEN WALTERS AND KADEEM ROPER

SENIOR ART DIRECTOR AND COPYWRITER, LEO BURNETT CHICAGO

RECENT WORK: "Our latest Nintendo project, 'We Play Our Way,' focuses directly on a largely ignored segment of the gaming industry: women," Walters says. "We wanted to authentically capture relatable 'slice-of-life' moments that showcase real, nonaspirational women in a way that hadn't really been done before. And we made sure to commit to that realistic representation and materialized that sentiment in every single step along the way, from the stories we wrote to the talent we selected and even our production team. This campaign was our love letter to women everywhere. We face acute pressure to do it all, but who we are in our everyday lives is enough and worth celebration. I wanted women to see our spots and feel seen, and I definitely think we accomplished that."

GETTING EMOTIONAL: Roper says one of the duo's spots, about a woman's Animal Crossing: New Horizons project, even made Nintendo America president Doug Bowser cry the first time he watched it.

OUTSIDE OF WORK: Roper is also proud of his side project, "It's Still Being Written," an animated ode to human connection created with animator Mélanie Gohin. He created a physical book to accompany the project as well.

SPOOFED ON SNL: The creative pair's campaign celebrating 35 years of Nintendo's Mario Bros. got so much attention, it was even parodied on Saturday Night Live. —*D.G.*

**Congrats,
Frank Cartagena,
on being named
an Adweek Creative
100 honoree!**

You're the best partner
this cookie could ask for.

Except for milk.
Milk first. Then you.



AGENCY LEADERS

THESE BOLD EXECs ARE TAKING RISKS, ACHIEVING RESULTS AND SETTING NEW STANDARDS FOR THEIR CLIENTS AND TEAMS

ALLISON PIERCE

GLOBAL CCO FOR INTEL, VMLY&R

HER CAREER PATH: "I'm a bit of an anomaly in advertising. I decided very early on that I had no interest in city life and instead tried to carve out a career staying in Kansas City. I started at K.C. indie shop Barkely, working on the iconic 'Two Guys' campaign for Sonic Drive-In. When VMLY&R won Gatorade in 2010, I decided to come over and spent three years working on that business, learning a ton in the process. The following years were amazing, winning a lot of VMLY&R's first Cannes Lions. More AOR business was added under my lead, and after winning the Intel pitch, I became one of three execs helping lead that work, and about six months in, I took on the role of global CCO of Intel."

RECENT PROJECT: "Intel wanted to remind people that even with Apple's new release, PCs are more innovative. So our idea was to put them side by side and ask the guy who made us question PCs in the first place: the original Mac guy, Justin Long. The campaign earned 2.7 billion impressions in a matter of hours. This work was truly a group effort, as we were working on a super-tight timeline."

ADVICE FOR ASPIRING CREATIVES: "Don't wait to be handed a great brief. Those don't come to you; you have to create them. Follow the data, find the opportunities, solve the problems with a great idea and then make it the easiest thing in the world to buy." —*Kennyatta Collins*



FRANK CARTAGENA

CCO, THE COMMUNITY NEW YORK

RECENT PROJECT: The Oreo Doomsday Vault, voted by Adweek readers as their favorite ad stunt of 2020. A take on the seemingly impossible, "the idea was to keep Oreos safe from an impending asteroid, scheduled to hit Earth just before Election Day 2020. From a tweet to a client conversation to getting started a few days later, we did the total project in under a month, and we built a real vault in Switzerland. We made a film, made a special Oreo pack to survive extreme temperatures, and most importantly, had fun with Oreo fans."

ON ADVERTISING POST-PANDEMIC: "I believe that good work can happen anywhere now, and that's not something I thought was possible before last year. Now, everyone is equipped to work from everywhere. I'm still excited for people to come together. I miss collaboration and the quickness of being in an office, but we've learned how to make things happen from anywhere this past year and hopefully found the ability to better take care of ourselves in the process."

ADVICE FOR ASPIRING CREATIVES: "Whenever you can, try to follow the work or the creativity, not the money. I think it's important to set yourself up and work for great people at the beginning of your career." —*K.C.*



MO SAID

FOUNDER AND CREATIVE DIRECTOR, MOJO SUPERMARKET

ON GROWING UP IN PAKISTAN: "After 9/11, the world changed for me. My country was fighting a war we had nothing to do with, so movie theaters, concerts, festivals, anything that had to do with creativity was shut down for security reasons. When you live in a world like that, the only way out is to create one. I once made a short film that was set in four different countries and all shot in one house; a piece of grass can be Paris, a driveway can be a street—your world can be whatever you create it to be."

RECENT PROJECT: #SavageNotSorry stories for Savage X Fenty. "We hacked Instagram's 'sensitive content' UX and created a campaign behind warnings of our own. We

created a suite of customizable social content for fans to express their own #SavageNotSorry stories—and it worked, turning a zero-dollar media budget into a massive viral success."

ON CHALLENGES FACING THE INDUSTRY: "Consumers have found a way to circumvent ads entirely, and smart creatives aren't entering the advertising industry. In short, nobody wants to watch ads, and nobody wants to create them."

ADVICE FOR ASPIRING CREATIVES: "Don't try to assimilate into the culture of an agency or this industry. Find an agency that aligns with your beliefs and will encourage you to be yourself." —*K.C.*



COLTRANE CURTIS

FOUNDER AND MANAGING PARTNER, TEAM EPIPHANY

ON THE GROWTH OF AN AGENCY HE FOUNDED IN 2004: "Team Epiphany is a family-owned, influencer-fueled, culture-first marketing agency specializing in brand strategy, experiential, progressive multicultural marketing, influencer integration and strategic amplification for the 21st century. As founder and managing partner, I get the privilege of working across the agency's full portfolio of industry-leading clients and verticals."

RECENT WORK: "At the height of the pandemic in 2020, we worked with Audi to produce one of the first social-distant summer drive-in concerts at Calamigos Ranch in scenic Malibu, Calif. The event offered members of the L.A. community—inclusive of front-line workers, essential workers and influencers across a variety

of industries—a chance to get out of their homes and come together for a socially distanced event. Audi was one of the first brands to use and elevate the concept with a drive-in concert featuring superstar recording artist Kehlani and the brand's fleet of new vehicles. The event secured over 130 million online impressions from leading publications—and over 50 million social media impressions."

