

WORD FROM THE PLAYWRIGHT

The commercial played only once. And we're still talking about it.

History plays are more than reflections on our past. They shine new light on our present. And if they're based on incidents of enduring currency, if they dramatize individuals of rare genius, then our evershifting present will continue to be illuminated by these stories.

Early in my research, I came upon the controversy over authorship of the "Daisy" ad. It was soon clear that the controversy hadn't diminished since the spot aired in 1964. There were two camps, each fiercely defended. One claimed that Tony Schwartz was the genius and sole inspiration behind the ad. The other held the position that the "ad men" at Madison Avenue top agency Doyle Dane Bernbach were the brains behind "Daisy."

Despite the uncertainty, several things are clear. To me, at least. First, the "Daisy" ad, which was created in 1964, would not exist if it weren't for a remarkably similar radio spot that Schwartz created on his own in 1962. Second, and despite the first point, the most famous political commercial ever made was the result of a creative collaboration in which many hands played instrumental roles in its conception and execution: Tony Schwartz, Sid Myers, Stan Lee, Aaron Ehrlich, Lloyd Wright, and of course Bill Bernbach. If it weren't for each of their influences, we would not have such an incredibly nuanced and perfectly packaged spot. And third, all of these magnificent figures deserve their place in the history of modern communications.

Bill Bernbach ushered in advertising's Creative Revolution, bringing excitement and renewed appreciation to a then-tired industry that lacked in lustre, and had surfeit of cynicism. The tasteful maverick whose quotes adorn the walls of ad agencies everywhere taught his leagues of offspring that whereas advertising is persuasion, persuasion itself is not a science, but an art.

Tony Schwartz was a man ahead of his time, and though he faced restrictions of space and conventionality, he broke the barriers of each. A man-of-the-people, he'd converse with his colleague Marshall McLuhan, or with a sitting president, or with the fruit vendor down the street. It was all of equal value. And it's all stored in the collection that bears his name at the Library of Congress.

These two giants revolutionized the way we transmit, and even understand ideas and information. And they made their greatest impact at a time when our species was ill-prepared for an unstoppable wave of persuasion, delivered upon our defenseless senses through the unprecedented power of television.

The effect of electronic media, and specifically television, on politics and campaigning—the effect of television on EVERYTHING—is one of paradigm shift. Campaigns which failed to understand and incorporate these new technologies to their full potential were decimated. We've seen the same thing in recent years with campaigns that lack effective strategies for social media.

Speaking of media, it's impossible to get a true sense of the new realities described in this play without experiencing the various media elements referenced in this script. A weblink has been provided on the following pages as a useful reference for any reader who wishes an extra-dimensional experience of the play. But I'd like to highlight some foundational elements here.

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If the 1964 U.S. presidential election was the first American contest that saw the impact television commercials could have on a campaign, then it's the creative minds at Bill Bernbach's flagship agency who are responsible for that. The best place to see the whole of their work on the 1964 campaign is at www.livingroomcandidate.org. This site includes a history of American presidential campaign commercials— Republican and Democrat—dating back to 1952. By comparing the ads that Bernbach's team created for Lyndon Johnson with Barry Goldwater's tired missives, it's easy to see their game-changing effect. And while you're there, take a look at the ads that helped propel Richard Nixon to the presidency in the 1968 campaign, and which demonstrate, in hindsight, just how wary we must be about the power of advertising.

Which brings me, finally, to Tony Schwartz, a man whose work still resonates throughout our heavily mediated world. And it's hardly an exaggeration to say that his book *The Responsive Chord* is a sacred text in some circles. Though it may seem simple now, Tony's "resonance theory," derived from his understanding of the mechanics of hearing, is still a mind-blowing concept. And it's a concept that, frankly, will stand the test of time no matter where technology takes us, because nothing will outpace the electronic speed that the theory is based on.

I hope you enjoy the play, and that its arguments and discoveries are as relevant now as they were in 1964. I hope the story resonates.

Or as Tony might say, I hope you remember it for the rest of your...

—Sean Devine
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