

Dedicated to the art of on-air promotion and broadcast design, the fourth annual Promax/BDA Africa Conference took place at Johannesburg's Sandton Convention Centre in mid-October. As usual the event drew a range of fascinating presentations. Here *Screen Africa* looks at two of the top-rated international sessions.

Know your generation



PRESENT FUTURE – Herman Konings

Herman Konings, who has a doctorate in psychology and is the founder of Belgian trend and future research agency Pocket Marketing/nXt, gave a presentation called: *The future has arrived (It's just not widely distributed yet...)*. The presentation examined aspects like aboriginals, flexistentialists and mediors – in basic English, why we are all children of our generation even more so than we are children of our parents.

Konings explained: "What has happened in the last 10 years and what has been the most important boom market, is simply consumer technology. The other side of this, paradoxically, is the boom market of wellness and health. In the modern world the antidote to technology is a seeking to escape to nature and wellness."

Konings said that the most important aspect to look at is how people are products of their environments and that they are absolutely adaptable to their environments. "Also the other important aspect to note is that consumers will not be able to predict the future. Asked in the early 2000 whether they would use phones they could walk around with – mobile phones, the majority said never, but in 2009/2010 this is huge business. The key is that the only really reliable sources of prediction lie with the experts in the field of history, economics, psychology, etc."

Konings elaborated that it was important to study the way different generations behave and what affects their behaviour. "For instance the baby boomers have the highest capital power and money to spend while the flexistentialists have limited capital power."



SKY'S THE LIMIT – An artist's impression of the Cloud Hotel in Dubai that will be built over the next few years

Digital pros

"Flexistentialist is the generation 40 and younger who follow this classification: no space, no time and no money. They are not able to afford the luxury lifestyle of the baby boomers, also because the baby boomers are known to have spent more than they can afford, in essence, being the generational debt makers for future generations. The flexistentialists are also digital pros and know how to use technology for their benefit, whereas the baby boomers will still buy CDs and be baffled by technology."

"They live a multi-layered life and do not have time, so microwave food and multi-tasking becomes crucial. Everything is about time so while they eat, they e-mail. Space intensification is also a big issue so that space is utilised to the maximum. Also they have limited capital, which makes them creative."

Konings said however that the real digital 'aboriginals' or 'natives', the ones who know and will grow up completely in a technological world, "are the six- and seven-year-olds".

Konings elaborated that the key

aspects that the baby boomers look for are the following: locality – a product that comes from their country or region, authenticity – products that are brand conscious but that are authentic, traceability – products where the CO2 emissions can be accounted for, and finally, trustworthy and ethical products – those that do not betray humanity.

The classifications that meet the flexistentialist, Konings explained, are the following: astonishing – things that are completely unusual, like the Cloud Hotel in Dubai that will be built over the next few years (a hotel that looks like a cloud and is 'see-through'); cultainment – this is a fusion of culture and entertainment; contagious – social networks like Facebook, My Space, etc.

Flexistentialists are also interested in i-motions – this is a fusion of science and technology but making it fantastical and bringing in emotions. "For instance, walls in restaurants that change colour by pressing a button or change the scene, they thereby affect the mood and hence the emotion."

'Alternative' is another buzzword, – this is not about less consumption but about alternative solutions. "For instance green technology and clean cars as opposed to gas guzzlers." And

finally, 'talented' – "This generation has its pulse on the world and they do a lot to expose and show their talents.

Not passive

"The great thing about the baby boomers and the flexistentialists is that they actually get on with each other. There is a good understanding between these two generations. The flexistentialist are also known to be the most open generation to date; they will say what they think and demand information. They are not a passive generation."

Konings gave a glimpse into the very near future. "Augmented reality is the next big things. It really means putting 'extra' reality on what you see. For instance Apple will be launching a laptop within the next year or so that will have no keyboard and you will be able to 'point' your laptop to the sky and get direct information about that segment of the universe that you are looking at – galaxies, stars, etc. Another example – you will be able to buy glasses in the future that will give you all the information of a product you might be considering buying – where it was made, what materials, how much CO2 is contributed in its formation, etc."

Konings added: "This whole new way is changing the fundamental shift and brands no longer have the power, the consumer does. In a sense this is what many refer to as the democratising influence of technology."

Konings concluded: "It is important to know these aspects if you are in the business of creating for consumers and for instance with promos, which Promax is all about. You have to spend time getting to know what generations like and see how you can build this into your business plans." ❄️

Consciously delving into the subconscious

By Joanna Sterkowicz

TV promo makers should use the classic five-part dramatic structure to analyse the show they're previewing as a means of setting up a subconscious conflict in the viewer that can only be resolved by watching the show.

This was intriguing premise of Australian TV promo guru Charley Holland's presentation at Promax/BDA Africa. Holland, who has worked as a creative director at various TV channels and agencies for 25 years, focused on clip-based promos for any kind of dramatic programmes.

"Dramatic structure is a problem because it remains a secret world," explained Holland. "This is because of the way the brain works – it controls all functions without thinking about it. The more you do things the more subconscious they become, like driving, for example. So we go from being consciously incompetent to consciously competent."

"Great entertainment makes us lose all track of time because it works on a subconscious level. Promo makers must be consciously aware of the things the

audience takes for granted and not bully the audience with conscious facts."

As Holland pointed out, the better the show is, the harder it is to stay conscious. As screenwriters encode their work for the subconscious enjoyment of the viewer, promo makers need to decode it and think like screenwriters.

