

with... Stu Stobbs

This week, we find out what's really going on behind the selfie with Stu Stobbs, Executive Creative Director at 1886 Advertising...



Hard to tell whether Stobbs' hair is more electrifying than the skull...

1. Where do you live, work and play?

Stobbs: I live in a beautiful little old house in Parktown, Jozi with The Mrs and our two dogs, Badger and The Roo Bear. I work on a Gautrain bus route building site in Sandton (that is, there's a lot of dust and traffic) otherwise known as 1886, which is in the FCB building. I play pretty much everywhere I can.

2. What's your claim to fame?

Stobbs: My silly hair and my frightfully sunny disposition. I also won the Walton Scroll for Dramatics in Matric - the other guy didn't turn up.

3. Describe your career so far.

Stobbs: I've written below-the-line, conceptualised above-the-line, thought through-the-line, stood next to the line and scratched my head, poo-pooed the line and done product design, crossed the line and then gotten back in line. I've worked for two big agencies, one medium one, owned one, then returned to the first big one. I've seen freezing Warsaw and been to boiling Eksteenfontein. I've even downed a beer in front of chanting rugby players to sell them an idea. I've been astounded by others' talent and been inspired by minds that have blown my own. And I've been lucky enough to work with some of the most exciting clients on this planet.

4. Tell us a few of your favourite things.

Stobbs: Food. Cooking. Wine. OK, alcohol in general. Running with the Mrs and the dogs. Travelling like... anywhere.

When someone pops their head into my office and says 'Er... Stu, do you have a sec for me to show you something I've been working on'? Driving my car - I like speed a lot (but only really when I am the driver). Oh yeah, and I am a bit of a coffee nerd.

5. What do you love about your industry?

Stobbs: Every day we get to think about how we can make people smile/laugh/cry/feel with the work we create. How much fun is that?

6. What are a few pain points your industry can improve on?

Stobbs: I think sometimes we take ourselves too seriously. Or rather, believe our own bullshit and inflate our own sense of importance. We make advertising and sell products, and that really helps our clients, which is cool - but we don't save lives. Also, I have something of a love-hate relationship with awards. I think too many creatives are obsessed with them, so much so that they forget that their real job is to sell their clients' products.

7. Describe your average workday (if such a thing exists).

Stobbs: Up at 6:30. The Mrs and I have a sleepy run, sometimes with the dogs. Make coffee, either in a Chemex or Aeropress or Nespresso machine if I am pressed for time (I told you I was a coffee nerd). Wrestle with Jozi traffic. My first meeting starts at around 9/9:30. I will usually have between five and eight meetings - mostly reviews or presentations - mostly back-to-back. I laugh a lot. I shout a fair bit. I try to avoid crying. I usually get to sit down at 5-ish and wade through mails or write pieces like this one about my average day. On a good day, I am home by 7ish for dinner on the deck with The Mrs and the dogs. But sometimes I will be working with the teams on tomorrow's deadline. There's nothing like a deadline to motivate a creative solution.

8. What are the tools of your trade?

Stobbs: I think the most important ones are a positive outlook and a thick skin. Other useful things are a good pair of ears, an easy sense of humour and a partner that will keep you sane... but I guess that's true for life not just our industry.

9. Who is getting it right in your industry?

Stobbs: There are a bunch of people doing good work. I've seen some great Joe Public stuff. GRID, of course, do amazing stuff year after year. And I love Black River FC. Network's Tusker Lite ad is also a beautifully visual ad.

10. What are you working on right now?

Stobbs: My sleep patterns, mostly.

11. Tell us some of the buzzwords floating around in your industry at the moment, and some of the catchphrases you utter yourself.

Stobbs: 'Content' is said a lot. My favourite at the moment, however, is ARPU (Average Revenue Per Use). It never fails to make me snigger.

12. Where and when do you have your best ideas?

Stobbs: I guess when I put proper time and effort to something and sit with talented people to spark with. Unfortunately, I don't generally get struck with whizz-bang earth-shakers when I am sitting on the toilet or lying in bed, it usually takes some elbow grease.

13. What's your secret talent/party trick?

Stobbs: I do a mean 'Running Man' on the dance floor. I tell offensive jokes quite well - mostly to my detriment.

14. Are you a technophobe or a technophile?

Stobbs: Technology is so much a part of life that you would be stupid to run from it. And generally I love it and embrace it, except maybe for technical conversations about how it works. I also have little patience with it when it doesn't work; I have flung a good few phones across the room/car. I do believe that, like *Terminator*, we are going to create machines that will kill us, but that's a different conversation and until then, I will embrace it.

15. What would we find if we scrolled through your phone?

Stobbs: My screen lock page has a pic of my dogs with a 'rah rah' message for me, there are loads of pics of The Mrs and I at a million different places, and there are lots of pics of food. My most-used apps are my diary, which invariably tells me I am running late; the Nike running app, to see if I am still coming last in the challenges set by my friends; and the new Economist Espresso app, which makes businessy-money-type stuff pretty digestible to a dumb creative like me. I also often use a geeky brewing app for making coffee. Heehaw.

16. What advice would you give to newbies hoping to crack into the industry?

Stobbs: You need to show off what you can do - and that mostly means building your porti. A thought is to look around you and rewrite a few of the ads you hate. What would you have done better if you had been briefed to sell that product? Maybe the brand needs more humour or less pack shot. Hell, maybe it needs more pack shot. Write it in a way that you love and think works. Then find a way to get it noticed by a CD, being careful you have not rewritten any of her/his ads! One of my writers sang a song and sent it to me, I myself have dressed up as a pizza delivery guy and took my porti to an ECD in a pizza box.

17. Plug your contact details, punt yourself - list all the places people can find you/your work...

Stobbs: 1886

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Google 'Stu Stobbs' for all my profiles (except Twitter, which is [@BigBrownBear](#) - but don't bother because I haven't updated that since Noah built his wonderful ark).

Read more about of Stobbs by [clicking here](#).

**Interviewed by [Leigh Andrews](#).*

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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