

Remember all those wonderful TV commercials?

 By [Mike Abel](#)

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As I sat in the [Loeries](#) audience on the Sunday night a couple of weeks ago, I couldn't help but wonder why I had seen very little to nothing that took my breath away. There was not a single television ad where I could apply that old test of saying, "I wish we had done that!"



Sure, there was some nice stuff - the Everlast ad with the "hungry robber", the Avril Elizabeth Home ads and, only from a craft point of view, the 8.ta work which was done in a Tim-Burton style, which made it interesting to watch but didn't make me feel anything positive. I think I liked the tactical Nando's "CEO" ad the most. It made us laugh - and is on-brand.

Where were the big, glorious brands?

But where were the big, glorious brands that we have come to know and, most importantly, love - primarily as a result of their historic TV ads?

Where were the challenger brands that bravely fight the status quo?

I have worked on a number of iconic brands where a lot of the imagery and brand associations are residual, as opposed to current and fresh, in the mind of consumers. When you take on these accounts, you wonder when and how decisions were made along the way, eg, to drop this line, to take away that established image - and very soon, through a seemingly benign process of little incremental "tweaks", the brand has lost a lot of what it stood for.

Brand properties: about seven years ago I worked on Melrose. Parmalat had recently acquired the brand and our first question was, "So what happened to the *Mum remembered Melrose* line and jingle?"

Based on what insight or research?

It appeared the previous marketing team felt it had lost its relevance and had decided to drop it. Based on what insight or research, we asked? Well, needless to say, there wasn't any. So we brought the line back. Today's mums knew it from when they were kids - and loved it.

Certain brands demand big ads. It's what consumers want and expect from them - and the way the brand behaves. [Allan Gray](#) is such an example. You actually look forward to watching its next instalment.

The automotive category used to be rich with competitive spirit. It made the advertising great. Mercedes vs BMW, Volkswagen vs Toyota - or vice versa. Citi Golf vs Opel Corsa, Toyota Conquest, Fiat Palio and the like. Big, emotive, majestic productions.

The hospitality, telco, banking, alcohol and FMCG categories were rich with great work. The brands were well-articulated and the competitive spirit forced us to do brilliant work. "Makes you think, doesn't it?"

Facile pursuit of awards and other tinsel

Today, in many ways, the facile pursuit of awards and other tinsel has made agencies pursue cool vs loved. Sexy vs "emotional".

And the results are there for all to see. Some brands today stand for very little. Many of the ads that win, you've never seen - or on brands you hardly know. And I do blame awards show judges and juries, in addition to the agencies and clients for allowing this.

Today, the brave work gets elevated to award-show scam and the "responsible work" is viewed as boring - so it isn't pushed and prodded and polished until it is good enough to make you laugh, cry and buy - and win an award.

So here's a challenge to us all:

Make far better television work

For Loeries 2012, let's try make far better television work over the coming year. Where we establish powerful and resonant brand properties that even our kids will recall when they grow up. Where we fight for good, real work to come through and don't ask the consumer to tell us how to make these ads through research groups - and then run a little scam section at the Loeries to celebrate some good ideas that never ran.

Let's stop thinking in little executional ideas and more in big brand ideas that will "stand the test of time". I think as an industry and marketers, we've all taken enough out of the well of trust - it's time to start pouring back in.

ABOUT MIKE ABEL

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