

Cannes 2016 Day 9 - Orwell, Oliver & Oculus - From Virtual Reality to harsh reality

 By [Eoin Welsh](#)

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Having slept like the dead, I was resurrected by the miracle of the mobile alarm clock which I forgot to set on "snooze".

I then went on to discover yet another miracle of modern technology – this one's called a "train", and it gets you from Antibes to Cannes in 10 minutes flat for a mere 8 euros for an entire week pass.

Considering that the pre-Uber analog option of "taxi" takes 40 minutes through crawling traffic and costs about 40 euros per trip, I think I shall embrace this "train" idea and add it to my growing list of innovative appreciation.

And then it was Palais time good and proper.

All the razz, with an extra helping of matazz – like Vegas for advertising.

And in true Vegas style, where everything is bigger and better than the real thing, I thought I'd try my hand at this thing called "VIRTUAL REALITY".

Wow.

At the Samsung exhibition, I hopped on for a demo, and found myself transported from the Palais basement to an insanely terrifying rollercoaster ride, followed by a dunk in a Hawaii megawave, a ski trip down a mountain and a kayak down a waterfall. Unbelievably amazing.

So much so that after the kayak ride, my pants were actually wet – oh, wait...

Man, that's the way I wanna watch *Game of Thrones* from now on!

Then appropriately, on to a talk by Kevin Kelly of *Wired Magazine* on virtual intelligence.

The gist of his thinking is that you cannot compare intelligence between humans, animals and virtual technology – they’re all completely different and each have their own spikes and troughs.

He believes all three should be embraced as legitimate intelligence – so that, in much the same way as transgenderism is being viewed as a legitimate third gender, so artificial intelligence should be viewed as a legitimate form of independent intelligence. There is technology being developed, he told us, that can insert a tiny computer into the human brain to add 100 million neurons worth of brainpower to the several 100 trillion already there. I don’t know whether to be astonished or terrified – a bit of both, really.

By contrast, the other highlight of the day was Oliver Stone talking about his new movie on Edward Snowden, the guy who made the world aware that the US government was monitoring its citizens and invading their privacy on a mammoth scale (and who is now a political exile in Russia). His point was a chilling counterpoint to the “technology above all” school of thought – that with technology as it stands, government are perfectly capable of turning their countries into Orwellian “Big Brother is watching” states. And are, in fact, busy doing it right now.

So a day of virtual reality, artificial reality (no longer a contradiction in terms) and harsh reality.

Speaking of which, I’m now off to an Irish pub with the Havas Dublin lads to face the harsh reality of Italy probably giving Ireland a pasting, which may be slightly softened by the blissfully reality of several pints of Guinness.

Keep it real.

Til tomorrow...

ABOUT EOIN WELSH

Born in Dublin, Ireland, and bred in Johannesburg, Eoin began his career writing property brochures. From these humble beginnings he has risen through the ranks to creative director at such esteemed agencies as Draft FCB, King James, Metropolitan Republic, Lowe & Partners (both in South African and Europe) and now is the chief creative officer executive creative director of the Havas Group of Companies in Southern Africa...

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