

The darlings of the advertising scene

By  Karabo Ledwaba

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Darling Films won 14 Loerie awards last week across eight different commercials - with four directors bagging prizes.



Darling Films at Loeries 2022. Source: Supplied.

A 100% women-owned business, the production company was founded by producers Melina McDonald and Lorraine Smit in 2014, with the focus on developing young and diverse talent. Over the years the Darlings have been responsible for many of SA's award winning work - both locally and internationally - including South Africa's only Glass Lion.

Their well-awarded work earned McDonald and Smit an induction into the Loeries Hall of Fame in 2021.

"Lorraine and I started Darling Films and we wanted to make it about everything we love. We wanted everyone around us to be cool, amazing and fun. Over the years we have gone from strength to strength. We are a 100% woman-owned business with more than 50% of our directors being women," says McDonald.

"We are committed to young talent. We employ a lot of young directors who still have their whole careers ahead of them and we grow with them and they grow with us. Our vision has always been about youthful energy and doing great creative work," she says.

Award winning work

McDonald says they have been hired to produce adverts that confront issues that overwhelmingly affect women. They have worked with brands like First For Women and *Hype Magazine* to make ads that gained international recognition for these issues.

Director Jeana Theron was awarded four Loeries and one craft certificate for Carling Black Label's Campaign #No Excuse.

"The Bride Armour campaign, directed by Jeana Theron for Carling Black Label and Ogilvy had also already won Cannes Gold and Jeana was also the only South African director shortlisted for direction in the Cannes Film Festival. It is an amazing project and we are very proud to be involved in it," says McDonald.

The effect of Covid-19

Like many production companies, Darling Films was negatively affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

"The film and advertising industry went under a lot of strain as a result of Covid-19. The international work reduced drastically and clients cut budgets across the board. Post-Covid-19 the industry is still struggling to get up to speed - so a great creative year is even more significant."



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"We struggle with budgets all the time as clients don't always want to invest as much in advertising due to the economic strains felt as a result of the pandemic. There's a big disconnect between international budgets and local budgets. We struggle to make ends meet on some of the local budgets and do the creative justice. We strive to produce work that is of international standard - and budgets are making this challenging," says McDonald.

Embracing a vision

Looking toward the future Darling Films wants to continue to do purposeful work that impacts culture.

"Our challenge is just to keep on doing good work focusing on creative excellence and innovation. We know our Darling

directors are invested in this too and we hope to keep offering this to our advertising industry,” says McDonald.

ABOUT KARABO LEDWABA

Karabo Ledwaba is a Marketing and Media Editor at Bizcommunity and award-winning journalist. Before joining the publication she worked at Sowetan as a content producer and reporter. She was also responsible for the leadership page at SIVag, Sowetan's lifestyle magazine. Contact her at karabo@bizcommunity.com

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