

# Cannes: The Church and the Truffle Forest

 By [Damon Stapleton](#)

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What I am about to say may make me a hopeless romantic and naive in how the world works. So be it.

There is a church in Cannes called Notre Dame Bon Voyage. It is a beautiful, quiet space. Eternal and Gothic. It is as far as you can get from the madness that I love: The Cannes Lions Advertising Festival.

It also happens to be right across the road from the Palais, where thousands of ads jostle for fleeting success. It is one of many contradictions you find in this strange town in the South of France.



Image credit © [Damon's Brain](#)

Contradictions. Cannes is full of them. It is where yesterday's buildings meet tomorrow's ideas. Inside the Palais are the greatest ads in the world. Ads and ideas that take your breath away. Outside of it, you will find some of the worst.

Ugly flyers, buttons, badges and eager young men and women in very bright T-shirts trying to thrust something into your hand. The goody bag you receive when you register mirrors this. It is like an explosion of tinsel and jargon.

You have celebrities wheeled in who speak in vague generalities and we applaud. We take phrases from them as gospel even though we have heard them a thousand times before. Their global success defeats our well-rehearsed world weary cynicism for one week a year. It would seem their presence gives us the affirmation we desperately crave. And hey, it's

awesome for our social posts.

We see the word 'creativity' plastered everywhere, but you don't actually see much of the stuff.

We hear endless explanations, polished presentations and mountains of jargon, all used to explain simple ideas.

Simple ideas.

What you do in the dark gets you into the light.

Love Freebies. Get them legally.

Let's close 170 stores on Black Friday.

What if a country had its own phone number?

Let's turn beer into fuel.

Let's get two major global business rivals to come together for peace.

This is what I love about Cannes.

These are the simple ideas that should really be celebrated at Cannes. Sadly, I feel they get lost in the clutter, explanations and tectonic forces of a rapidly changing business. With the sheer scale of what is going to happen over the next couple of years at Cannes (2017 sees the introduction of the Sports and Gaming Lions), I feel like there will come a day when these ideas will become a side show. I hope I am wrong.

Perhaps, the noise is necessary for advertising to move forward.

Perhaps, moving forward is about focusing on why our industry exists in the first place. Ideas.

The thing is, amongst all the shiny packaging, the one thing that doesn't change is a great idea. That is why they have so much under-appreciated value.

We seem to always forget this and we surround them with so much sh!t that it makes them hard to find. And appreciate.

It's as if we have a forest full of truffles. And our bizarre way of trying to find these delicacies is making the forest bigger each time we look for them. We plant more trees. We have lots of discussions about what the perfect truffle forest is. We explain truffles. We have truffle think tanks. And eventually, we confuse the forest for the truffles.

The truth is when a hungry pig finds a truffle in the forest, it knows. When a tired pilgrim sinks to their knees in a Gothic Cathedral filled with silence, they know. And, when you see a beautiful, simple idea, you know.

Knowing is when something affects you directly. This is what a great idea can do. No explanation is needed.

Unfortunately, I think we are in danger of celebrating the explanation far more than the discovery.

We need to love the gift of an idea far more than the wrapping paper we keep smothering it in.

*"One should use common words to say uncommon things" - Arthur Schopenhauer.*

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## 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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