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OPINION

Why can't the best brand advertising be audio advertising?

By **Al Young**
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Al Young, chief creative officer at St. Luke's tells us why it's time for brands to pay more attention to radio

We are in a golden age of audio. Ever increasing consumer demand for streaming audio networks means it's never been easier for brands to reach their target audiences. Spotify alone has over 135 million monthly active ad-supported users and more than half of UK adults listen to digital audio each week.

To celebrate great creativity in audio, we've launched a new **audio collection on creative works and asked creatives to talk about their favourite audio. This week Al Young, chief creative officer at St. Luke's tells us why brands need to pay more attention to radio.**

We can all effortlessly name a dozen brilliant brand ads on TV or posters, but many will struggle to name two we loved on radio.

Could it be that audio is, fundamentally, less emotionally impactful than the visual?

That's impossible to agree with. Music can produce as great a rapture as any visual art form can. What is reading great literature other than having symbols on a page conjured into images and voices in our heads? Ads we experience only through audio are forgettable because those that make them often don't really give a shit.

It's not that they're lazy people or bad creatives - it's because they don't give an audio ad the fraction of attention they would a visual one.

Because audio production is so cheap (low margin) compared to AV, the agency scrutiny on the brief and on the writing simply isn't there. For the same reason, there's rarely any kind of pre-production outside choosing a voice. The team rock-up on the day and knock out the ad and wander back to the agency full of free soy latte.

Agencies rarely fight for great radio because they've had those fights elsewhere in the campaign. We agency people learn to pick our battles so all the stupid addenda on the client's brief that's been fought out of other media, ends up dumped in the radio. Often making the ad incoherent - a waste of everyone's time.

Consequently, radio is caught in a vicious circle of crap ads making it feel like a low-rent medium. Perhaps this is why brands tend to restrict its place on the media laydown to promotions.

Of course, the other great desecrator of radio commercials is the T&Cs. Suddenly you have to endure garbling legalese read faster than a Texan cattle auctioneer shifts lots. One set of caveats is all every radio ad requires. It's this: TERMS AND CONDITIONS APPLY. DETAILS AT URL. Job done.

These factors come together to create a huge lost opportunity for creativity and the medium. The purity of radio makes it a brilliant place for powerful, single-minded brand advertising. As good as any AV spot, as good as any poster.

It's the fact that radio is so relatively inexpensive to produce, is partly what makes it such an outstandingly creative medium. Putting pictures in a listener's mind costs nothing next to putting them on a viewer's screen.

Producing radio ads gives you the time to write and rewrite with the sound designer, with a carefully chosen artist without racking up thousands. To loving design soundscapes, and experiment with different music – without a film crew standing around on triple-time waiting for you to make your mind up.

Great radio, like a great piece of writing, somehow resembles our own thinking process – the voice that's working things out in our heads. It somehow allows us to “hear” the brand idea more clearly.

It's easy to say the above, but do you believe it?

Here are two brand ads that are as good as the campaign's visual ads.

· Old Spice '[RAB presentation](#)' this ad starts in at 2:12 - 3:12 minutes.

· Bud Light '[Real Men of Genius](#)'

Twice a month the user submitted work from our audio collection is judged by Spotify and the winner is featured in our Creative Works newsletter. If you would like your work to be considered, [submit it here](#) or contact editorial@thedrum.com if you're new to Creative Works.

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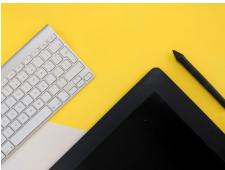
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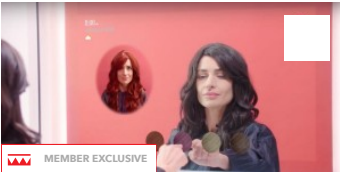
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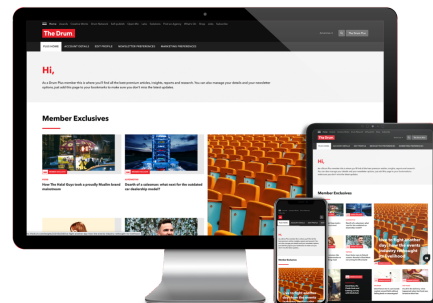
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