ADVICE FOR ASPIRING CREATIVES: "Become cultural experts. There is no substitute for being an active member in culture who fuels progressive, innovative and disruptive movements. You can teach people how to write communication plans, community content calendars and even consumer journeys. But you can't make people active in culture." —K.C.

celebrating

GABRIELLE

one of our favorite muses

Congratulations Gabrielle Shirdan for being honored as Adweek's Creative 100.
Thank you for inspiring us.



MEDIA INNOVATORS

INTRODUCING THE BROADCASTERS, PUBLISHERS AND PODCASTERS RISING TO PROMINENCE IN AN EVER MORE MULTIFACETED FIELD

WHEMBLEY SEWELL

EDITOR IN CHIEF, THEM

COMMUNITY RULES: Since Sewell took the reins at Condé Nast LGBTQ+ title Them in September 2020, finding ways to connect with the audience during the pandemic has been a tough nut to crack. "An essential part of the work we do at Them is rooted in community building for queer folks. I knew Them could find new ways to foster connection and create affirming experiences. From our virtual celebrations to new slates of videos and live shows, it's been a joy to offer moments of much-needed levity to our audience."

ON CULTURALLY NECESSARY STORYTELLING: "It's not always an easy industry to exist in as a young, Black, queer woman. I love that just by showing up exactly as I am, I can help create opportunities and advocate for other people like me."

OPENING UP ACCESS FOR NEW TALENT: "The most profound thing I've seen [from the pandemic] is that opportunities once confined to New York or Los Angeles are now becoming increasingly more available to folks everywhere. That would have made a massive difference to me when I was starting in this field."
—Lucinda Southern



NILAY PATEL

EDITOR IN CHIEF, THE VERGE

TECH TRANSFORMED: Over the past decade, as the tech industry has transformed into the predominant force shaping modern life, Patel has covered it all. In doing so, the co-founder and editor in chief of The Verge has shepherded the publication through its own evolution, from niche sub-brand to authoritative voice on modern technology.

GROWING PRESTIGE: Last year, the House Judiciary Committee cited The Verge's reporting 40 times in its October antitrust report, and the site surpassed a key milestone—1 billion annual pageviews—as readers turned to its award-winning reporting for an intelligible explanation of life on the internet. Under Patel, the publisher received a Webby Award and a Sidney Award last year, and The Verge was named as a finalist for the National Magazine Award and a Pulitzer Prize in Feature Writing.

ON ECCENTRICITY: "The Verge is one of the few publications at its scale that delights in being extremely strange. I hope we get even stranger."
—Mark Stenberg



WILLIAMS: JOSEPH BLAKE



BIMMA WILLIAMS

PODCAST HOST, CLAIMA STORIES

GROWING TOGETHER: Williams merges the passions and driven pursuits of creatives and professionals as the host of Claima Stories, a podcast launched amid the pandemic to help people of color find their dream careers. Claima Stories acts as a network and platform that shares the narratives of those in various fields, including design, creative marketing, media and sound.

MAKING STRIDES: A former Nike marketer, Williams is empathetic to a wide range of barriers to entry that can keep people of color from finding their ideal career paths. Through video conference live panels, podcast episodes and blog content, Claima Stories broadcasts these voices to advise and

inspire others experiencing similar situations, led with the honesty of those connecting over successes and failures.

INVESTING WITH INTENTION: "Now, more than ever, consumers, brands and corporations alike are investing in BIPOC communities with real intention. This, paired with the world reopening, makes me excited about how Claima Stories can assist in preparing our community to best leverage these investments. For Claima, we are set on offering pivotal solutions to emerging and aspiring BIPOC creatives—beyond just storytelling—but through marketing solutions, strategic alliances and funding that will assist our audience in growing their business and profits." —*Samer Khudairi*

LAUREN

2021 CREATIVE 100



CONGRATULATIONS LAUREN SMITH

CREATOR, LEADER, TEACHER, LEARNER, WRITER,
READER, MENTOR, CHEERLEADER, INSPIRER

FROM YOUR 72 CREW

INTERNATIONAL AGENCY LEADERS

INTRODUCING THE TALENTS FROM ABROAD WHO ROSE TO THE OCCASION WITH FRESH IDEAS AND UNFORGETTABLE WORK

ALEXIS BRONSTORPH

CO-CCO, TAXI

BASED IN: Toronto

CAREER PATH: Bronstorph knew she wanted to work in the advertising industry since age 9 while doing voiceover work, and then she dedicated herself to breaking into the industry. "I remember thinking on my first day on the job, 'I better like this because there's no Plan B.'" That first day took place in 2004 at Taxi, where she began as an intern. After stints at Sid Lee and Juniper Park, she returned to Taxi in 2018.

RECENT WORK: Bronstorph worked on a sustainability project for Volkswagen called "The Carbon Neutral Net" to launch the company's all-electric SUV, the I.D.4. This saw the automaker commit to lowering the carbon impact produced by its website by only offering live ASCII text and coding that used over 1.5 million characters to recreate the usual beautiful car imagery of promotional sites while reducing page weight—and its carbon footprint.

GETTING GWYNETH'S ATTENTION: Bronstorph was also involved in the "This Smells Like My Penis" candle created in response to—and released within days of—Goop's "This Smells Like My Vagina" candle. The satirical product, which aimed to draw attention to the gender pay gap in Canada, ended up being discussed by Gwyneth Paltrow herself while appearing on Jimmy Kimmel Live.

ADVICE FOR ASPIRING CREATIVES: "When you do your best, people notice. Do your best. Stay curious. Be resilient. And focus on the work." —*Stephen Lepitak*



CHAKA SOBHANI

GLOBAL CCO, LEO BURNETT

BASED IN: London

CAREER PATH: Having grown up in the south of England in Devon and Epsom, Sobhani was used to the quiet life before moving to south London and eventually entering the advertising industry. She describes those differences in lifestyle as having shaped her transition "from being the outsider as the only brown kid in my school to moving and finding my tribe through bunking off school and sneaking up to London." Sobhani was involved in setting up ITV's in-house creative studio as its first creative director before moving to indie agency Mother in a content development role and then onto Leo Burnett London in 2016.

GOING WORLDWIDE: In May, Sobhani was promoted to global chief creative officer, tasked with upholding the agency's global standards and helping identify new creative talent. Despite taking on

an international role, Sobhani will also continue to hold the post of chief creative officer at Leo Burnett London.

