

W e l c o m e

to Orange County

De sidste 4 år har 2 af DDB's top kreative brugt meget af deres tid på at opbygge Carlsberg International's brand i 60 forskellige lande. Nu har de forladt DDB og er ved at pakke deres danske hjem sammen for at flytte til en ø i Middelhavet. Selvom det kunne lyde som om d'herrer skal på ferie, har de faktisk i sinde at arbejde hårdere end nogensinde. Og det bliver også nødvendigt, for de har meget store planer.

Brand News spurgte John Schoolcraft hvad det hele handler om.



So, you guys are leaving Denmark, what are you going to do?

We are going to build the best agency in the world. Holy shit, did I just say that?

Sounds modest. How are you going to manage that?

We've been in this business long enough to realize that there are many before us who have tried. But if you want to build the best agency in the world, you have to accept the full consequences of what this means. The way we work, who we recruit, where our offices are located and how they are designed, the type of clients we intend to target. Everything has to answer to our goal.

One of the greatest misconceptions is the belief that agencies are just made up of people. Have you ever wondered what separates a great agency from an average one? Is it only the people? Why do some creatives do great work and then change agencies and do nothing? We believe that if you want to create the kind of ideas that will make you the best agency in the world, you have to have an environment and atmosphere that fosters this.

Our vision is to build Europe's first true creative refuge, where creatives together with our clients can solve problems and focus all energy on results, not on managing clients. I don't think that there is any greater waste of time than managing clients. Hell, they can manage themselves.

Cut through the bullshit, kill the politics, focus all energy on results and then give the client a powerful set of tools to implement in his own organization instead of a courtesy laugh. Honesty is good, crapola is not.

What are you going to do differently from other agencies?

One of the first things we intend to improve is the working process. Improving the creative process has a lot to do with the outcome of our work. I don't know how many times I have heard creatives complaining about clients. We believe that clients should be more involved in the process, that they should be given a forum where it is easier for them to make bold, daring decisions. A lot of client decisions are based on security and trust. If you involve them, they will know why they feel secure in taking an unexpected decision and you will earn their trust faster.

Our work process is adopted from the commercial film industry where you have to gather specialists and solve complicated tasks in short periods of time and on a tight budget and where everything is divided into stages: preproduction/ treatment, production, post production and the final hand-over. This is the most efficient, creative and dynamic process known. By replacing numerous unnecessary meetings with longer, more intense workshops we will be able to enhance our output and build strong relationships with our clients.

