

Fort's Amr Singh on what makes a good director

 By [Jessica Tennant](#)

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Fort agency's creative partner and director Amr Singh recently won the Craft Gold for Best Directing at the 2017 PromaxBDA Africa Awards for his work on DStv Africa's brand film in collaboration with Studio Zoo.

The film pays homage to the audiences who have grown up with the brand and have made it what it is today, according to a release sent to Bizcommunity. It showcases the ways in which DStv has grown alongside a girl turned woman as her constant companion over three decades, and allows viewers to reminisce on their own personal journeys with DStv. The result is a beautifully crafted, authentic and heartfelt piece.

[DSTV Thanks \(Dir. Cut\)](#) from [Fort](#) on [Vimeo](#).

Here, Singh shares his secrets to directing success...

 ***Congratulations on the win! What does this recognition mean to you, and for the agency?***

It means a great deal to me. I think craft awards are a very satisfying type of recognition.

“ They say ‘the true measure of a house is not in the square foot, but in the square inch,’ and I think similarly it’s the finer details in advertising that resonates with audiences. ”

It creates a sense of lasting quality and worth. Hopefully this is what a craft award acknowledges.



■ **Comment on your work for DSTv Africa in collaboration with Studio Zoo.**

But, of course, no amount of craft can save a poor idea or concept. The ideation process was thorough, and the concept always felt whole and strong. Working with everyone always felt very collaborative, but grounded in a firm understanding of the story that we wanted to tell.

■ **Briefly describe the DSTv brand film and what inspired the direction?**

The premise was a seemingly simple and elegantly efficient one – show the story of a young woman unfold as a parallel to the growth of DSTv over the last three decades. The woman and DSTv are ultimately the same age, and although initially quite innocuous, we see how the broadcaster has remained a constant companion to her throughout her life.

“ It was an easy concept to digest for me, simply because I’m 32 and the protagonist’s journey almost perfectly mimics something that I can relate to at every stage in the script. ”

■ **What do you think made it stand out from the rest?**
The strength of our narrative were the human truths in them. In many ways, they stand as a reflection for the audience watching the film, playing on feelings and imagery that mimic their very real, lived experiences. The board was designed to resonate strongly in this fashion.

These are seemingly little things that we possibly take for granted, but are the moments that ultimately shape our lives, rooted in familiar rituals, emotions, movements. This film was as much about hope, friendship, family, love, as it was about DSTv.

■ **What do you think makes a good director?**

I think it’s a bag on knowing contradictions. The ability to plan meticulously and then go with your gut on the day. To have an extreme attention to detail, but also serve general mood of a moment. It’s all very tricky, and different directors seem to have very different approaches.

“ Ultimately, I think being a good director is being a student of your craft. ”

■ **What has been your most noteworthy learning in the creative field since launching Fort?**
Another tricky question. Perhaps that doing something meaningful usually means doing something that you can’t

guarantee will work.

■ **Any industry trends you predict for 2018?**

I think there'll be a continual push towards finding the illusive 'authentic narrative'.

“ We're all looking to create 'real' films, and 'real' advertising. ”

Advertising will also continue to dissolve into entertainment. It's becoming harder and harder to buy eyeballs, so we all need to be focused on creating brand-centric pieces that inherently deserve to exist, simply for their message and entertainment value. I also think we'll see the emergence of a neo-African aesthetic continue to grow. I'm not sure where this will take us, but every new piece seems to be pushing the idea of a pan-African creative visual style forward.

■ **What other accolades or campaigns are you particularly proud of and why?**

Two years ago myself and Shukri Toefy – my business partner, CEO of Fort and occasional film producer – embarked on a journey across the Kathmandu valley to make an independent film called *Unwritten*. The film won a number of local and international awards and got a couple of official selections along the way. Most notably though, it won the Van Gough Award at the Amsterdam International Film Festival, which was quite a cool and uncommon accolade to garner.



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■ **What's next?**

We've been lucky enough to work on some really forward thinking international brands in the last quarter of 2017, so hopefully we'll be able to share some great new work with everyone soon. We've also got some exciting projects lined up for 2018 that we hope will pioneer some interesting new avenues for storytelling.

■ **Tell us something about yourself not generally known.**

I am a big boxing fan.

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