RECENT WORK: "Inner Child," the Christmas 2020 campaign from McDonald's U.K., featured the tale of a teenage boy who still yearns for the childhood wonder of the season but holds back, thinking he's too grown up. Sobhani, who has been very close to the client during her time at the agency, says the animated tale "shows the true power of simple and heartfelt storytelling told through beautiful craft."

ADVICE FOR ASPIRING CREATIVES: "Be tenacious. Be resilient. Be curious. And make, make, make. We are lucky enough to live in a time when you don't have to ask permission to create and get your ideas out in the world, so have fun playing and getting stuff out there." —*S.L.*



XOLISA DYESHANA

CHIEF CREATIVE DIRECTOR, JOE PUBLIC UNITED

BASED IN: Johannesburg

CAREER PATH: Dyeshana began his career with FB Cape Town, spending four years there before moving to formerly IPG-owned agency Joe Republic as a creative director. He became a shareholder when the agency's founders bought it back in 2009, then became its executive creative director two years later. Over the past decade, he has been elected chairman of South African advertising awards initiative The Loeries, chairman of the country's Creative Circle and a member of the One Club International board.

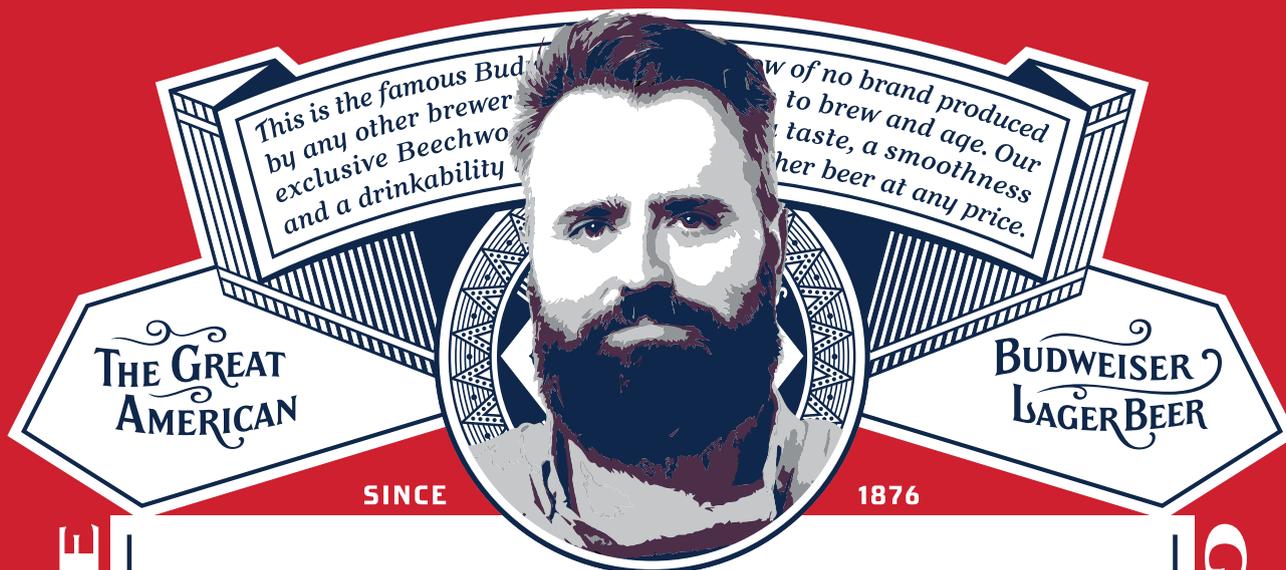
RECENT WORK: Of "Secrets" for Nedbank, a major banking brand in South Africa, Dyeshana says, "The insight around the piece is that in South Africa, money is a taboo subject that no one likes

to talk about, and yet as a nation, we have some of the worst money-saving habits. So as the bank that wants to encourage people to 'See Money Differently,' we created a movie called 'Secrets.' It was advertised all over the country, unbranded, and the trailer led viewers to believe that there was a new blockbuster coming about people who had secrets to hide. We revealed the reality of the stunt in cinemas, movie premiere-style, where a 15-minute film was shown, revealing at the end that it was in fact a campaign for Nedbank."

ADVICE TO ASPIRING CREATIVES: "Make yourself heard and seen. The industry needs you. The world is changing, and you should be a part of that change. Most importantly, bring that change into the work you do." —S.L.

THIS BUD'S FOR ADAM

CONGRATULATIONS FROM YOUR FRIENDS AT BUDWEISER.



E
Z

Adam Lock

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E



CHLOÉ ZHAO

FILMMAKER

HOLLYWOOD BREAKTHROUGH: The Beijing-born writer-director racked up scores of industry awards for *Nomadland*, with the crowning glory being a history-making twofer on Oscar night: Zhao was named best director—the first woman of color and the second woman ever in the awards' 93-year run—and the film, which she produced, won best picture.

DOCUMENTARY MEETS FICTION: Zhao, who studied with Spike Lee at NYU's film school, previously made two critically lauded features, *Songs My Brothers Taught Me* and *The Rider*, developing a style the L.A. Times calls "a marriage of investigative journalism and collaborative storytelling." Often likened to a modern-day *Grapes of Wrath*, *Nomadland* continued Zhao's penchant for casting untrained non-actors in major roles and using a hyper-realistic shooting approach. "I'm looking for some kind of truth," she told NPR. "I'm looking for some kind of authentic moments."

A NEW CINEMATIC UNIVERSE: The next project for Zhao is light-years from her gritty trilogy of the American West. She directs the star-studded \$200 million Marvel action flick *The Eternals*, which launches in November with A-listers Angelina Jolie, Salma Hayek and Kumail Nanjiani. The sneaker-loving California transplant also has lined up a Universal adaptation of the classic monster drama *Dracula*, described as a futuristic sci-fi western. —T.S.



JOSHUA KISSI

DIRECTOR, DIVISION 7

ON WHAT SHAPED HIS CAREER: "I spent most of my life growing up in the Bronx. The Bronx comes with many assumptions but not many truths. I believe stories always could change the world, which sparked the conviction in me to tell them. Coming through the ranks as a photographer-turned-director has made me much more resourceful, composing and understanding my framing and storytelling."

RECENT WORK: "Business As Usual" with Google: "I've always wanted to create personal work that brands could support, and this project was the perfect example of this. 'Business As Usual' is a short film inspired by the need to fall into societal pressure or choose yourself in everyday life, driven by skateboarding."