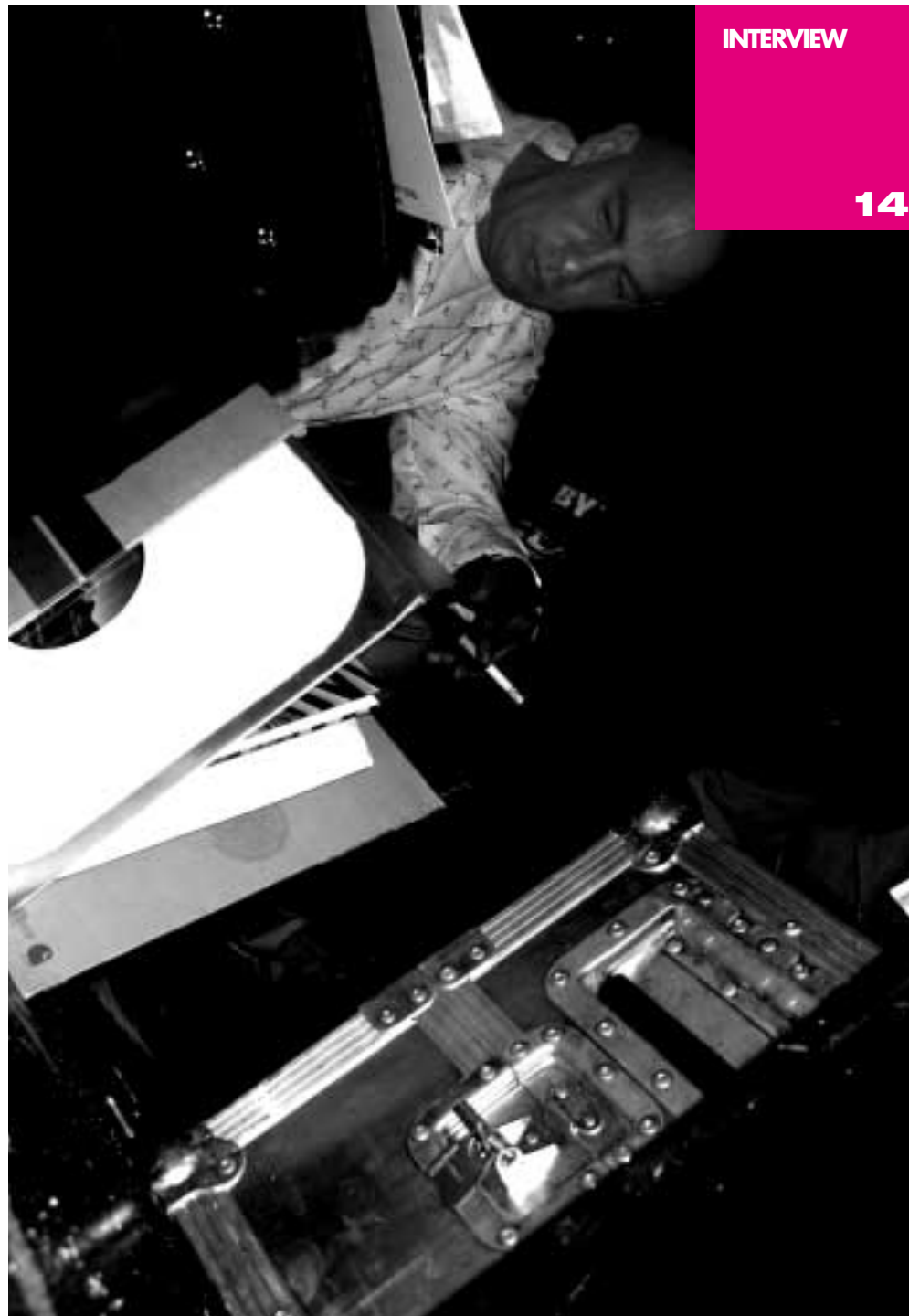
Next, we are going to limit our scope of activity. Instead of focusing on everything from TV commercials to websites, we are going to concentrate on what we call exploration projects, or those projects where clients are willing to invest in exploration in order to achieve big results. It could be a problem that is impossible to solve with traditional approach of going to

an advertising agency, or that a conventional campaign like an ad, a commercial and a couple of billboards won't solve. Let's say you want to launch a new consumer product in Europe but you don't have 567 million Euros to do it. You'd be very comfortable coming to Welcome to Orange County.

Today, there isn't anywhere a company can go if they realize that they need a solution that is totally integrated and independent of pre-chosen media and at the same time innovative enough to do big things with limited resources. You can't go to a traditional advertising agency for example and think that they are going to explore because they don't work that way. They do advertising. They can give you a great ad. A web agency does web solutions. A dm agency handles direct marketing. And all of them are after a chunk of the client's budget.

So how does Orange County fit in?

We are going to focus on the one big idea that solves a specific problem and once we have that we will look at how it can be executed. From there we will put together a special group of the absolute best experts in Europe to execute that idea. So in essence, clients will be able to work with the best people at any given discipline, because we will help them find the right person for every job. It'll save them money and give them better results. In the future,



clients may treat advertising agencies like film directors, choosing the best agency for a given job. It makes a lot of sense.

But most clients are too rigid to be able to adjust to such a system.

Exactly, that's the point. Welcome to Orange County is not for everyone. But for those clients who want to do big things and demand a lot from their agency we are very attractive. On the other hand we are not easy to work with. We place high demands on our clients. Many clients will find us a pain in the ass.

Why is that?

Because of the way they are used to working. Remember, what most agencies do is work to own a client's strategy and once they do, they can create dependency. Clients know this and since many of them are busy handling internal politics they allow it to happen. We find this process to be one of the greatest reasons why advertising works so poorly in 85% of the cases.

Our approach is to give the client all the power, making them responsible for at least 51% of the outcome. Because if we don't, no matter what we do it will never be implemented and in turn will never reach it's potential. We believe in sharing an entrepreneurship with our clients, making them part of the creative process..As a means to ensure that our clients have the power, we always conduct a formal hand-

over of each finished project and integrate the project into their organization so each client feels comfortable meeting the future alone if they see fit. If a client finds this pressure unbearable, they would never be right for us in the first place.

Why have you chosen to move your offices to Mallorca?

First of all, Jokke and I have only worked with large international projects while in Denmark. The other two founders, Christian Aronsen and Jakob Wästberg have more than 25 years of combined experience working in Europe as well. Our home market is Europe, so in essence we could have done like everyone else and opened our offices in London or Amsterdam. Instead, we chose Europe's southern California.

