

Mercedes-Benz returns to Chapman's Peak w/ Net#work BBDO

 By [Jessica Tennant](#)

30 May 2018

Mercedes-Benz and Net#work BBDO today released the S-Class content piece that returns to the famous Chapman's Peak accident that Christopher White survived 30 years ago.



While the commercial released in 1990 told White's story, proclaiming that Mercedes-Benz cars are engineered like no others, the 2018 kicker is that the S-Class is the latest rendition on the road to autonomous driving and that, to this day, White still places his trust in the brand that once saved his life.

During a telephonic press conference that took place this afternoon, Selvin Govender, marketing director of Mercedes-Benz Cars SA spoke about the inspiration behind this, while Tim Beckerling, creative director at Net#work BBDO provided some insight into the creative direction.



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For Mercedes, the challenge was to demonstrate the intelligence of the new S-Class, so Net#work BBDO was challenged to tie together the Chapman's Peak story with the autonomous drive story of the series.

Govender said the piece shows the development of technology and advancement of safety, just how intelligence is paving the road to fully autonomous drive, and how Mercedes-Benz is pioneering this form of mobility. Noting that if some of this technology had been in White's car 30 years ago, this accident could have been prevented.

The first challenge was actually to find White. In order to do so, the agency hired a private investigator to track him down. "Amazingly, they found him in East London of all places, alive and well and, guess what, still driving Mercedes-Benz. Not that you'd blame him of course," said Govender. Needless to say, White was willing to embark on this exciting project.



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Beckerling explained that they chose a longer, documentary-style form as it presented an opportunity to unpack and explore the parts of White's story that people didn't know. "The story was driven a little bit by what we felt internally around the story being told all those years ago.

"When we first started this, we were in doubt of whether the original filmmakers had just invented him and when we found that he was actually a real person, we started to uncover more about his story, and there is so much rich detail to it."

What he particularly loves about it is that it's a generational story. "It's about the growth of the person, but also about the growth of the car. The car that went over the edge in those days was one of the safest cars and one of the most advanced cars of the day, and what's true today is that that's what the S-Class is."

This required breathing room, he says, pointing to the way people are consuming content today. "Look at Netflix. There's a major upswell of people watching documentaries, true crimes, dramas and things like that, and when you look at this film and how it has been presented now, I think it speaks straight into how this new generation of people are engaging with content - branded and unbranded - and rich stories that are only added to by this increased perspective."

Govender added that what they've found at Mercedes-Benz is that remarkable content doesn't have a time limit. "We find that people engage irrespective of how long or short it is, so the rules of social media are great and usually very adapted

into everything we do, but when we have remarkable content, we're prepared to go outside those parameters."



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Beckerling said they were briefed to humanise the technology. "I think that technology like this can be a little bit cold until it affects people in their real lives.

"I think what this story does so beautifully and what we tried to demonstrate through our work with Chris is that it can have a real-world effect – it can affect people's lives and this is of paramount importance when choosing a brand and a car to buy, as it's the real human element that makes it such an amazing car to drive."

"Mercedes-Benz is about human-centred innovation," added Govender. "The technology is great, but it's only as great as the job it does for people."

The documentary will be broadcast on Top Billing and in cinemas, as well as online for more specific targeting and measurement. Particularly excited about the cinema trailer segment, Beckerling said, "A film like this is so epic – the way that it's displayed from a visual and an audio point of view, but also the context of that captive audience will make it even more powerful." Here it is:

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