REVIVING A FORGOTTEN ERA: "A Beach of Our Own" with The New York Times "follows the history of African Americans in Sag Harbor, starting from the early 1800s. I felt like I had the opportunity to uncover a story a lot of the country had no idea about, and even the Black community had minimal references."

ADVICE FOR ASPIRING FILMMAKERS: "The world is waiting for your voice to be heard no matter how layered or complex it is." —K.C.

MEET THE FILMMAKERS BEHIND SOME OF TODAY'S MOST INVENTIVE STORYTELLING

VISIONARY DIRECTORS

TV AND STREAMING INNOVATORS

MODERN TELEVISION'S CREATIVE TALENTS WHO ROSE TO THE OCCASION WHEN AUDIENCES CRAVED COMFORT, EMPATHY AND DISTRACTION

STEVEN CANALS

CO-CREATOR AND EXECUTIVE PRODUCER, POSE

ENDING AN ERA: As FX's award-winning drama *Pose* progresses with its third and final season, Canal's impact on the industry as co-creator and executive producer is clearer than ever. Though the show's finale will undoubtedly leave a sizable void in the TV landscape, Canal's penchant for deeply human storytelling will get a second life through his development deal with 20th Century Fox TV.

POSE'S IMPACT: As the series nears its conclusion, *Pose* remains the first and only scripted show of its kind to center on a predominantly trans and queer cast. In addition, it has received critical acclaim for its thoughtful and varied portrayals of individuals living with HIV and AIDS—especially when it came to people of color. The individual stories of the show's stars Blanca (Mj Rodriguez) and Pray Tell (Billy Porter) showed a range of experiences between those living with the disease, working against a dehumanizing stigma that has followed the community for decades. "To me, that's the beauty of this show," Canal recently told *Digital Spy*. "I hope that it inspires other storytellers to say, 'Yeah, we may have seen a version of that story before, but there are other versions to tell.'" —Shannon Miller



MICHAELA COEL

TV WRITER, CREATOR AND ACTRESS

MASTERING MULTIPLE PIVOTS: Coel didn't exactly abandon her comedic roots while creating, writing and starring in HBO's critically beloved drama *I May Destroy You*. However, by choosing to mine her own traumatic experience with sexual violence in order to tell a nuanced story about the culture of consent, she did flex her chameleon-like ability to excel in any genre, solidifying her as an unstoppable talent. The series also marked the beginning of a budding creative relationship with HBO. Not only did the multi-hyphenate turn down a million-dollar offer from Netflix in order to retain ownership of her work, but Coel's comedic series *Chewing Gum*—which was originally billed as a Netflix Original Series—also found a new home with HBO Max in February.

ON AVOIDING "HEROIC" TITLES: "I stay away from branding myself as some sort of hero, because I think it can lead you into trouble," Coel told *Elle Magazine*. "I like to do what I can. If I can make a show, it doesn't strain me to create 268 jobs. If I do this the best I can ... then I've contributed to what's happening here, and it's not breaking my back." —S.M.

JAC SCHAEFFER

PRODUCER, DIRECTOR AND SCRIPTWRITER

MAKING MARVEL MAGIC: Schaeffer was the showrunner for this year's breakout streaming sensation, *WandaVision* on Disney+, and co-wrote the story for one of the summer's most anticipated movies, *Black Widow*.

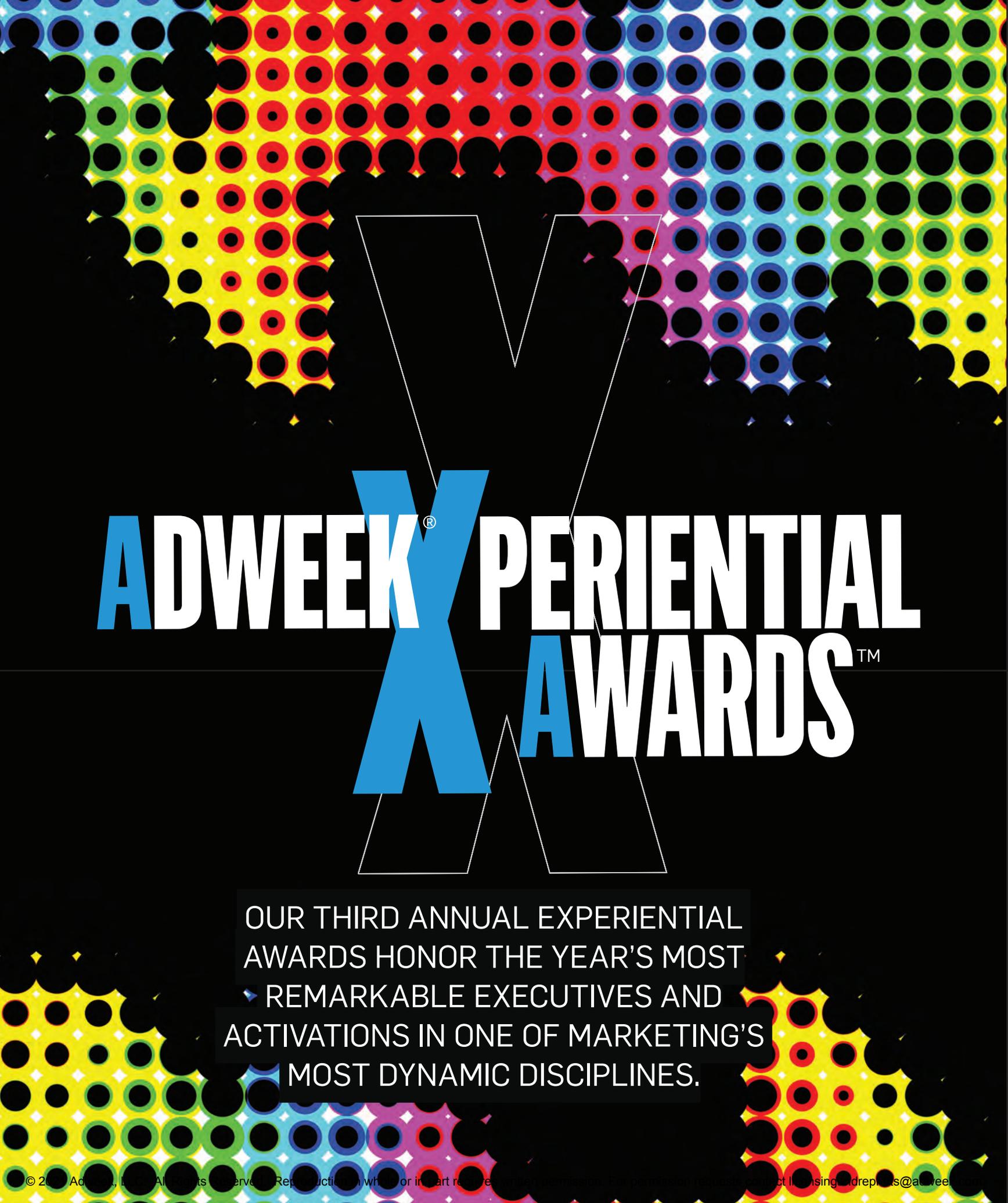
INSPIRATION THROUGH COLLABORATION: "I had always thought of myself as an individual sort of a writer, but it was on *WandaVision* that I learned how phenomenal it is to be at the helm of a truly collaborative, dedicated and talented team. I drew so much inspiration from the *WandaVision* writers—not just for the show but as a person on the planet. I believe a big part of the show's success stems from the good intentions of the people who so lovingly put the story on the page."

