

Hall of Fame inductee Greg Gray and all that *Romance*

 By [Jessica Tennant](#)

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This year's Loeries Hall of Fame inductee is... Greg Gray of Romance Films!

"I don't think anyone ever expects to be recognised for their contribution to any industry," says Gray.

“ My focus has always been on producing quality work and not chasing awards. If the work garners recognition then that is amazing, but not something you seek out. For me, this induction is much the same. ”

"It was a complete surprise and something I never expected, but having said that, I feel very honoured to receive recognition for the role I have played in our industry.

"More importantly it is great to see that the role of production is valued and recognised for its part in the advertising process."



Greg Gray, director at Romance Films

In this exclusive interview, Gray lets us in on his directing journey, having learnt from the masters before his career even began, being closely involved in some of South Africa's most iconic TV commercials from the outset.

📺 **What did it take to get to where you are today?**

I was really fortunate to work for Giaco Angelini and then Keith Rose right up until my directing career began. It meant being closely involved in some of South Africa's most iconic TV commercials from the outset. I guess if you could do an apprenticeship in directing, then I did it with the masters.

I won the trust of Jupiter and Hunt Lascaris during that time and was very fortunate to get a break from them, directing great creative scripts. I can't say it ever got easier, but it has never stopped being exciting.

📺 **Tell us more about the mentorship you've received and from where you derive inspiration.**

I was extremely fortunate to learn from two icons in our local industry: Giaco and Keith, who both played huge roles in my learning my craft. They were both a huge inspiration for me as they had enormous knowledge to impart and both come from cinematography backgrounds.

What inspires me on so many levels are the narrative, filmic aesthetic and performances we see in so many film mediums today. You have to keep watching work across the board, and from those, I constantly learn and see myself evolving.



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📺 **One of your more recent campaigns (Chicken Licken 'Sbu 2.0') won a bronze film craft lion at Cannes. What did this win mean to you/for Romance Films?**

Recognition for work at Cannes is becoming harder and harder to achieve. They are all about the idea over execution, and concepts that haven't been seen and done are a challenge. So, it was great to see a South African narrative cutting through. This is, of course, great for Romance, Joe Public and SA. It keeps us all on the global map, I guess.

📺 **What do you think makes this campaign in particular unique?**

Artificial intelligence is very topical right now. There are people out there who have created AI replicas of themselves. However, they haven't used them as ingeniously as Sbu did. So, taking a current topic and looking at it from a different perspective is both clever and funny in this instance.

📺 **What other campaigns/work of yours are you particularly proud of and why?**

One's work is like one's children – hard to pick favourites. Though I only have one child, so that's easy. With regard to my work, I guess Virgin Atlantic's 'Love Story', MTN's 'The Clap', Dialdirect's 'The Notebook' and Bell's 'The Reader' are up there. They are very different, yet I think they best represent the work I like to do. Emotionally uplifting and very human.

📺 **What is unique to your direction/work?**

I like storytelling injected with emotion. Now, that emotion can make people laugh or cry, or just feel moved. So, that is what I try to do: narratives that leave you feeling something.

■ **Comment on the current state of film in South Africa and how this compares globally.**

There is a lot of talk about the demise of the advertising industry and more specifically the demise of the television commercial. But South Africa has created and continues to create some of the greatest, most memorable stories on film. Our challenge is to maintain that standard of strong conceptual ideas. When a project has a smart idea, it permeates throughout the process; it creates an excitement that you see in the end product.

We used to have a lot of fun at work, but that has certainly been dampened by fear. That can start right at the top amongst clients and their respective agency and works all the way through to the bottom.

“ Globally I feel a very similar phenomenon where pleasing everyone has become paramount. We need to take risks again. Good is the evil of great. ”

I think that we can all now see that commercials and especially content still has its place, perhaps more so than ever before. Besides television, which in SA is still watched by 70% of the country, social networks are the new vehicle of delivering content.

■ **What are you most looking forward to? Any emerging trends in the industry?**

I see a big trend in producing bigger and longer pieces of communication, and we need to be creative in how we bring this about.

■ **As August is Women's Month, what do you think of the role of women in the creative industry, particularly in film?**

I don't think that there should be any discrimination based on race or gender in any industry. In film production, directors have historically tended to be male, as have the technical departments on set.

“ The demise of the boy's club has been a long time coming, but it is happening across the board in clients and agencies, and I can see a big change afoot in film production too. ”

We need to be part of the solution, by helping bring about change, and mentoring and nurturing young talent, especially in South Africa.

■ **What has been your greatest learning?**

Clichéd I'm sure, but loving what you do permeates into the work you produce. When you stop learning, enjoying your work and feeling fulfilled, then it's time to make a change.

Follow Gray and Romance Films on [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#). View the [Hall of Fame](#). Loeries Creative Week Durban takes place from 16 to 19 August 2018. Keep an eye on our [Loeries Creative Week Durban](#) special section for all the latest updates.

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