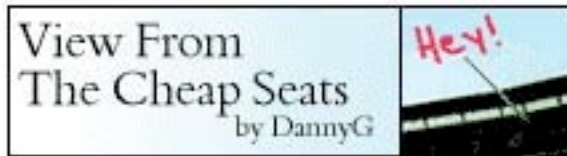


VIEW FROM THE CHEAP SEATS



12.12.2004

New Words for the New Year

Because sometimes writers invent 'em when they're tired of using all the old ones

Every year, Merriam-Webster adds new words and terms to its dictionary. In 2004, for example, they added "MP3," "information technology," and "pleather."

I decided to get a head start on proposing some new ones for 2005. Of course, I write about what I know, so I'm suggesting these from the wonderful world of advertising and marketing:

BrandGasm—A term applied to any ad agency's proprietary, trademarked process for doing research, strategy, and planning for an account. Highly touted on websites and in credentials books but never really used. BrandGasms were invented to fool clients who don't want to know their million-dollar ad budget is riding on an idea that popped into someone's head while taking a shower. Any agency can have a BrandGasm, and some even have multiple BrandGasms. But all agencies are faking them.

Award Loser—This applies to anyone who hasn't won many awards, yet likes or rejects concepts based on guessing what an award show judge would think of the idea. Award Losers are notorious for saying things like "That concept's not an award-winning ad." "What would show judges think of that?" "That's a bronze, but we really need a gold." Often times, Award Losers will pull a One Show book off the shelf or find a great TV spot on the Internet and say, "This is what we ought to do."

Tagline Dependency Syndrome (TDS)—Describes any highly conceptual, often visually-oriented ad that doesn't make any sense whatsoever until you read or hear the brand's tagline. Symptoms of TDS include a justification of the idea such as, "Consumers often like to complete the circle themselves." Books from ad school graduates are often infected with many cases of TDS. But just like cholesterol, TDS comes in both good and bad forms.

Retroactive Creative Director—Synonymous with the phrase "Monday Morning Quarterback," the RCD doesn't offer much feedback or creative direction on concepts—until they're produced and out the door. Then the RCD comes along a few months later to blame the underlings responsible for the concept by saying, "Oh, I didn't like that campaign you did," even though the RCD approved it.

Creative Diaper—This applies to any creative brief that has way too much shit in it. Like 7 or 8 primary objectives. Or a "single sentence" that feels like 3 sentences. Creative Diapers should be thrown away immediately in favor of a fresh, uncluttered one, but like all diapers, no one wants to touch it.

Conceptiwrap—A quick summary of what just transpired in a writer/art director conceiving session. Often used to validate a 3-hour pool playing session where a few notes got scribbled on a sketchpad. Example: “We got a good start. I think there are some good nuggets here.”

Marketing Subhumanager—A client, typically entry-level or mid-level, who possesses the authority to kill any work he/she doesn’t like or “get,” but lacks the authority to approve any work. Often they’ll say, “I need to go present this to so-and-so,” which means the concept won’t be presented with any enthusiasm or skill at all, and will die a horrible, premature death.

Pity Patter—The awkward small talk you have to make with the people in your office you don’t know well —and don’t really care about. Like the nerdy IT guy or the accounting person who sits at the other end of the hall. Pity Patter takes place largely in the office kitchen or during holiday parties. It tends to involve forced, inane discussions simply because awkward silences are even worse. Common Pity Patter topics include: sick children; last night’s game; how tired you are on Monday and how glad you’ll be on Friday; and “What’s that stench coming from the microwave?”

So there you have it. Now I’m off to go buy a new pleather case for my MP3 player. It’s perfectly acceptable to say that now.