HOW QUARANTINE AFFECTED THE WORK: "We hadn't finished filming when the pandemic hit. We shut down for several months and when we resumed shooting, rigorous Covid protocols were put in place. To the credit of the cast, crew and studio, we finished the show safely."

ADVICE FOR ASPIRING WRITERS: "Learn how to receive, process and implement creative notes. The goal is to be able to hear the opinions of others with the least amount of ego interference and then make the best choice for the project. It's not easy and it takes practice, but for screenwriters in the franchise space, it's just as important as raw talent." —Al Mannarino



KISSI: ROG WALKER, ZHAO: GETTY IMAGES; COEL: GETTY IMAGES



ADWEEK[®] EXPERIENTIAL AWARDS[™]

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ACTIVATIONS IN ONE OF MARKETING'S
▶ MOST DYNAMIC DISCIPLINES.

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AIRBNB EXPERIENTIAL BRAND OF THE YEAR

Experiential Activation by a Travel Brand

“Go Near;” Agency: Weber Shandwick West

Best Use of Partnership in an Experiential Activation

“Be Kind, Rewind: A Sleepover at the World’s Last Blockbuster;” Agency: Weber Shandwick West

The idea of any travel brand counting 2020 as a “winning” year would strike even the most wildly confident marketing executive as absurd.

And yet, for Airbnb, 2020 was successful. Proof of that can be found in the company’s December IPO, which opened at \$146 per share, more than double the price it set the day before its market debut.

When Covid-19 hit the U.S. in March 2020, lockdowns became the norm worldwide and the travel industry—which had seen demand grow exponentially since 2014—suddenly seemed all but dead, Airbnb responded directly to the abrupt changes in the way people were defining travel. Flying was out of the question for most consumers. Instead, short car trips were the way to get a break from the isolation and restrictions of life during Covid-19, and the company’s marketing reflected not only these altered travel patterns, but also consumers’ moods and

the need for local experiences.

The past 14 months have been marked by unparalleled loss, fear, uncertainty and discontent, but Airbnb, Adweek’s Experiential Brand of the Year and winner of Experiential Activation by a Travel Brand and Best Use of Partnership in an Experiential Activation, responded to the crises of 2020 with quirky humor grounded in the brand’s core premise: sharing unique travel experiences. The only real difference was distance.

A short, strange trip

While nearly all industries and most media activations faced unprecedented challenges last year, the ability for a travel brand to thrive using experiential marketing was not simply a matter of luck, says Nick Wilkins, communications director for Airbnb, which surmounted these difficulties, he says, by staying true to its brand identity and marketing attitude.

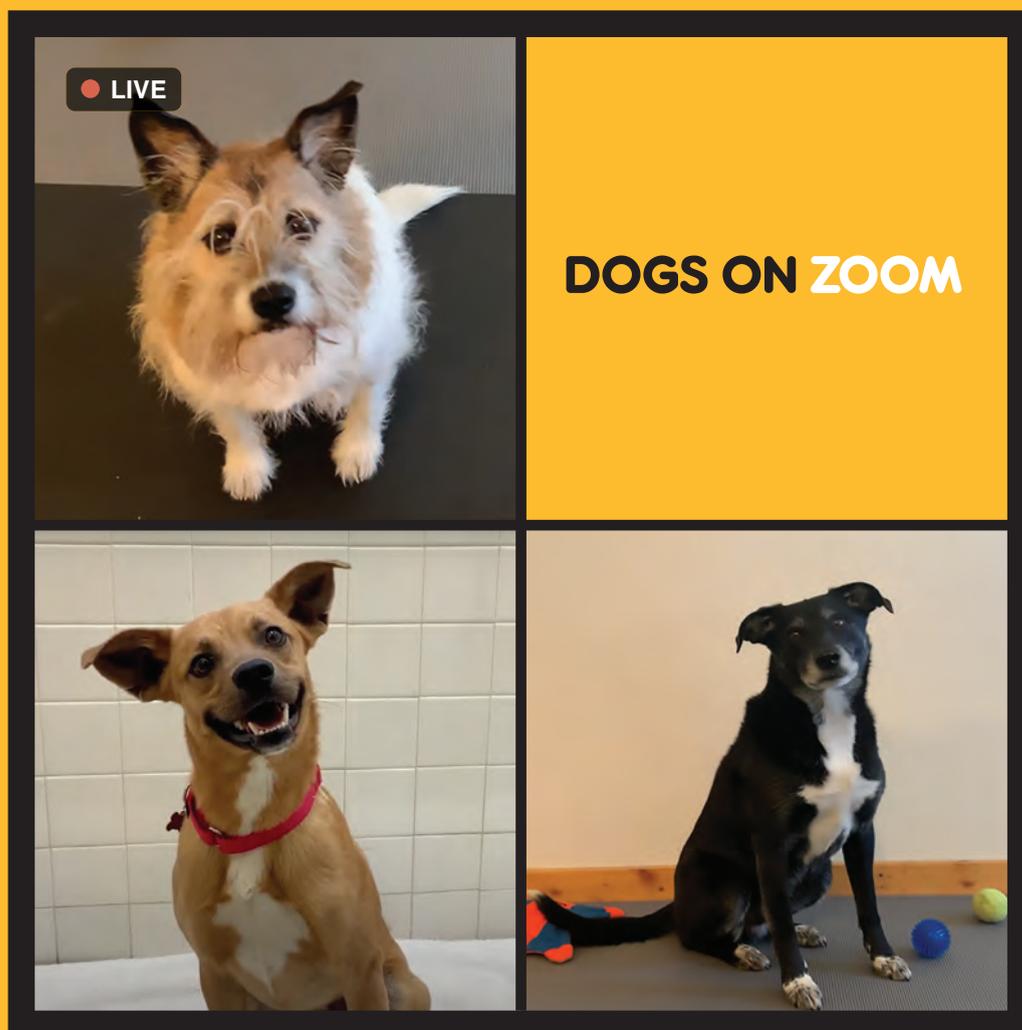
The brand’s positioning of “people belonging everywhere” shifted naturally

