



The Berlin School Of Creative Leadership Contributor

We write about leadership and the creative fields.

Opinions expressed by Forbes Contributors are their own.

LEADERSHIP 8/20/2014 @ 10:00AM | 1,309 views

## Great Minds On Music: An Interview With Creative Chief Mark Tutssel On Audio Brands

[Comment Now](#)

From an office in Chicago, [Mark Tutssel](#) oversees the work of [Leo Burnett Worldwide](#) and its 95+ global offices. Prior to becoming Worldwide Chief Creative Officer, Mark was Executive Creative Director of Leo Burnett London. There, the agency was the United Kingdom's number one creative agency and, in 2001, was the World's Most Awarded. In addition to personally winning the prestigious Cannes Grand Prix and 45 Cannes Lions, Mark has had the honor of chairing the world's greatest award shows, including: the Clios, International Andy Awards, D&AD, ADFEST, Eurobest, YoungGuns, Addys, Sharks and Spikes. In 2008, he served as the President of the Cannes Titanium & Integrated Jury and in 2010, he served as President of both the Film and Press Juries at Cannes. He is member of the Royal Society of Arts and has [co-authored a book on Leo Burnett's "HumanKind"](#) philosophy.

Uli Reese, an award winning composer songwriter and producer for Hollywood and leading brands, interviewed Tutssel recently about the role of music in advertising as part of Reese's thesis research for an executive MBA at [The Berlin School of Creative Leadership](#). Here is an edited excerpt of the conversation:

**Uli Reese:** Are you a music lover? How do you feel about music in terms of its marketing potential?

**Mark Tutssel:** I've been looking at some of the work we've done at Leo Burnett around the world in the past two or three years and it really demonstrates the many ways of solving a problem using music, or applying music in an interesting fashion, which gives us an insight into music and human behavior. But the first question you asked was, "Do I love music?" And I defy anyone to say "no" to that question. I think music is loved by every human being on the planet. It's in our system, it's in our DNA. Think about it: our first introduction to sound is in our mother's womb. Sound is the first connection people have with humanity, with each other. I grew up in Wales,

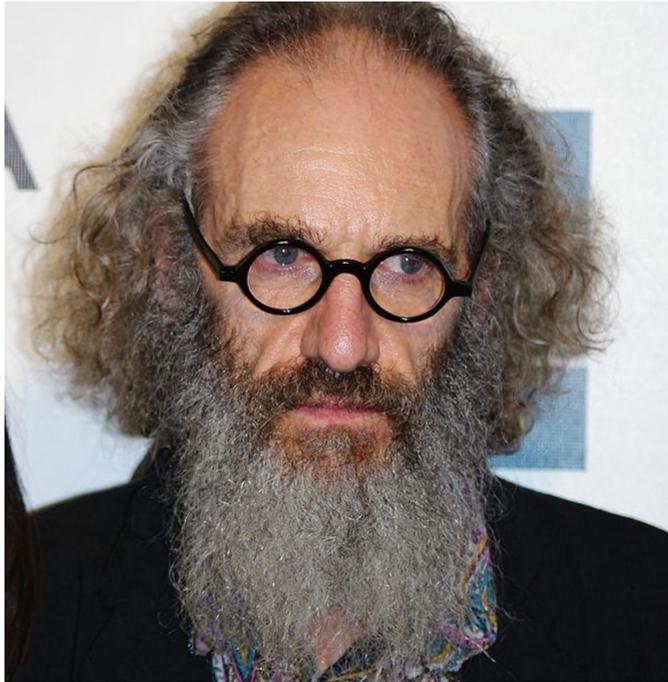
which is renowned for singing. It's home to some of the greatest singers in the world. I grew up in a family where music was everywhere: every aspect of my life had music as part of it.

**Reese:** Is that still the case today?

**Tutssel:** Well, my nephew Kristian Williams is a musician, under the stage name [Eugene Francis Jr.](#) He's toured with Coldplay. And my son literally lives for music. He's the product of the iPod generation, where you can immerse yourself in a vast choice of music. Now he plays the piano, he plays guitar, he plays saxophone, he writes music. He's one of many that have the ability to create. They write songs, they sing songs, they post them on YouTube, they get their music out there. That ability to be heard, to share it globally, it's never been easier...Geoffrey Latham once said that "music is the vernacular of the human soul." I've always thought that was a fantastic quote. Music has the ability to touch you, to move you, and to connect with you...In terms of music in advertising over the years, where do you begin? There's been so much great work. From signature stings like [Marlboro Country](#) right through to [Honda GRRR](#). And the beloved jingle, which is beginning to resurrect itself. Richard Russell, my former partner, a copywriter who worked on Honda GRRR — every single day in the office he used to say, "The jingle will be back. The jingle will be back."

**Reese:** Do you make a connection between the value of a brand and the ability to listen to a brand? Certain brands, like Apple or McDonald's, you can hear and recognize with your eyes closed.

**Tutssel:** I think music amplifies the purpose and the personality of a brand. Tony Kaye is probably one of the greatest film directors in our industry in recent times, and I remember talking to him once about the power of music. He looked at the television and he said, "A television screen occupies that space, X by Y. But music fills the room." When you watch commercials, you're watching that space, but actually you're absorbing the entire message of a brand, of which music can play a powerful part...Music has the ability to change feeling. Because it IS feeling. You can learn an awful lot about people when you listen to the songs they love. When you're invited to somebody's house and they select music, it's a deep insight into who they are, what they love, their tastes, their character. And of course music has the power to unite: think of the national anthem before a soccer game. It generates strong emotions — people can cry.



