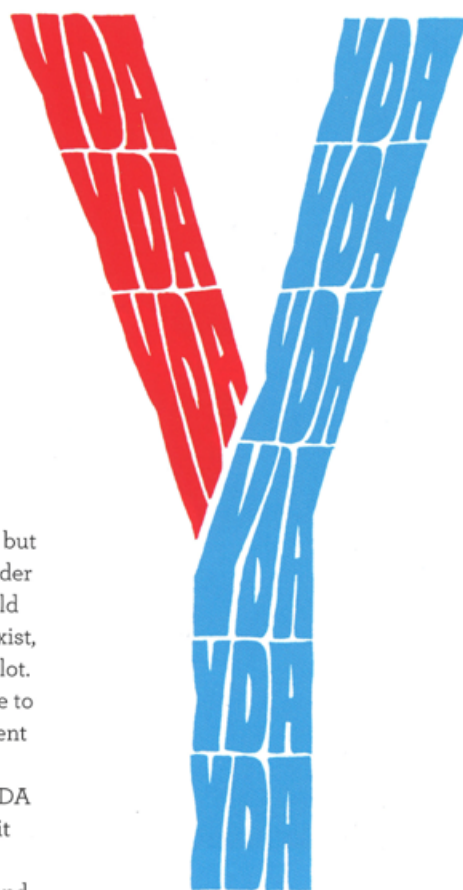




"My goal was to make it not just a singular thing, happening at one point in the year, but something that works throughout the year, and to also make it more global."






# is for YOUNG DIRECTOR AWARD

**Y** is indeed for the Young Director Award but we could just as easily have put this feature under F or C because the Young Director Award would not have been born, nor would it continue to exist, without its creator and president, Francois Chilot. The Young Director Award is an occasion close to *shots'* heart as we've been partners with the event since its inception in 1999 and have, we like to think, helped to spread the good news of the YDA among *shots'* international audience. Not that it wouldn't have been a success anyway, Chilot's tenacity and sheer enthusiasm for promoting and nurturing new talent would have seen to that.

Many of you reading this have probably attended one of the YDA's ceremonies at one of the last 17 Cannes Lions festivals, where the competition winners are announced. At the first event you would have been standing in the large room to the left of the Carlton Hotel (probably quite hot, looking for a spare section of floor to sit on). After a few years it moved to bigger, more comfortable surroundings at the Palais Stéphanie. This year, its 'transitional' year, the event was held solely on the beach while Chilot looks to reinvigorate the competition – more of which later. But wherever it's been held, the defining element of the YDA is the spotlight shone on an array of talented directors from across the globe. Names such as Kosei Sekine, Aleksander Bach, Hanna Maria Heidrich, Andreas Roth, Josh Cole, Kibwe Tavares, Christian Werner and, probably most famously, Ringan Ledwidge, have all been garlanded at the YDA and are testament to both the directorial talent that's out there, and the YDA's ability to find it.

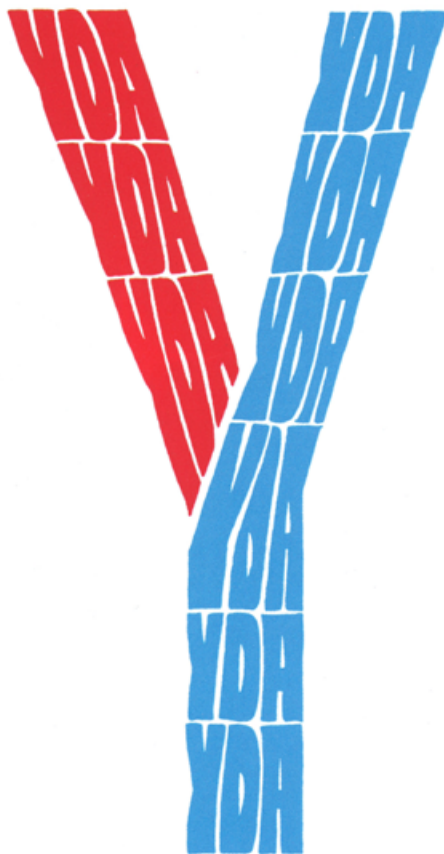
## Letting the producers lead the way

There are, of course, numerous international award shows and festivals, many of which recognise and reward new directing talent but, says Chilot, the element of the YDA of which he is most proud is the fact that it is the only event which is created by, led by and awarded by producers, the people, he says, whose purpose is to find and nurture new talent.

