

"We love what we do, as petrol heads and film nuts" - Young Gun Films

 By [Leigh Andrews](#)

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I recently sat down with OJ Van Jaarsveld, account director for Young Gun Films, in their classy office space where guests are welcomed by name on entry, to find out about their success in the niche world of car advertising and their recent foray into the music video space.



Team Young Guns Films: Producer OJ van Jaarsveld; director of photography (DOP) Fergus Hannah; director Rob Hannah.

Van Jaarsveld was just back from a four-day work trip to Frankfurt and Russelheim in Germany, with the Opel Unitrans Automotive team, part of the Steinhoff Group, when I met with him. The brand had sent the dealer principals from 35 dealers along for a brand immersion to renew energy for the old hats and spark passion in those who had not dealt with the product before.

It was the work trip those of us chained to our desks from 9 to 5 dream of, as Van Jaarsveld and co got to drive the vehicles through the German countryside, taking in the rolling green forests and fairytale castles in that gorgeous setting while also experiencing the ride. He didn't do any filming for Opel while there, but Van Jaarsveld did shoot a video on his phone, which was sent on to the team after the trip as a digital memento:

Van Jaarsveld confirms that Opel will use Young Guns for filming in South Africa going forward for two big wallet client wins. Firstly, is the obvious point that the exchange rate is favourable for SA-based Young Guns to work for them. Secondly, they now know Young Guns can do the work quite a lot more cost effective than their competitors – Van Jaarsveld reveals exactly how much more cost-effective below.

The collaborative music video moment

But it's not just about vehicle visuals for the Young Guns team. In fact, they recently shot a [music video](#) for Francois van Coke for the song, *My Hart*, from the album, *Hierdie is die lewe*.

Van Jaarsveld says this was an exciting first for the Young Guns team as their director, Robert J Hannah, is very much into the music scene and even DJs in his spare time. Van Jaarsveld himself has known 'Van Coke' since the early days of New World Inside.

Fast-forward to a few months ago, where Van Jaarsveld saw Van Coke had asked his fans to recommend what song he makes a music video for next on social media. Van Jaarsveld posted his choice of song and said, "Let us shoot it for you!" The rest is history, so to speak.

Brainstorming and bouncing ideas around

Van Jaarsveld reveals that Van Coke received a bit of funding from the Red Bull Studios in Cape Town, to shoot a music video for a song of his choice – that's where the budget came from. They then collaborated with him and the band on an idea for the music video, for which Van Coke gave a very blank canvas.

He gave very little direction in terms of how the story was crafted around the idea, but he wanted to end up singing karaoke at a local bar called Gringo's in Bellville. The Young Guns team brainstormed, bounced a few ideas off Van Coke, got his approval and shot the video.

Asked if he prefers that unscripted, 'go with it as you will' approach or if he prefers a little more guidance, Van Jaarsveld said it's nice to add a bit of your own creative touch to a project. That said, Young Guns doesn't mind "just being a production house," where they shoot an idea that someone else has come up with, but they do prefer shooting something content based on their own ideas.

As this was the first music video they've shot, Van Jaarsveld shared that it differs from the automotive advertising they specialise in on a few levels: "The budgets were a little smaller than those of the automotive guys but sometimes that's a challenge we enjoy. There was also lots of freedom shooting the music video vs the automotive stuff, where regulations are the norm. It's a bit more laidback, a bit more fun, and offers the opportunity for a bit more creative flair."

The long road to specialising in automotive advertising

Explaining how he personally got into this line of work, Van Jaarsveld explains that he studied account management and brand management at the AAA School of Advertising. From there, he started his career as a client service/account executive/account manager and eventually account director, working on the GMSA brands of Chevrolet, Opel and Isuzu.

A few years ago, they shot a large brand TVC for Opel and were on set as the client – being pampered, fed fancy treats and shaded under a gazebo while looking at a screen. Van Jaarsveld says they sat looking at what they perceived as a fair deal of wastage on set that wasn't actually adding to the production value at the end of the day – it was merely adding to the production experience for the client.

This frustration with the South African film industry and overall is what led to the creation of Young Guns, as Van Jaarsveld says they thought to themselves, "We can do this, and use young talent to boost the industry while we're at it." The industry was rapidly changing at the time, a handful of years ago, so they followed through by jumping on board with a few young talents to produce their own content at a fraction of the cost.

Being there from the beginning, with most of their work being for the GMSA brands, they took the lead in managing the production and pre-production for their projects. The result is funny, professional and entertaining. See for yourself:

Having spun the wheel on vehicle film production for five years now, Van Jaarsveld says they've got it down to a 'T', so can save even more on costs as they know what's unnecessary before even walking onto a set as they know exactly what needs to be done.

Saving production costs: In it for the work, not the perks

Young Guns has also built relationships with key suppliers in that industry while the key role players involved in pre-production, production and post-production are part of their permanent team. The fact that they love what they do as a bunch of "petrol heads and film nuts," makes coming to work quite easy as they're in this for the work, not the perks.

Without saying anything negative against the established production houses, which Van Jaarsveld says are brilliant at what they do, there's no denying some things become expected on those bigger sets, like fancy catering and reserved parking for the clients. There's no lavish catering here either a team Young Guns is happy to "chow McDonalds," for three days straight if need be, to get the job done. It's not all junk food-bingeing though as they have relationships with amazing food trucks that make the food fresh at a fraction of the cost, which people enjoy as part of the experience. And so, Van Jaarsveld shares that they build a cost strategy for each project in order to find the best way to make the best quality project for the smallest outlay. That's because they believe your advertising money should be spent where people can see it – rather spend that money putting the ad on TV.



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Previously, they'd give clients the option of weather insurance, but feel this is also wasteful at massive cost. Instead, they book their crew for tentative days and build that into their contingencies, so if they don't shoot on those days, they still pay them a small fee for not shooting.

Another standout factor is that they only shoot what's necessary, which can cut days off the overall shoot. Often a director and director of photography won't be involved in post-production, and a separate post-production company will handle it. At Young Guns it's all handled in-house, which means they can see the final product before they even start rolling a camera.

Big idea to TV screen in a week

All of this saves an average of 40% to 50% consistently on the nearest comparative quote. But it's not always an easy sell – just as the industry is set in its ways, so are some clients set in their ways. That's why they're warned upfront that all the 'fancies' have been stripped away, they've built relationships with young professionals, do the film production directly and have their own CGI department for rendering, motion graphics and animation, can do 360-degree VR shoots and even compose their own music when need be, as "music usage rights are insane, and library music is a bit 'meh'."

That 'cost-cutting to enhance quality and outcome' may sound idealistic but it actually works. For example, Van Jaarsveld shares that on their first-ever shoot for Opel as Young Gun films, for the launch of the Mokka SUV, the consignment of cars was very late to arrive in the harbour. But, "TV spots were booked, schedules signed off and penalties were to be had if it was late, so from when the cars arrived to when it had to be with TV stations was just over a week."

They got the job done by driving up to the PE harbour with a bakkie full of gear, flew the rest of the crew to PE, got temporary licenses and number plates that were cleared with the police and drove from PE back to Cape Town. They shot and edited along the way, and made it a little road trip story that won an Orchid advertising award from Brendan Seery.

Sounds like a winning strategy to me. Visit the [Young Gun Films' press office](#) for more, and follow them on social media for the latest updates: [Facebook](#) | [Youtube](#).

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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