

Francois Chilot Column: How can a production company survive in this very unstable world of ours?

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Every year in January I ask myself the same question. Are we going to get as many young talented directors as the previous years at YDA this year? Enough to make a great show like we have done for the past 15 years? YDA, the only International Award created and managed by Producers is also the only award which is dedicated to beginners and I fear that maybe there will be one day a decline in the number of emerging talents as the market keeps expecting more and more from them. However, each year shows that I have no reason to be pessimistic as each year at YDA a new 'wave' of new talents rolls on the beach of Cannes.

I want to remain optimistic because if the world is moving fast forward I also believe that Producers have the capacity to adapt to any situation, it is part of their DNA. Anybody who has ever been on a shoot knows this. Days or weeks of thorough preproduction will never prevent the unexpected to happen. Producers are also the only ones who discover and promote young directors who will be the next generation of film makers which will mark its time. I have said this many times over the years and I will repeat it probably many times in the years to come with the risk of irritating quite a few people. But in this fast changing world I was referring to earlier where boarder lines do not exist anymore between the different professions, I am sure that neither Agencies nor Marketers will ever take this risk. They may want to produce and some of them do but they will always turn to production companies when they want the most talented directors to direct their best scripts. The image of a director is very much tied up to its production company and vice versa. This exclusive tie strengthens the production company artistically, commercially and financially speaking, thus gives a wider access to the best projects on the market to its directors. Something which directors would not have by working directly with Agencies and Marketers.

We are in a world where uncertainty and volatility prevails. Moreover, innovations follow each other at great speed in the digital world, thus giving more opportunities of development to companies who master those innovations.

I was reading the other day in a French newspaper 'La Tribune' an article about VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous). This is the concept which has been developed by the American Army (of course) to describe what they think (rightly) is the world environment nowadays. Most companies today think that they do not have visibility beyond 2 or 3 months. However, we have seen with VUCA the birth and development of new powerful actors in every possible areas: Apple, Google, Zara, Netflix, Facebook are a few examples. The author of the article shows how Zara succeeded by using 'versatility of fashion' as it's ally by creating a new collection every week and by being the only one capable of doing this in its market. In a totally different market Netflix has learned how to master the tools of Big Data and use them to identify its client's desires and develop it's very successful series 'House of Cards'. And so on.

Now, although this theory can be applied without a doubt to the 'big business world', the question remains: can we apply those rules to the B to B at large and to our profession in particular? I have not read the book of C-E BOUE (Light Foot Print Management) but I

have the feeling that it is possible to get inspired by them. Our market is VUCA but our clients are also VUCA so we have to adapt ourselves to this new world. How can we do this? As always by being very creative but also by trying to apply the recipe described above. In our world it means that producers should be able to produce films in the broad sense of the term (from classical commercials to brand contents, to short films, to documentaries, to music videos, to interactive films, ...etc) in any kind of format for every medium, for Agencies but also whenever relevant for Marketers directly. Here, I am not referring to quantity but to high quality. Each of those "productions" must reach excellence in craft and therefore be directed by one of these directors who are among the best in their region and for some of them the best in the world.

Daniel Bergman sees the challenges facing production companies at the moment maybe in a more personal, less didactical way but his views are valuable as they are those of a very successful and visionary producer: "I think a lot of people are thinking about the future, but the important thing is to stay calm and focused on making good work. You have to move inside the system and live it, influence the trends and be part of it. I think it's better to be proactive than reactive. I hear people say "oh we haven't done this or that, maybe we are too late to get into digital", but really if you do brilliant work you will usually be alright. It's important not to get distracted about what's happening in the press."

The Ultra HD television set is new today but it will represent 90% of the market in 2020. This shows that if the tablet has revolutionised the way we watch our programs it has not killed the TV set, far from it. Connected TV will be like having a cinema screen at home. The sets will be up to 1.5m wide, ultra thin and transparent. The viewers will gather around this screen to share special programs, events, sport and cinema. Commercials in the wide sense of the term on tablets and on TV will still be part of our daily life but the viewers who have been and will be inundated with flows of images will request more and more quality. Excellence in craft is and will be more than ever the key to the success of a film.

YDA will celebrate its 16th anniversary next June in Cannes. We thought that it was time for us to introduce a new Award, an Award which will be dedicated to producers who have excelled in discovering and promoting young directors over the 2 years preceding the Award Ceremony. By doing this we wish to give more visibility to the Producer's role and show the clear difference between the different actors of our business .

As a conclusion I would like to congratulate Martin de Thurah from Bacon who recently received the Directors Guild of America Award for Outstanding Directorial Achievement in Commercials. With this award one of the most respected professional body in the world gives recognition to exceptionally talented directors.

YDA call for entries starts on February 10th. We will be happy to welcome all the future young Martin de Thurah on stage at YDA award ceremony on June 19th.