to “belonging here.” In the era of social distancing and stay-at-home orders, the typical allure of far-off, short-term rentals in Airbnb members’ dwellings held little appeal. And given state and city governments’ restrictions, travel became more of a hassle than a practical consideration.

Instead, with its “Go Near” campaign promoting local travel, in partnership with Weber Shandwick West, Los Angeles, Airbnb “curated” stays in unusual places for local residents looking for an escape from their all-too-familiar surroundings.

Among the curious curations listed on Airbnb was a stay for Garden Staters at the 19th-century Jersey Shore roadside attraction Lucy the Elephant, the six-story piece of novelty architecture that became a symbol of resiliency after it was saved from destruction in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy. In September, Los Angeles County residents got the chance to book one of five nostalgic stays in the Fresh Prince of Bel-Air’s mansion. Guests were charged

If only all Zoom meetings were this rewarding.



The PEDIGREE® brand would like to thank all our partners for this Adweek Experiential Award, but especially Rocky, Spot, Lucky, Sir Bark-a-lot and all the rescue dogs that made it possible.



MARS
Petcare

BBDO **mediacom**

WEBER
SHANDWICK



\$30 a night in recognition of the 30 years since the Will Smith sitcom first aired on NBC, and the effort garnered nearly 19,000 original stories, 39 million organic social impressions, 4.3 million listings views and 99% positive sentiment.

“Airbnb has always been about unique experiences,” Wilkins says. “Every hotel room in every hotel chain is the same. Airbnb is a home, and our stays are as different as the individual host. So, we thought, ‘How can we take that to the extreme?’ And we came up with ‘Airbnb Night At.’”

The 2019 “Airbnb Night At” campaign preceded 2020’s “Go Near,” but it influenced the brand’s focus on “unique experiences,” Wilkins says. Even before the pandemic, Airbnb sought to raise the level of its experiences to something more playful and extraordinary. Starting in 2019, it listed stays at the Downton Abbey estate, at Dracula’s castle for Halloween and inside the Oscar Mayer “Wienermobile.” It even created a Malibu Barbie Dreamhouse in partnership with Mattel for the iconic doll’s 60th birthday.

“The key ingredient in each of these partnerships was nostalgia,” Wilkins says. “That’s what made these things fly.”

The brand also listed a stay in a cable car suspended thousands of feet up in the Swiss Alps. Parisians could sleep in a bedroom inside a local aquarium where guests were surrounded (safely) by sharks. And in the U.S., Airbnb got an idea for a local rental that would tap into what many adults in 2020 would view as a more carefree moment in entertainment and cultural history.

Turning back time

“Be kind, rewind” is a familiar phrase to anyone who ever thoughtfully returned a VHS rental in the 1990s. That’s when video rental chain Blockbuster peaked with over 9,000 global locations. As of 2019, only one Blockbuster remained. So, when Airbnb heard the news about the world’s last Blockbuster, the idea of transforming it into a stay clicked.

The brand’s “Be Kind, Rewind: A Sleepover at the World’s Last Blockbuster” campaign (also with Weber Shandwick West), which had been shelved until Covid-19 caseloads began to stabilize last summer, was more than an attempt to offer a contrast to the Netflix-fueled intensity of bingeing. It served as a reminder of how residents of a community pull together in the face of change.

Even as movie theaters shuttered during the pandemic and streaming video took over as the preferred viewing platform, community support kept the planet’s final officially licensed Blockbuster open in



ADWEEK EXPERIENTIAL AWARDS™

THE WORK Nearness and kindness—what better, more soothing themes could a travel marketer embrace during one of the saddest times in history? Not many travel marketers in 2020 could do that, of course. But Airbnb had some advantages. For one thing, the idea of sharing a nearby home as opposed to marketing far-off destinations was more easily available for the brand versus its competitors. After all, a hotel wasn’t about to build a suite of rooms around the corner for prospective guests. And no other short-term rental platform had the scale of Airbnb’s host network. But it took the campaigns to inspire Airbnb users to book and for hosts to remain on the platform. **“Be Kind, Rewind,”** in which Airbnb partnered with the world’s only remaining Blockbuster video store to create a ‘90s-themed stay, led to 4,700 news stories around the world, 1.5 million social engagements—along with a 21% engagement rate with the campaign’s content—and ultimately led to 100% organic traffic visits to the platform. The corresponding **“Go Near”** campaign generated 18,900 original news items, 39 million organic social impressions, 4.3 million listing views and 99% positive sentiment rating.



Bend, Ore. (population: 76,000). In keeping with the short-term rental giant’s drive to connect locals to nearby attractions, the store was transformed into a ‘90s-themed Airbnb stay, complete with a replica of a living room from 30 years ago.

“We lean into pop culture, and we try to use our platform to bring those cultural elements to life,” Wilkins says. “In all cases, the host provides the experience. We wanted that message to come through.”

As the U.S. and parts of Western Europe begin to reopen, the idea of a “travel reset” has already become ingrained at Airbnb, Wilkins says.

