

Pittsburgh's ad industry celebrates creative work and seeing each other again

But will ChatGPT give the robots the skills to write jingles?



PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE

Got a news tip? 412-263-1601

localnews@post-gazette.com

APR 29, 2023

12:50 PM

A century ago, when the club now known as the American Advertising Federation Pittsburgh got its start, it's unlikely many people were expecting machines to be in a position to write slogans to sell beer and paint, to create illustrations and even to identify smart media buys.

Yet, here we are.

“If you are reading this, the robots have already taken over,” says the deadpan copy in an ad in the program for this year’s Pittsburgh American Advertising Awards show, held Thursday at the August Wilson Center, Downtown. “Congratulations to the last winners ever.”

Dark humor aside, the annual exercise known as the Addy awards has faced challenges lately after years of gathering to honor work by the Pittsburgh region's advertising and marketing professionals. The pandemic sent the program into virtual mode in 2021 and then the 2022 event was held at the Dependable Drive-In in Moon.

"We're back, baby!" said Maureen Rooney, president of AAF Pittsburgh, in her introductory letter in this year's event program, cheering on the club's return to an in-person gathering just in time for its 100th anniversary.

More than 300 entries submitted by almost 40 organizations represented fewer submissions than last year, but organizers were excited to report "more new entrants than we have had in a very long time." The out-of-state judges handed out 75 total awards — 29 golds and 46 silvers.

Wall-to-Wall Studios, which claims offices on the North Side and in Honolulu, took Best in Show for its work on a video for the Chicago-born band Blind Adam & The Federal League and its song, "[There was a Ballgame.](#)" The band, which describes itself on its website as "something of an anti-fascist punk rock family band," has worked with Shaler-headquartered band Anti-Flag and recorded on Anti-Flag's A-F Records.

If a music video taking best of show seems surprising, that's part of the fun of the Addys. This year's entries showed off a range of clients and work being handled by Pittsburgh-area shops.

Coatings giant PPG ordered up some work from its Downtown neighbor GH Advertising, which changed its name this week from Garrison Hughes. The Brunner agency, which also has Downtown offices, submitted pieces done for Cold-EEZE for Vepyr Brands, while the agency known as Animal showed off projects done for East Liberty language learning app company Duolingo.

Sharpsburg-based Deeplocal, which always has interesting clients, submitted pieces done for the Hershey Co. ("The Never-Ending Kit Kat Bowl") and for streaming giant Netflix ("Netflix 'Stranger Things' Clock").

Highmark Health might be a name that Pittsburghers think of as a medical care/insurance giant, but its in-house agency Tonic went home with 8 golds and 4 silvers.

GH Advertising gathered up 3 golds and 10 silvers; Gatesman collected one gold and 6 silvers; Brunner took 4 golds and 2 silvers; while Animal won 2 golds and 3 silvers.

Other winning organizations were Chemistry; CLC Agency; Dessert Before Dinner; AlphaGraphics; Level Agency; NFM+Dymun; Red House Communications; Voyage Visuals; Barkley; MarketSpace Agency; Odat Marketing Group and PMI Digital.

The advertising industry, like so many others, has been adapting to financial shifts and changing consumer habits — not to mention seismic technological developments.

Many in the industry are bracing for the potential impact of computer innovations such as ChatGPT, an artificial intelligence chatbot that people are using to write stories and songs, to develop spreadsheets and coding and more.

On industry blog Measured, director of product marketing Clay Cohen recently noted ChatGPT has the potential to disrupt the business model supporting search engine giant Google by helping people to ask questions and to get answers in a more targeted way. And that, in turn, could threaten the ad business that Google has built, selling marketers access to its search engine users.

Such industry shifts could affect billions of dollars in spending, with the ripples being felt in smaller marketing ponds like the Steel City.

Hence the “hail to our new robot overlords” tucked discreetly in the back of the Pittsburgh Addy award program this week. The piece came from an agency with offices in Troy Hill that appropriately enough bears the dystopian name “Untitled.”


PG business news: business@post-gazette.com

First Published April 28, 2023, 12:40pm

Popular in the Community





AdChoices 

Sponsored