Much of our decision was based on our recruiting strategy. If you intend to recruit the best creatives in Europe, you can't do it from Scandinavia. You can't get creative minds to move to a place where it's frickin' cold and dark 9 months of the year and 60% of their income goes to tax.

Mallorca also has become one of the truly international areas in Europe. There are tons of new start-ups from all over Europe who have chosen the island because of its central location and great feel. For us it was more the psychological aspect of being surrounded by water on an island



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that was central to our business idea. Too many clients are trapped inside the strict, conservative framework of their corporate structure. If you want them to think blue sky, you have to physically remove them from their daily routine and Mallorca is perfect for that. I mean I don't think many clients are going to regret giving up slushy sidewalks and broken parking meters for palm trees and tapas.

But do you really think you can get clients to fly all the way down to Mallorca for meetings? It feels like the other side of Europe.

Yeah, I agree but Europe is changing. I wouldn't expect a local supermarket on Jutland to fly down to Palma for a meeting. But don't forget we are not a Danish or Swedish agency, we are European. Look at the US. It's very common that a client is based in Boston and their agency is situated in Seattle or San Francisco. If European companies can get something unique from Welcome to Orange County, a two and a half hour flight shouldn't stop them. Our thought is that once a client comes and visits us, and experiences our offices and the way we work, they won't want to leave.

So what are your offices like?

They're a refuge, a place to take brave decisions. There's an organic swimming pool, surrounded by palms, a large studio, a bodega in a wine cellar, 4 hotel rooms for

our clients, full industrial kitchen, a club room for meetings all positioned 30 minutes outside Palma through the Serra de Tramuntana mountains in a micro-climatic valley surrounded by orange trees. It's an old textile mill on the outskirts of Sóller. It's more like an Amanwanna Resort than a European office. The locals call our building "The House of Spirits."

Self-serving?

Yeah, we think our clients and employees are worth it. Walk around to 50 agencies in Europe and they all look exactly the same. Reception area with glass coffee tables, rows of offices or worse yet cubicles, posh meeting rooms. Maybe that's why all their ideas are also similar.

What about the timing? Most agencies are cutting staff.

Look, a recession is a dangerous thing. But it is also a wonderfully powerful tool. Why? Because it helps create change, topple lazy giants and make way for more dynamic companies. Sure it's tough right now. Clients and agencies take a defensive stance toward their marketing and business development. They lose track of their dreams and focus on safeguarding what they have. The problem is when companies stop dreaming, and that includes agencies, they lose their magic and their power and their employees lose much of their drive and their business stagnates. I mean if you stop dreaming, you might as



well shrivel up like a prune and fuckin' croak. I think the timing couldn't be better

I have heard that everyone working at Welcome to Orange County is going to be a creative. Is that right?

You are right in that we are not going to have account managers. We don't really believe in them. Why put a filter in a suit and tie between the client and the people who do the work? Everyone at Welcome to Orange County will be a creative. Everyone will have different backgrounds. We are not just putting together a staff of art directors and copywriters. You might find an architect, a photographer, a pervasive media developer, a McKinsey strategist who doesn't like wearing ties. But let's not forget that some of the best account managers in Denmark or anywhere are actually extremely good creatives. They are welcome. Our only rule is that everyone has to be a project developer. We manage work, not accounts.

How do you intend to get them?

We have been fortunate to have worked the last five years on major international projects, where we have worked with some of the best people in the world. It's those people who are providing support now. When we plan to diversify our DNA by recruiting people from all different European countries, you have to have a handle on the talent base. Take for exam-

ple our friendship with Larry Frey, the legendary Weiden and Kennedy creative director and founder of 180 in Amsterdam. It will most likely be a great help now. If we don't know where to find the right people, he does. Our initial contacts with creatives in Europe has proven surprisingly fruitful. There is a great interest in our way of working. We are confident that if we are successful in building a true creative refuge, it won't be difficult to get creatives.

Are you going to miss Denmark?

Actually, I don't think it's about us leaving DDB or Denmark. Our years at DDB have been great. Personally, I think Denmark is beginning to move in the right direction. For us, it's more about moving on. We have the ambition to work internationally and to do it in a way that we feel is more in touch with what clients need. When you have ideas that are unique, you owe it to yourself and the business to prove that they are right. It's a natural process that people move on. In our business, you have to do that every single day.



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