For the brand, that means stressing

flexibility by accommodating sudden trip planning and longer stays, a trend the company expects to endure. And Airbnb’s marketing will continue to take its cues from evolving travel trends and focus on search, PR and experiential to drive a message about what the company offers and what it ultimately represents. By casting “experiences” as synonymous with “travel,” Airbnb is extending its brand identity, and in a year when travel appeared lost, it found new ways to keep its hosts and guests connected—and that will continue to be a point of departure for the brand as bookings pick up and new competitive pressures emerge. —David Kaplan

**We don't make them
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A reimagined icon of the past for
tomorrow's audience - Delivering what
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EXPERIENTIAL AGENCY OF THE YEAR LITTLE CINEMA DIGITAL, BROOKLYN

For over five years, Brooklyn-bred creative studio Little Cinema has tendered an impressive reputation based on immersion, performance and an innovative blend of in-person creative and



social strategy. But when social distancing nixed a majority of on-site activations, the team brought its talents to the virtual space and created Little Cinema Digital, expanding its portfolio to include remote experiences for clients like HBO Max and Amazon Studios. Producing over 50 shows in just 11 months, Little Cinema grew its revenue by 1,011% while pushing the boundaries of in-home marketing.

BEST EXPERIENTIAL ACTIVATION BY A TECHNOLOGY BRAND UNSEEN BALLET

Brand: Dell Technologies
Agency: VMLY&R

BEST USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN AN EXPERIENTIAL ACTIVATION

Three honorees were selected in this category:

SPICY PROFILE PICS

Brand: Wendy's
Agency: VMLY&R

@GOODNESSBOT

Client: Monica Lewinsky
Agency: BBDO New York

THIS IS QUITTING

Brand: Truth Initiative
Agency: 72andSunny

EXPERIENTIAL ACTIVATION BY AN ENTERTAINMENT BRAND THE FLIGHT ATTENDANT INTERACTIVE COFFEE- OLOGY EXPERIENCE

Brand: HBO Max
Agency: Tool of North America

BEST USE OF CELEBRITY IN AN EXPERIENTIAL ACTIVATION ALONE WITH ME: AN EXPERIENCE WITH THE WEEKND

Brand: Spotify
Agency: Jam3

This campaign was also honored in Best Use of Music/Audio in an Experiential Activation.

BEST COMMUNITY-FOCUSED EXPERIENTIAL ACTIVATION

Two honorees were selected in this category:



SUPER WENDY'S WORLD

Brand: Wendy's
Agency: VMLY&R

Avid gamers have plenty of options for how to spend their free time, so what could possibly make them spend 9.8 million minutes watching a fast-food brand play games instead? With "Super Wendy's World," agency VMLY&R turned the pandemic refuge of digital gaming worlds into a playground to create branded content within popular titles like Animal Crossing, Fortnite and Minecraft. The brand became one of Twitch's top 1% of streamers and sparked nearly 1 million downloads of Wendy's-customized game levels.

TINDER'S SWIPE NIGHT

Brand: Tinder
Agency: 72andSunny

BEST VIRTUAL CONSUMER ACTIVATION FX UNLOCKED AT COMIC-CON@HOME

Brand: FX Networks
Agency: Creative Riff
This campaign was also honored in Best Experiential Activation by a Media Brand.

BEST USE OF DELIVERY AND MERCHANDISE WHITE CLAW WINTER GAMES

Brands: White Claw and Gopuff
Agency: VTProDesign

BEST USE OF PARTNERSHIP IN AN EXPERIENTIAL ACTIVATION #LABORDAYON

Brand: Red Wing Shoes
Agency: Droga5
This campaign was also honored in Best Experiential Activation by Retail Brand.

BEST USE OF DRIVE-UP EXPERIENCE LOVECRAFT COUNTRY DRIVE-IN

Brand: HBO
Agency: Giant Spoon

BEST USE OF OUT-OF-HOME MEDIA IN AN EXPERIENTIAL ACTIVATION SOUTH PARK: THE PANDEMIC SPECIAL BRONCOS STADIUM ACTIVATION

Brand: Comedy Central
This campaign also won in the following categories: Best Experiential Activation Less than \$1 Million / Best Sports-Related Experiential Activation

BEST USE OF INFLUENCERS IN AN EXPERIENTIAL ACTIVATION EBAY AUTHENTICATION STATION

Brand: eBay
Agencies: UEG and Edelman

BEST USE OF MOBILE IN AN EXPERIENTIAL ACTIVATION EL POLLO LOCO AR MURAL

Brand: El Pollo Loco
Agency: NVE Experience Agency

BEST CAUSE-RELATED EXPERIENTIAL ACTIVATION

Two honorees were selected in this category:



DOGS ON ZOOM

Brand: Pedigree
Agency: BBDO New York
People didn't have many options to get out and meet potential pets during the Covid-19 pandemic, but they definitely had Zoom. So Pedigree used the video conference platform to host 28 "Dogs on Zoom" events in partnership with nine shelters nationwide. A total of 9,900 attendees joined the Zooms, with 1.3 million watching Facebook livestreams. In all, 7,000 adoption inquiries were sparked by the campaign.

THE UNCENSORED LIBRARY

Brand: Reporters Without Borders
Agency: MediaMonks

BEST USE OF MUSIC/AUDIO IN AN EXPERIENTIAL ACTIVATION RED ROCKS UNPAUSED

Brand: Visible
Agency: Madwell

BEST USE OF EXPERIENTIAL ACTIVATION TO LAUNCH A PRODUCT

Two honorees were selected in this category:

THE PUNCHLINE HOTLINE

Brands: Ben & Jerry's x Netflix
Agencies: Trigger(House and Observatory)

THE PRIME RIB VENTURE

Brand: Carl's Jr./Hardee's
Agency: 72andSunny

BEST USE OF VIDEO IN AN EXPERIENTIAL ACTIVATION

Two honorees were selected in this category:

2028 OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC GAMES PARTNERSHIP ANNOUNCEMENT

Brand: Delta
Agency: MKG

LIVE FROM MIRAGE'S HOLO-DAY BASH AT THE GAME AWARDS

Brand: Respawn Entertainment
Agency: The Mill

BEST USE OF VIRTUAL EVENT TECHNOLOGY

HBO LOVECRAFT COUNTRY: SANCTUM

Brand: HBO
Agency: The Mill

EXPERIENTIAL ACTIVATION BY A PACKAGED GOODS BRAND



THE CEREAL MAN

Brands: General Mills
Agency: SGK

As part of a partnership with the Milk Processor Education Program of "Got Milk?" fame, General Mills turned to the past for inspiration and revived the era of door-to-door milk delivery. Only this time, it was cereal being dropped off—specifically with influential TikTok and Instagram creators. The socially distant strategy generated 26 million views on TikTok and more than 3 million via Instagram stories, with total impressions estimated at more than 45 million.

