

THE INFLUENCERS

Does Anyone Care Anymore?

Grand Central Recording Studios, 3 months, 3 weeks ago

DOES ANYONE CARE ANYMORE?

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Over the past 20 years, the time, budget and resources required to make one 60-second commercial have plummeted. Meanwhile, the variety of mediums with which brands can communicate their message and attempt to stand out from the crowd has sky-rocketed.

While it is important to stay optimistic about the opportunities that the new frontiers of advertising offer, it is difficult not to feel that a need for constant churn is happening to the detriment of quality, across the board. Which is why, as someone who has worked in advertising post-production for over 30 years, I ask, in all seriousness, does anyone care?

At one point, not so long ago, Britain set the standard in broadcast and mastering. Now it can feel as though the prevailing approach is one of: "That'll do", with the focus firmly on volume over quality.

This causes real damage to brands, at a time when asking people to trust you is harder than ever. For example, in sound, audiences are smart enough to know when something is off – too loud, too distorted, simply wrong – and they are not afraid to complain, via any one of the public platforms available to them.

Or they skip the break, change channels or switch off.

Take one single campaign. We all know that adding the likes of digital, social, content and experiential into the marketing mix brings with it a whole new set of requirements and challenges. Often, brands are looking to achieve this bumper set of deliverables for the same budget or less. There is also the increasing demand for everything to be delivered more quickly, mounting pressure on creatives, producers and post-production who are all scrambling to achieve award-worthy results in a sliver of the time that they once would have had.



At Grand Central Recording Studios, we are seeing more and more often that sessions are unattended, as producers and creatives increasingly struggle with the demands of being in three places at once. This means that they are not listening to the sound design and mixes in the settings that are purpose designed for this. Instead, agencies, and clients are given the task of listening to judging and approving work via headphones or laptop speakers.

This perfect storm means it is very hard for producers and creatives to care – it is simply a luxury for which that they do not have the time or budget.

However, the problem does not start and end with increased campaign pressures. Receiving solid training, both at the start of career and on the job, should be a vital part of making us the best version of our professional selves. It is now less likely that creatives come the traditional art school route or that PAs (a rare resource in some agencies) are given the opportunity to shadow senior producers, in order to gain experience and skills. And those time pressures, plus an increasing number of different roles required, mean that many working in the process do so in a siloed way, unable to comprehend the responsibilities and tasks required for other parts of the production process. Sometimes it seems as though the next generation is being trained to buy commodities rather than learn about the craft of advertising.

It does not have to be like this. Advances in technology have meant that work can be delivered more quickly. This should free up time to record the perfect take, technically, and with the perfect performance. It should also allow us to take more creative risks, to experiment with sound and to perfect the mix.

To be the best, the boldest and the most brilliant again, it will take a transformation in the way we demand and deliver work. It will also require commitment from the creative side of the divide, to push back against accountancy, resetting the creative / cost / production balance. Only by everyone, at every stage of the process, demanding perfection, can we once again build campaigns that show we care: about the brand, the audience and the industry we work in.



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Failure will reduce our work to the mediocrity of 'Knowing the cost of everything and the value of nothing'.

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