

The human pattern

 By [Damon Stapleton](#)

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Saturday night. My wife, Minky, had informed me we were going to a cabaret with some friends. The cabaret was called *The Sound of Falling Stars*.

It was about the music of rock stars that had died young. A cabaret about dead rock stars. My mind had this swirling vision of a sequinned Jim Morrison or a very theatrical Elvis covered in fishnet stockings. What could go wrong?

Let's just say, I wasn't expecting much. Actually, I didn't know what to expect. Here's the thing though, the show was bloody good. The ability of the main actor to sing like a multitude of stars ranging from Elvis, Kurt Cobain, Syd Vicious and Sam Cooke was truly astounding.

I was left with two thoughts. Firstly, there was this strange novelty in having a direct experience. No screen. No list. No barrier of any kind.

An actor by the name of Cameron Goodall (slightly out of focus pic to the right), singing his heart out and occasionally having to incorporate a drunk patron into the act. This would throw the timing of the performance out and you could see the band working with him to get things back on track. By the end of the show, he was covered in sweat from the effort of making a thousand things look effortless. He deservedly received a standing ovation for a performance that made you feel like time had stopped. We had been there for 90 minutes but it felt like just a couple of minutes. The power of his performance had made you focus. The emotion he had generated had us in the palm of his hand. There was nothing else to look at or connect to, he had our total attention because he demanded we feel something. How many pieces of very expensive communication achieve that these days?



Image from [Damon's Brain](#).

My other thought was that the whole experience had been better because I had no idea of what was going to happen. We had done something pretty random and somehow that had made it better.

Random.

It is not a word people in our business particularly like. Right now, our business is enthralled with personalisation and accuracy. With knowing what you like and when you want it. In essence, the object is to create a curated life. As this happens, you will create data. This will create a pattern. This pattern will give you more of what you like. It will be very efficient at doing this. In theory, this should make human beings very happy.

Except, my Saturday night disproved that.

I did something I wouldn't have normally done. No bit of data or any algorithm would have suggested I do this based on my previous behaviour or history.

Human beings are weird and quite tricky on a good day and this fact makes me wonder how correct the prevailing beliefs in our business really are. In a couple of years, when everything is effective and efficient, will the quirky human beings of Earth value the most unexpected, slightly wrong or the pure joy of surprise more than endless predictability and complete ease?

Life is often about the need for comfort and routine. This is a pattern. A pattern we all desire. However, what makes life worth living is often about surprise and delight. That is what breaks patterns. And, I think we want that more than just about anything.

We want the unexpected. We want what we cannot imagine. And yes, we want safety and routine. But, we also want things that will blow our minds.

In the end, we want things we didn't know we wanted.

I suppose you could call that a very human pattern.

"But, instead of what our imagination makes us suppose and which we worthless try to discover, life gives us something we can hardly imagine." – Marcel Proust

ABOUT DAMON STAPLETON

Damon is regional chief creative officer for DDB in New Zealand and Australia. Before that, ECD at Saatchi and Saatchi Australia, before that, group ECD of TBWA Hunt Lascaris and global ECD of Standard Bank. He has won over 500 awards internationally, including a D&AD Black Pencil, Cannes Grand Prix, Grand Clio, ADC Black Cube and most effective ad in the world by Warc 100. Damon is now regional chief creative officer for DDB in New Zealand and Australia...

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