**BEST VIRTUAL EVENT FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
YOUR BUSINESS IS ESSENTIAL: A RISING ENTREPRENEUR'S MASTERCLASS SERIES**

Brands: Target and Refinery29's Unbothered
This campaign was also honored in Best Virtual Event in Support of Diversity and Inclusion.

**BEST VIRTUAL EVENT IN SUPPORT OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION
UNIVISION'S UFORIA, LA X 96.3 AND BAD BUNNY SURPRISE FANS WITH LIVESTREAM EXPERIENCE**

Brand: Verizon

**BEST VIRTUAL EVENT PIVOT
YOUTUBE BROADCAST DELIVERED**

Brand: YouTube

BEST EXPERIENTIAL ACTIVATION BY A SPIRITS OR ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE BRAND

THE DA VINCI OF DEBT

Brand: Anheuser-Busch
Agency: The Bait Shoppe
This campaign was also honored in Best Experiential Activation Over \$1 Million.

BEST EXPERIENTIAL ACTIVATION BY RETAIL BRAND

ENDLESS WORLD OF AIRMAX

Brand: Foot Locker
Agency: BBDO New York

EXPERIENTIAL EXECUTIVE OF THE YEAR

KUDZI CHIKUMBU

Director of Creator Community, TikTok



Congrats to Wendy's and Dell for winning three awards in this year's Adweek Experiential Awards.

And respect to Allison Pierce and Alexis Bronstoph for being honored on Adweek's Creative 100.

VMLY&R

ON THE ORIGINS OF BRANDS AND THE PEOPLE WHO BUILD THEM

Perspective

THE SURFACE
Roomba's brushes work best on hard floors, but the higher-suction setting can handle carpets.

THE BRAINS
To learn its way around, the Roomba has optical sensors that actually map out your home.

THE MACHINE
Priced at \$1,200, the S9 is Roomba's most advanced model that even cleans up after itself.

Roomba →

HOW A MARS MISSION, A TOY DOLL AND A SHARK CAT CONSPIRED TO MAKE A ROBOT VACUUM FAMOUS.
BY ROBERT KLARA

Sometime around Halloween 2012, a Houston woman named Helen Arnold set out to buy a shark costume for her dog, a pit bull named Sharkey. When she could find only a small-sized outfit, Arnold decided to let her cat Max wear it instead. Max, as things turned out, not only tolerated being dressed as a shark, but the chill Siamese also had taken to riding around atop the Roomba robot vacuum that Arnold had bought. With kitty all suited up, Arnold began to post videos.

This is how Max the Roomba Cat broke the internet.

Among the tens of millions of Americans who took note of the videos was one Colin Angle, who immediately felt a bond with Max—and for good reason. Angle is the co-founder of iRobot, maker of the Roomba.

Through the long years of building his company, "there's a lot of really weird things that we didn't anticipate happening," Angle told Adweek. "Cats riding Roombas was definitely one of them."

In fact, if there's anything more surprising than a vacuum-surfing cat, it's the success of iRobot and its signature product. When the Roomba hit the market in 2002, the company figured it might move 15,000 units if it were lucky. To date, it's sold over 35 million of them.

Armed with two MIT degrees, Angle founded iRobot in 1990 along with computer scientist Helen Greiner and robotics professor Rodney Brooks. "Our journey to Roomba was not straight," Angle said of the company's lean first years. "It was a lot of: How can we create any kind of robot to allow us to make payroll and survive the next day?"

iRobot's first revenues came from industrial contracts. It built the prototype rover that gave rise to NASA's Sojourner mission in 1997. For Johnson Wax, iRobot created a contraption that cleaned shopping center floors. Hasbro hired the firm to create the animatronic capabilities for its My Real Baby doll in 2000.

Strangely enough, it took iRobot doing all these industrial projects to perfect the components that eventually went into the Roomba. "Not many companies would be crazy enough to say, 'Hey, let's all mash these technologies together to create a robot to clean your home,'" Angle said. "But that was us."

And it still is. Roomba's ninth-generation model features a piezoelectric sensor to detect dirt and a powerful motor that makes it a dope ride for cats. Angle still marvels at how Max wound up providing his brand with better marketing than he could have afforded at the time.

"I have great appreciation for shark cat," he said.



1



2



3



4



5



6

A Clean Sweep When it debuted in 2002, Roomba ("the Intelligent FloorVac") felt like science fiction come to life (1), but the vacuum had taken iRobot co-founder Colin Angle (2) many years to develop. The Roomba's capabilities were a confluence of technologies from industrial robots including Genghis (3), a crawling bot invented at MIT by iRobot co-founder Rodney Brooks, and the PackBot (4), shown here scouring the 9/11 site in New York. Though it was made to clean floors, the Roomba is just as famous as the free ride for Max the YouTube cat (5), and it has inspired spin-off products like Braava, the mopping robot (6).



Buy a Cybersuck Today! Much like Kleenex or Band-Aid, Roomba—a mashup of "room" and "rumba"—is so wholly synonymous with its category that it's impossible to imagine the product carrying any other name. But the truth hurts: Roomba was very nearly called the Cybersuck. That was the best name the internal team could come up with, anyway. Weighed with doubts, Angle ended up paying a branding firm \$16,600 to come up with a better name. "That still sticks in my craw," he said, "but of course it was completely worth it."



1940

The Mother of Wi-Fi

During Hollywood's golden age, few actresses could match the elegance of Hedy Lamarr. Discovered by MGM's Louis B. Mayer after fleeing a loveless marriage to an arms dealer in her native Austria, Lamarr would headline in some 25 films. What few in Hollywood knew, however, was that Lamarr's creative talents went far beyond acting. Gifted with an innately technological mind, Lamarr had disassembled the family music box at age 5 just to see how it worked. In between takes at MGM, Lamarr would steal away to her trailer to tinker with radio equipment gifted to her by billionaire aviator Howard Hughes. When World War II broke out, Lamarr invented a frequency-hopping spread-spectrum system to guide American torpedoes. Lamarr's work formed the foundation for later technologies including Bluetooth, GPS and Wi-Fi. "All creative people want to do the unexpected," Lamarr once said, having set the best example herself.

—Robert Klara



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VIOLET BENSON
Creator



NICK BIANCHI
Director, Digital and
Social Media



MICHAEL BULL
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