Chilot has always been of the opinion that a production company has a duty to the industry, and to itself and its fellow companies, to seek out directing talent and he is acutely aware of the rise in prominence of the in-house production model, where agencies take control of production from within their own walls. This has always happened but, with the continued blurring of boundaries between agency/production and post, it is an increasingly widespread approach and Chilot believes that, 

*Danny Edwards* talks – and listens – to the brilliant raconteur that is Francois Chilot, founder of the Young Director Award. It's a story of a father with four wives, landing in London in the Swinging Sixties, graduating from a Cardiff business school, working with the W and the T of TBWA, hooking up with JFK's photographer and harnessing a passion for producing and helping other producers find, nurture and celebrate the new directing talent that the advertising industry thrives on

“When I joined, in 1971, it was just TBWA\Paris but they pretty much opened a different office every year. I worked for the Group and so I grew with the agency, always with a very broad remit and outlook on the world.”



however well-intentioned an agency's motives are, it will never nurture and promote new talent to the degree that a production company will.

Chilot founded his own production company in his native France in 1984. Called Les Producers (named after the famous Mel Brooks film) it started with just him and the then-unknown director Bruno Decharme, now one of the world's leading collectors of art brut. “When I opened the company,” says Chilot, “I looked at a lot of directors but I already had in mind to only have one director, and for him to be a beginner. It wasn't, to me, so crazy as it might seem today. I wanted to start with somebody, and this somebody had to want to start with me. And I found Bruno. I felt, straight away, that it was the right thing to have done.”

### Let me tell you a story...

Les Producers wasn't Chilot's first foray into the advertising arena though. He spent 13 years working at TBWA, based in Paris but travelling the world to the company's various international offices. But Francois, I asked, how did that job come about? The answer, it turned out, was not short. Chilot, by his own admission, is a talker, and also a great storyteller so here goes:

“My father was married four times and at one point had an English partner, she was really nice and gave me the notion to carry on my studies in the UK. London was really attractive at the time, it was the Swinging Sixties and though that was costly, my father agreed to pay, so I came to London at the age of 18 and went to school to learn English. My goal was to learn the language, which I did, and then I moved to Cardiff, to a business school there, and got a business diploma after two years.

After business school I went back to Paris. At the time I had a serious girlfriend who was from England who, four or five years later, I married. (My first wife. I have only two. I have a bit of catching up to do with my father). In Paris I met an American photographer, Jacques Lowe, [JFK's former personal photographer], who was working in Paris as a photojournalist for the *Washington Post* and *Playboy*. He was totally mad but fantastic to be around. We became friends and he told me one day that he'd been offered a job in Geneva, at a big financial company, as creative director. He said he'd

have a lot of money to open a creative department and because I had a business degree and he had no interest in that side of things, he asked me to be his assistant. So off I went.

That was almost three years of my life. The company was called Investor Overseas Services [IOS] and the story of the company is amazing. The man who founded the company in the 50s – Bernard Cornfeld – specialised in mutual funds. Cornfeld was crazy about filmmaking and he wanted a team who would make films and take photos of all the productivity in the company. In the space of a year-and-a-half the department was 150 people. We had built a sound studio, we had still as well as moving image cameras, editing equipment, everything. It was an incredible experience and that's when I started to learn about film. I worked there until it all collapsed. Which is another story.

I had met art directors and copywriters at IOS and while still working there I heard from an art director who had decided to move before the collapse to work for the W of TBWA [Uli Wiesendanger]. He called me and asked me to join him at this young advertising agency in Paris. So, once I returned to Paris, I had an interview with the T in TBWA [William Tragos]. I was at TBWA for 13 years, first in traffic, then 10 years

as a producer. When I joined, in 1971, it was just TBWA\Paris but they pretty much opened a different office every year. I worked for the Group and so I grew with the agency, always with a very broad remit and outlook on the world. They gave me this global outlook at a time when advertising was moving on and exploding. It was a fun job, crazy and very demanding at times but everything was aimed at creativity and aiming to always do the best. I remember one of the very first films that the company did was with Alan Parker and I learned on the job.”

15 years after opening Les Producers, Chilot was voted in as president of the Commercial Film Producers of Europe (for football fans, it's sort of like the UEFA of advertising) and almost immediately set about creating the YDA. “I told the guys that we have to find a way to send a message to our members,” explains Chilot, “as well as the clients and advertisers, about what it is we do. And that's how the YDA came to be; we discover, promote and nurture young directors.”

### A new formula for young directors

Les Producers still exists but its main focus is as the company behind the YDA and Chilot, now a sprightly 70, remains president of the CFP-E, as well as advisor to production film gallery, Superette, which was co-founded by his Danish wife. He's still as dedicated to the YDA as he was at its launch, though he realises that the event, after more than a decade-and-a-half, needs to move with the industry. “It has evolved in a sense that it's not just an award,” he says. “My goal was to make it not just a singular thing, happening at one point in the year, but something that works throughout the year, and to also make it more global, both of which we have achieved with the YDA blog and the various shows we put on. [But] we have to move on, we will, within the next six months, develop the new formula of the YDA.”

What that new formula will be is yet to be officially announced, but Chilot stresses the YDA's not-for-profit mandate and also highlights the industry's move towards longer-form content. What is in no doubt is Chilot's commitment to an event that's benefitted the industry's creativity for 17 years and which has also been an important part of *shots'* history since 1999. **8**