

Q&A: Till Hohmann

Chief Creative Officer, Memac Ogilvy MENA



This is second time around for Till, who was the ECD of Memac Ogilvy UAE from 2007 to 2010. Now he has 13 offices across 11 markets in the region to look after.

Now, as then, he's driven by digital innovation and exploring new and sustainable ways to build brands.

We fired off our standard questions and got some very non-standard answers.

Q: These are strange and unusual times. How has the pandemic been for you personally?

Till: Indeed, it has been strange and unusual... In my previous role I worked remotely from home for 16 months. So, a lot more time spent around the house and close to the daily lives of my family. Half the time I felt like a trespasser. Simply because for 20 years I had been away long hours, in the office or travelling or on a jury... This dramatic shift took some adjusting. That said: I do miss the energy in a war-room, with a tight team punching away towards launch. Sure, we can emulate and augment collaboration via systems such as MIRO, yet I still feel physical presence adds an edge.

But then beyond all this, the biggest thing for me the past year has been moving – within WPP, from one great operating company to another, from one regional role to the next. For me personally a move back to Dubai and the MENA region after leaving 12 years ago. This time moving as a family with two kids and two cats in the middle of the pandemic.

Let's just say it has been a pretty wild ride...

Q: Do you have a side-hustle? What do you do outside your job as a counterbalance to the stresses and strains of your job?

Till: No, sadly I do not. While I have helped launch a thousand companies, services, products and offers for others across all media and gigantic geographies, I just can't seem to have any good self-propelled ideas for a venture. That said: I was close to launching a DTC perfume business a year back... but then I had a lot of other things interrupt it. Let's put it this way: I'm open if you have a great idea and if you think I should get involved in :-)

Q: In your career, which one piece of work are you most proud of? And why?

Till: Co-writing and then co-creating a film for the BMW C1 city-cycle called “Magic Car”. This was aeons ago. Yes: we did still shoot on real film...

Why this piece?

Because this was the project that taught me vividly how every single little element matters for the outcome of our product. I learned it from the director, the late Paul Arden. Through annoying persistence, I had gotten him to show interest in “my” project and then convinced client, agency, production house to go ahead together.

Utter madness ensued. There are about 100 anecdotes to be told about it all. Most of them having to do with the crazy levels of attention to detail. And, indeed, the project did also end with us on stage in Cannes...

Q: If you weren't in advertising, what would you be doing now?

Till: The other option had always been journalism. Or the diplomatic service. And if you think about it, it's what I have ended up doing. I investigate topics, I wrote and write, I travel the world and try to connect teams around culture...

Q: Are awards important?

Till: Yes. As a benchmark of the true potential of all our thinking and craft. And, if done right, as a driver for transformation and business growth.

Q: What does it mean to be a juror of The Caples Awards 2022?

Till: It's a great honour. I have always liked work that is a bit more systematic, uses mechanics and tech, drives real results. Much of this is what direct marketing is based on.

Q: What sort of work are you hoping to see?

Till: I look forward to smart work by clever people. Or the other way around, if you prefer...

Q: I know, I know. Impossible question but - what is your one all-time favourite piece of advertising, the one idea you both admire and envy and wish that you'd done yourself?

Till: Inventing and pushing out a program such as American Express' Small Business Saturday.