Adamant that the study of screenwriting should be compulsory for promo makers, Holland said promo makers need to get to the heart of the story in a few lines. The first step is to determine what the story is *really* about. "This is also known as theme or subtext. If you look at *Master and Commander*, it tells the story of British sea captain in the Napoleonic wars pursuing a French vessel around South America. According to its screenwriter John Collee, the film is about how modern man can be both a man of



PROMO GURU – Charley Holland

action and a man of reflection. In another example, Michael Richards, one of the stars of *Seinfeld*, describes the show as being about modern manners and etiquette."

Thus the promo maker needs to ask himself what concepts and ideas will the viewer experience (ie. their subconscious) when they watch the show? Using the thriller *The Sixth Sense* as an example, Holland noted that the first element of dramatic structure to look for is exposition (ie. dialogue that quickly explains what the story is about). In this case it's the little boy saying, "I see dead people".

"The second element is setting – where and when the show takes place. Next is characters – who are the key players in the story and how do they develop? The little boy refers to himself as a freak and is emotionally fragile, while the Bruce Willis character is compassionate. Viewers won't care about the show if they don't care about the people in it."

"Thereafter comes conflict – what's at stake and what characters the stand to lose? Drama is all about conflict. In *The Sixth Sense* Bruce Willis says he can't be the little boy's doctor anymore and tells the child that he doesn't know if he believes he sees dead people. The child responds, "How can you help me if you don't believe me?". This is so dramatically compelling a promo maker might well miss it."

Lastly there is resolution. Promos should include a minor resolution with a suggestion that there is a way out of the conflict. The major resolution must be avoided as it will give the story away. ❄️

Playing with 007

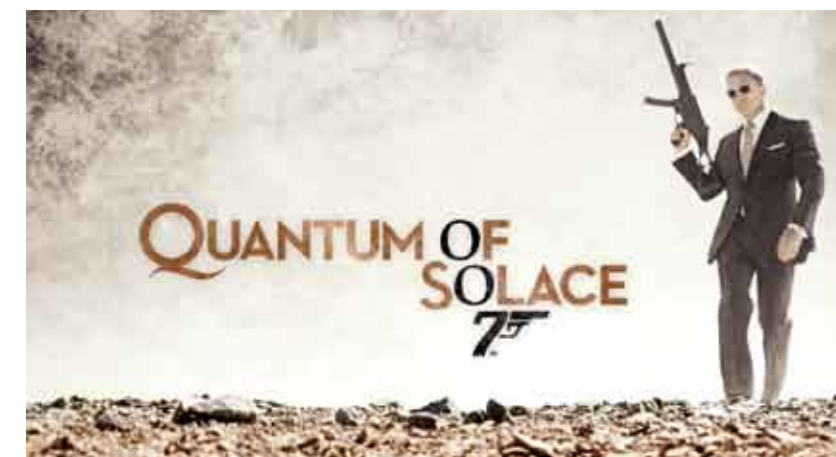
By Karen van Schalkwyk

One of the Promax/BDA Africa conferences sessions dealt with the making of the title sequence for 007, *The Quantum of Solace*. MK12 was the company bought on board to do the title sequence. The company is based in Kansas City, Missouri and is a design and arts collective that works primarily in motion design, creating hybrid live action and animation works both for the commercial and feature film market.

Timmy Fisher, one of the founders of MK12, began by stating the following: "I can still not get over the fact that some kids from Kansas City, in the middle of nowhere, actually got to do the opening title sequence. However initially we were brought on board to do two VFX sequences in the film. This we accomplished, but the big deal was the title sequence."

He and a fellow MK12 team mate were flown over to Pinewood Studios. "We lived in the UK for most of that year commuting between Pinewood and later in the evening back to our place in Soho – often after 11pm and struggling to find a place to eat!"

Fisher explains that while they were working on the two VFX scenes, "we would also work late into the night on



ideas for the title sequence. You must understand that we were not initially hired to do it but only the two VFX scenes. We looked at all the great Bond sequences of the past two decades and the thing about them all is that it all flows and has a unique '007 look'. The pace is also symbolic and foreshadows what will happen in the film."

Fisher continues: "We started by looking at the larger thematic issues of the film and although we were not privy to the whole script and only received the scenes we were required to work on, we knew they decided to film some actual footage and hired a model

and shot her in a gallery in which she was in a tank of water and then oil. "That was really our early test of how it would look. We aimed for the abstract female form and also shot stills. We also kept the colour palette simple. We worked on this for hours."

Fisher says that eventually they showed what they had shot to the producers. "They were interested and liked what we had done, so asked us to continue our work. Ideas kept evolving throughout the process and we did a second promo. This they really liked but asked us to go in another direction and instead of concentrating on oil and

water to create the theme around sand. Sand was associated with oil and lack of water and was a fantastic motif. Sand also becomes symbolic of Bond's isolation and his wandering in a desert after Vespa dies."

Fisher elaborates that they then built a giant sandbox. "We played around with sand for hours and shot more female forms, sand blowing, twisting and turning. On the third promo we got the job and the go-ahead to do the title sequence."

The process was then very fast. "We got six days to shoot the sequence. One day with Daniel Craig, two days with models and a few days with the sand boxes and VFX. We also experimented with different geometrical shapes and boards and really used a lot of imagination to get all the material. Sand was great to work with as it has the ability to be liquid, solid and cosmic."

Fisher concludes: "The professionalism was fantastic and it was great to work with so many talented people. For us however, it is not so much the end result but the process that is the most rewarding. We spent six months playing around with sand and water and that is just a fantastic job to do." ❄️