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PAUL MIDDLEDITCH OF PLAZA FILMS

Who's not happy now?

Advertising's funny man is deadly earnest about success.

"I believe there was a time when advertising was the stuff you had to watch between the stuff you wanted to watch," the country's most awarded advertising director tells CWK. "I think now, because of the internet and a lot more very well made television, that audiences have been educated up to better ads," says Paul Middleditch of Sydney-based Plaza Films.

The 40-year-old New Zealander who started out as a feature film director – he's just completed another, a romantic comedy due for release later this year – has bagged more than 200 awards internationally, just on half of them for beer ads that would certainly figure among any viewer's most memorable.

The man who put 'Not happy, Jan' into the lexicon in 2001 along with a clutch of more recent humorous

ads for Yellow Pages is also the creative force behind 'Flashdance', where a fat man dances his Carlton brewery job interview. For Fosters, Middleditch also created the 'Big Ad' that, he says, made big ads fashionable again. "It won a lot of recognition awards and in America I saw it on *World's Funniest Ads*," he tells CWK. "It was released on the internet before it was put to air and people started to send it to each other and it became a global phenomenon. Clients suddenly realised the kick-on effect of making entertaining, original ads."

Plaza Films also works with agencies in Britain, Europe and Asia. "There's a big bland area of technique out there, and my main technique is humour," he says. "As a comic director, I think I have a pretty universal sense of humour, and it's a tried and true formula that humour sells."