Tony Kaye at the 2011 Tribeca Film Festival premiere of Detachment (Photo credit: Wikipedia)

**Reese:** What about sound recognition and triggered responses? There's an interesting study about how a child, separated from their mother after birth, will still recognize the sound of her voice years later. And universally, a baby's cry evokes a huge emotional response when we hear it.

**Tutssel:** I think we're hardwired that way. We're conditioned to respond to sounds in certain ways. Music is part of that. When you hear the first few bars of "Start Me Up" with the Rolling Stones, the hairs on your neck stand on end. And that's how great music can really add something to communication. Since I've been in the business, it's always been about: here's a great idea, here's a great director, here's a great story board, here's a great editor, and, oh yeah, we need some music. Music's usually been at the end, sometimes unfortunately more of an afterthought rather than front and center, inextricably linked to the idea. I think what musicians and composers can bring to the table is so important, if they're briefed correctly. And of course existing music, if it's used the right way...I remember talking to John Hegarty (of BBH) over dinner a few years ago about how Levi's 501 owned music in the 1980s. Think of the classic spot "[Lauderette](#)" with Nick Kamen and "I Heard It Through the Grapevine." It captured the imagination of the British public and wove its way into popular culture. There's a more recent piece that wove its way into the audio fabric of the world, that showed the joy music creates. I'm thinking of the [Cadbury's Gorilla](#). The entire aim of the brand was to create joy in peoples' lives; that moment of joy when you pop a piece of

chocolate in your mouth. So how do you then translate that into film? Not only the spectacle of a gorilla playing the drums, but the Phil Collins "In the Air Tonight" track. The music delivered what it was intended to do, which is create joy.



'Start Me Up' (Photo credit: Wikipedia)

**Reese:** I always remind people in our business that we're working in an AUDIO visual medium – not just a visual medium.

**Tutssel:** That's a nice way of putting it.

**Reese:** I'm drawn to commercials that strike me as very unobtrusive, very human. Music certainly provides an emotional underscore that can be both subtle yet persuasive.

**Tutssel:** All great brands have a human touch. You don't need to force feed people ideas. People embrace ideas. And participation is the logical conclusion of an idea they truly love...I was talking to Coca Cola last week, and obviously music is pivotal to their communication strategy, which is all about creating happiness. And when you think of music – the joy music brings – you can go right back to "I'd like to teach the world to sing." It was really addictive at the time, and it's endured. It's not just a musical sound track to a commercial, but a kind of spiritual anthem. And it's a great illustration of the power of music.



Coca-Cola glasses in red (Photo credit: Wikipedia)

**Reese:** It seems like you work hard to make sure everything you're involved with offers a rewarding experience for your audience. You want people to be engaged with the process and with the message.

**Tutssel:** Ultimately, I'm looking for communication that creates participation. You will only truly connect with people if you put a meaningful human purpose at the center of a brand story, and invite participation into a brand. People want to be active participants in brands now. They're no longer passive receivers of those stories...Obviously, you know, we do great work for McDonald's around the world, and that's because we understand the part that McDonald's plays in people's lives. Ray Croc, the founder of McDonald's, said: "We're not in the restaurant business, we're in the people business."...When you talk about musical mnemonics, those five notes, "I'm lovin' it", ba ba ba ba ba, underpin a piece of communication with a brand. It's almost subliminal: five notes create that instant recall of why the brand exists, as opposed to just a musical ditty that gets under your skin. It's a little reminder of what the brand story is all about, and your relationship with that brand.



McDonalds-Brentwood (Photo credit: Wikipedia)

**Reese:** One last question. This has nothing to do with music, but it's a question that's become a regular part of this interview series: How does it feel when a great idea comes to you?

**Tutssel:** I think it's intuitive. Actually, it sings to you. You feel in your stomach. There was one recent spot that, the moment I saw it, I knew that was it. The idea was to use [street musicians to premier the Oasis album, "Dig Out Your Soul"](#). We "leaked" four songs from the album by getting street musicians to perform them. Google Maps guided fans to performances at locations around the city. And with the help of YouTube it became a cultural phenomenon. Another one of my favorites was a spot by [Leo Burnett in Milan for Ariston](#). The brief was to show that the washing machine had lots of capacity; it was big inside. So they turned the inside of a washing machine into a coral reef, with the clothes as fish. They could have done this via computer generated imagery, but they chose to do it for real, because they wanted to capture the fluidity of the clothes. The music underscored and amplified the beauty: "Ask The Mountains" by Vangelis. It worked beautifully — it was poetry. Another piece we did a few years ago was for AIDS, to bring home to America the devastating effect of this problem. We found that globally, if you did the math, the number of deaths was the equivalent of every single child in North America being orphaned. Every parent dying, of every child under five years of age. So, a world without parents. We went to Berlin, we cleared the streets, and we shot a city without parents. And then we enlisted the help of Michael Douglas to do the voiceover, to give it gravitas. But the music we used was Common Threads by Bobby McFerrin. And again, the music was the emotional glue that brought the whole spot together.

*Uli Reese is President of [iV and iV2](#), audio agencies based in Nashville, TN, and Frankfurt, Germany*

---

This article is available online at: <http://onforb.es/1oeyyXZ>

2015 Forbes.com LLC™ All Rights Reserved