

"A holiday for ideas" - judging insights with Ryan McManus

 By [Leigh Andrews](#)

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The Cannes Lions Festival of Creativity for 2019 kicks off next week, with winners announced at nightly awards from 17 to 21 June. We caught up with this year's SA contingent of judges for a preview of what to expect. Last on the list, Ryan McManus.



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Under his creative leadership, VML SA has experienced phenomenal growth and climbed the creative rankings, including being named 'entertainment agency of the year' at Cannes Lions 2017.



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McManus himself has been recognised numerous times at Cannes Lions, D&AD, One Show, Loeries, ADC, NYF, the Effies and more, bringing a wealth of experience and clear purpose to his work.

Here, McManus shares what he's most looking forward to from this year's Festival of Creativity, as well as a few of his Cannes Lions-related highlights over the years and what SA judges bring to the global creative mix...

■ ***Have you judged at an international award show like Cannes before?***

Yes – I've actually judged at Clios, New York Festivals' Advertising Awards, Cannes Young Directors, as well as Loeries. I even once judged at AdPrint in Romania, which was especially cool because I got to see Dracula's castle.

■ ***Impressive! What does that add to your judging ability?***

More than anything, it gives me perspective. You're looking at so much work, the previous experiences help me know what to look for and what to expect.



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It's important to not focus on the environment, but rather the work and to soak up different people's points of view. It's really very seldom that I have the opportunity to spend time with the best talent in the world, reviewing the best creative in the world.

■ ***Share a few of your favourite Cannes Lions-related moments over the years – either from attending personally or agency winning work-related.***

Obviously, the best thing to do in Cannes is to win and go on stage, so that's been some of the best moments!



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Having said that, two years ago we did a talk with Khuli Chana about Absolut One Source.

It was so local, so African and so different compared to the other work you would see at the festival and it felt really meaningful to do something truly African on that stage.



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Over and above all the amazing work, the highlights for me are the people and the connections you make; all the conversations you get to have, whether it's over lunch or in jury rooms or late, late at night. They are always very interesting and leave me inspired.

■ **Which category(s) of work are you judging this year?**

I'm judging Entertainment this year, one of the most exciting new categories. It's basically the convergence of all the stuff we like to do and all the things consumers like to spend time with.

Also, because the category is relatively new, the work that wins helps define the category and the direction that branded content is moving.



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To be honest though, as marketers, if we're not creating entertainment, we are not adding value, and then what are we doing?

■ **What do this year's 7 SA creatives bring to the global Cannes Lions judging mix?**

Their talent and their views are obviously very important, but I think more than anything, local judges can provide local nuance and context to understanding the work South Africa has entered.



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As a country, South Africa is very difficult to sum up in the first ten seconds of a case film. Having SA judges in the room gets our work a better chance of being understood and awarded.

■ **Give us a glimpse of the specific criteria you'll be looking for in judging this year's entries.**

With Entertainment as a category, it's really hard to define parameters, such as how long should it be, how does it fit in – but that's the rational side.

“ The more emotional question is: Is it entertaining? Do I want to keep watching it and how original is the story-telling, how does it relate back to the brand values and how relevant is it to the audience? ”

For me, this is a very meaningful category and awards must go to work that the audience chooses to spend time with.

■ **With other international award shows *D&AD* and the *One Show* having wrapped up for the year, any predictions of creative trends that are likely to stand out at Cannes Lions 2019?**

I think we are seeing more and more of how brands are having a point of view, not just a purpose, especially around gender equality and inclusivity, which is great.

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We're also seeing how completely new formats are being woven into the brand experience.

There are some great new tech ideas coming through, too. All the great pieces really seem to express the values of the brand by living them, instead of just telling you about it.

🍷 **Love that. What are you most looking forward to from the Cannes Lions Festival of Creativity 2019?**

For me, it's always the people and the work. It's really very rare to have time to disconnect, watch some of the best work in the world and chat to the most creative people in the world.

It often takes weeks to digest, but it's like a holiday for ideas.

While main judging only takes place in Cannes next week, watch for the SA judges' specific predictions of the work that will win, later this week!

The Cannes Lions Festival of Creativity runs from 17 to 21 June 2019, with Cinemark – now known as Ster-Kinekor Sales – the local representatives of Cannes Lions for SA. Roving reporter Ann Nurock will be sharing the latest news as it happens, live on the ground in Cannes, so visit our [Cannes Lions special section](#) for the latest updates!

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of diversity, inclusion and equality, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! She can be reached on Twitter at @Leigh_Andrews.

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