

# Respect the pain

 By [Damon Stapleton](#)

7 Mar 2018

I would like to talk about a feeling. A very strange and specific feeling that you can get, being a creative in advertising. To explain it, I will take you back a few years, to a job interview I had in London.

It was at the Ivy. Now, for anybody in London, this restaurant is an institution. If London was a restaurant, it would be the Ivy.

## The neatness of 'Jean-Claude'

At the time, I didn't know any of this as I had just arrived from the colonies. I walked past the famous stained-glass windows, opened the door and, with as much fake confidence as I could muster, announced to the maître d' that I was here for lunch at the Ivy. The maître d' – that I decided was called Jean-Claude – was impeccable. He wore a suit so well that I was convinced it was airbrushed. 'Neat' was not the word. He displayed a level of flawlessness that I am incapable of matching.

His faultless hair alone could make you feel like you were wearing brown shoes with a black tuxedo for the rest of your life. It had the allure and symmetry you will only ever see looking down through the clouds at vineyards somewhere in Burgundy. The comb he used was probably handed down in a mystical ceremony, deep in the Black Forest, where Europe's finest headwaiters meet in cloaks, exchanging stolen bottles of wine, wheels of cheese and closely guarded neat secrets, that I am sure very few mortals can understand. But I digress.

As I said, I had announced that I was here for lunch at the Ivy. Jean-Claude, without really looking up from a wine list that seemed to list every wine ever made, simply and instantly added a word to my sentence.

Club.

I was a bit confused. He informed me the Ivy 'Club' was next door, and that is where I was having lunch. And to be clear, The Ivy Club might be next door, but it is a very long way from The Ivy Restaurant.

This encounter gave me a strange feeling. A mixture of anger, awe and respect. He hadn't asked my name. He never knew who I was. But, Jean-Claude was so good at his job and knew his customers so well that he was certain I wasn't eating there that day.

My backpacking attire may also have been a clue.

The reason I mention this story is that I happened to watch a documentary about the refurbishment of The Ivy in the same week I watched the brilliant Nike commercial called 'Nothing beats a Londoner'.

For some reason I didn't write about it instantly. And, as it happens, I fortuitously saw the Ivy documentary the following day.

I guess for me, the connection between my story about The Ivy and the Nike commercial, is that feeling that is a mixture of anger or perhaps jealousy, awe and respect. It is a weird feeling you only have as a creative when you experience something great.

I could be a fan-boy and say what I liked about the commercial. What made me laugh, what was slick or what was new or fresh. But, the more I thought about it, what made me like the commercial was the pain. The truth is, what separates that commercial from many was the sweating of details. The appreciation of craft. The millions of tiny choices that won't let you sleep. Not taking shortcuts. Trying to make sure every second had some love. And remember, for those who think ads are getting shorter, it's three minutes long. That is a lot of love.

You could see the creatives had given everything. You could see how hard it must have been. **They bled to make something look easy and effortless.** They endured pain, lost battles and did not give up.

I don't know if the ad is perfect. I do know, however, that the creatives could not have tried harder.

Perhaps, that is what real perfection is.

It made me think of Jean-Claude. The millions of hours learning. The infinite detail. The crazy f\*cking chefs. The stupid requests and impossible guests. Smiling through the pain. Taking it, pushing through and winning. You have to respect that pain because that is how great work happens.

You have to respect that pain because it is what makes you better. It is what separates you from the rest.

Anyway, I like to think when Jean-Claude told me to go to the Ivy Club, his feet were hurting from yesterday's service. And, it was just the beginning of today's shift. But, I also know, you could be bloody sure he would be there tomorrow with perfect hair.

Nothing beats a Londoner, or Jean-Claude. They both respect the pain and painfully, yet happily, remind me to do the same.

*'Jealousy is just love and hate at the same time.'* – Drake

## ABOUT DAMON STAPLETON

Damon is regional chief creative officer for DDB in New Zealand and Australia. Before that, ECD at Saatchi and Saatchi Australia, before that, group ECD of TBWA Hunt Lascaris and global ECD of Standard Bank. He has won over 500 awards internationally, including a D&AD Black Pencil, Cannes Grand Prix, Grand Clio, ADC Black Cube and most effective ad in the world by Warc 100. Damon is now regional chief creative officer for DDB in New Zealand and Australia...

- A line is a dot that went for a walk - 30 Dec 2021
- WTF is creativity anyway? - 23 Dec 2021
- Starting again. Sometimes nothing is the gift - 16 Dec 2021
- Why does emotion matter? - 9 Dec 2021
- Relax, reality comes later - 2 Dec 2021

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>