

#VodacomTurns30, celebrates 30 years of a "wonderful" South Africa

Coinciding with South Africa's 30 years of democracy this year, Vodacom's new ad, by its agency partner VML South Africa, celebrates 30 years of the company.



Image supplied. Vodacom's new ad celebrates 30 years of the company and a "wonderful world" for South Africa

The ad is set to Louis Armstrong's classic, *What a Wonderful World*, and the narrative is heart-warming as it takes viewers on a time-travelling journey spanning three decades that starts in 1994 and continues into the future.

Scenes show the evolution of technology unfolding against the backdrop of South Africa's growing democracy and celebrate African ingenuity, with Armstrong's gravelly vocals as the golden thread through the ages.

Showcasing its purposes

"We as Vodacom have always been about South Africa – about the people, and our purpose," says Thami Majola,

Vodacom executive head of brand.

Director Tebogo Malope of Star Films, who collaborated with VML and Think Creative Africa on the project, adds "For the last 30 years, we have had the privilege of connecting South Africans for a better future. So, when we started to craft this brief with our agency partner, we understood that this was a great opportunity to showcase our purpose."

He says that South Africa has a story to tell – 30 years of democracy, 30 years of resilience, 30 years of always surprising the world.

"We are a country that punches way above its weight and since 1994 we have constantly proven the naysayers wrong – those who said we couldn't transition without bloodshed, we couldn't transform our sport, we couldn't manage a global pandemic."

"South Africa is truly a special country and this commercial details the amazing story of South Africa's past, present and future with Vodacom at the centre of it all."



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Danette Breitenbach 24 Jan 2024



A nod to the future

With Vodacom a constant in the lives of South Africans, the brand wanted to celebrate - and communicate that - and the key was in Louis Armstrong's iconic piece of music.

"Anybody can find a song and use it as a backdrop, but the charm, and dare I say genius, lies in how the team (writer, Verona Meyer and creative director, Ross Makepeace) were able to use Louis Armstrong's words to poetically illustrate how Vodacom's purposeful actions have contributed to creating a wonderful world for South Africans at large," says executive creative director Nhlanhla Ngcobo of VML.

In creating the storyboard, the team purposefully steered clear of what could have been a montage of memorable moments and, instead, adopted a narrative approach to moving through the decades.

It was also important that the story should not focus solely on the past. "It nods to our present and ends with a future-focused hope for new possibilities and a feeling of how wonderful things could be if we use technology to move our people further together," says Ngcobo.



Time, careful planning and quick thinking

A lot goes into telling a story of this magnitude.

"We had three different teams capturing the creatives' and Tebza's vision as well as a huge cast," notes producer, Wendy Machanik of VML.

"We could never do this without the crew we work with," adds Adam Thal of Star Films.

"Over 70 people each day working together to make every scene the best scene it could be." It took time, careful planning and, at times, quick thinking.

"Pre-production time was vital to make sure that we found the right cast and make sure that all the details around each scene were in place and agreed upon.

"Long days, myriad get-togethers, a five-day shoot and many, many hours were spent to bring this concept to life," says Machanik.

"In any major production, there's always a ton of moving parts with many obstacles to overcome. That's just in the nature of pushing to make great work," explains Alex White, managing partner at VML.

"But with a committed client team and committed suppliers, we overcame anything that got in our way of the vision for this to come to life." The result is a piece of work that is nostalgic, uplifting and carries a message of hope.

"Our campaign speaks of the South African story of why we exist," says Majola.

Credits

- Agency/ Production
 - ECD: Nkgabiseng Motau & Nhlanhla Ngcobo
 - CD: Ross Makepeace / Francois Delport
 - Writer: Verona Meyer
 - Creative group head: Khetwiwe Makhubo
 - Digital concept team: Gugulethu Pule & Junior Mokoma
 - Producer: Wendy Machanik / Linda Dlamini
 - Managing partner: Alex White
 - GAD: Trusha Khusal / Nokukanya Khoza
 - Account director: Kelebogile Lekwape
 - Production house: Star Films
 - Director: Tebogo Malope
- Client
 - ME: Brand & comms group: Andisa Ntsubane
 - Executive head of brand: Thami Majola
 - Executive head of business: Ntombi Mhangwani
 - Executive head of sponsorship: Michelle Van Eyden
 - Executive head of retail: Mariette Nebuloni
 - Executive head of digital: Lana Strydom

Marketing manager: Thato Soato, Khensani Shikwambane, Sibongile Mthimunye, Mishqah Paruk, Mpho Jama
Marketing manager VFS: Sergio Martins

Specialist Retail marketing: Tohgieda Anthony, Shirleen Mkwebane

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