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ANATOMY OF A PRINT CAMPAIGN

Owen Yap, the
face of tomorrow

P8&9



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These are the folks making beautiful pictures: (from left) Ooi, William Chien (art director at McCann), Siew, Mak (peering at computer), Wong (seated, wearing glasses) and Low.

Making of a print ad

Ideas, experts and talents come beautifully together in the creation of advertising campaigns. FRANCIS DASS observes a photo shoot up close.



Mak lends his expert eyes to a big advertising campaign.

It was a gloriously beautiful and sunny morning and the team was already hard at work when I walked in on them mid-morning in a house in Desa Sri Hartamas, Kuala Lumpur.

The buzz of the busy atmosphere was the result of a photography session for the print advertisement involving a global beverage giant. It was still the very early stages of the campaign.

The man-of-the-moment talent was Owen Yap, a TV8 newscaster, while the photographer was the multi-award winning Mak Kah Heng, 41, of the famous photography collective, Untold Images Sdn Bhd.

Mak has won awards at the advertising industry's Kancil Awards in Malaysia as well as internationally.

Yap is one of the fastest-rising fresh faces in the world of television today.

(June will see many programmes featuring Yap aired over 8TV and NTV7, and also high-profile columns in Chinese daily *Sin Chew Jit Poh*).

What was most interesting about the photo shoot was that the team (10 people, including talent and photographer) seemed to have the routine down pat.

They have all joined forces before.

They include Rebecca Ooi, the producer of the print advertisement, who is a line producer at Untold Images.

The assembled team comprised crew members of photography outfit Untold Images, the advertising agency's representatives (in this case McCann Erickson Malaysia) and fashion stylists.

What was most illuminating about the photo shoot was the respect shown by all for ideas that were driving the occasion. Everyone was accommodating and highly professional.

Mak was respectful of and deferential to the talent (Yap), as he was of the agency folks (like Sonny Low, associate creative director at McCann) and also to his own colleagues from Untold Images.

Everyone was at the appointed house at 7am and they went about setting up the lighting equipment.

Yap, who arrived soon after, was readied for the shoot by the hair and fashion stylists and photography started after that. The scenario: Yap enjoying his mug of drink.

Yap was positioned according to the story-boarded

ideas (standing near the garden; seated near the door etc) with precision and the young man expertly did as he was directed by Mak and Low.

"Lean forward. Your eyes are looking up... your eyes are looking down now," Mak gently instructed his model.

"Express yourself," Mak then said, as he peered into his Mamiya digital camera.

Low too had his input: "Breathe in the aroma... (give us) a slight smirk... very subtly..."

At times, Mak would defer to Low and ask, "Do you want the eyes to look up?" to which Low confidently would reply, "No, that's fine."

While Mak was in action, Low and his team were intently monitoring the instantaneous digital images on a laptop computer placed on a table nearby.

Occasionally, Mak and Low could be heard conversing:

Mak: "How is it?"

Low: "Good! There's one nice shot here."

Armed with meticulous eyes, Low would spot things in the photo shoot that others would have easily missed.

"We don't want the building to be visible in the background," Low pointed out and Mak dutifully tilted the camera angle slightly to accommodate.

Everyone had a specific role. While Ooi kept time and issued instructions as to when a particular shot was to be

wrapped up (there were four shots the team was trying to capture on camera, tagged "appreciation", "consumption", "lifestyle" and "candid"), others, like Mak's assistant Andrew Wong, 23, was steadfastly monitoring the computer.

His task was to keep Mak on the ball as to how the shots were turning out.

(FYI: Each "shot" comprised tens of photographs which were meticulously choreographed both technically and artistically.)

The stylists too responded swiftly to any needs: a scar on Yap's right brow was expertly touched up within seconds by make-up artiste Joey Lau while stylist Darren Siew whipped out a steam iron to make sure that the wardrobe was in perfect condition before Yap wore them.

When everyone wrapped up the photo shoot session before 4pm, the team took off to Untold Images' office to do some close-up shots of the product and talent.

They only called it a day late at night. And the companion television commercial is in the works and will be shot soon.

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An exclusive peek at the upcoming print campaign starring Yap.

From idea to storyboard

IN the beginning was the idea. And the idea can come from the advertising agencies. Or, it could even be generated by the clients themselves.

What happens next is a collaborative creative input — the experts will



The crucial tools that make a beautiful picture (in the picture is Andrew Lee, Mak's assistant)

weigh in and a storyboard would be generated.

Whether it is a television commercial or a print campaign (billboard or print/magazine/newspaper), expect the director or photographer to also impart their expertise.

Then, on the day when the idea becomes reality, all the props (and stops!) will be brought out to make the campaign a success.

In the case of the print campaign discussed in the main story, the creative team descended on the venue, armed with all the necessary paraphernalia.

There were the photographer's lights and styrofoam boards to reflect/diffuse light.

A small fan on the floor to keep the talent cool while he is in front of the camera. There was also the make-up kit and a portable coat rack to hang the clothes, a steam iron to rid the creases as well as a makeshift rubbish bin.

Just as the day-rent house was clean when everyone got there, it was left thus when the shoot ended.

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Yap projects the perfect image of a man of the times.

Man-of-the-moment

OWEN Yap, 34, is the face of tomorrow's media. It is as simple as that. An amiable young man, he has won over all who have met him with his charm and thoroughbred good looks.

As if life could be any more unfair to lesser mortals like us, Malacca-born Yap is also blessed with a sharp mind.

He studied Business Administration at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia and did his Masters in Business Administration at Universiti Putra Malaysia.

He also studied for a year at the Graduate School of International Studies at Yonsei University in Seoul, South Korea.

He's also worked as a lecturer at Nilai International College and the Open University, where he taught management courses.

How did he end up being in the broadcast media?

"I saw an advertisement for TV8's Chinese-language newscaster, sent in an application and the next day, was called for an interview," he says, amused by the speed at which things unfolded.

"It was something completely new as I have no background in broadcasting. My training was basically the mock run we did before the station (TV8) went on air in 2004.

"I was very tense on the first day," he recalls, smiling.

Yap is still academically inclined and says that he now moderates as a subject-matter expert at Open University where he writes modules on interpersonal communications and business communications.

He has left his mark on the public psyche as an emcee for many high profile events, like the premiere and media events associated with the Kuala Lumpur launch of movies like *The Banquet*, *The Warlords* and *Kung Fu Dunk*.

He is also a familiar face on television commercials, having appeared for clients such as Hotlink, Drinho and F&N.

The best description of Yap as a personality is offered by Yap Mei Fong, the marketing and PR manager for Suria Meriang Sdn Bhd (who handles Aramis and other designer fragrances): "Owen is a celebrity whom I always recommend for jobs as he is such an amiable person and he always delivers. He is well groomed, gives high performance in all areas of his life and he projects the perfect image of a man of the times."

Owen is one of the Malaysian faces used to promote Mei Fong's Lab Series Skincare for Men.

The lanky 184-cm Owen, who speaks Chinese, Malay, English and Korean, is set to appear in a number of programmes over TV8 next month.

In the pipeline are *Deal Or No Deal* and a Mandarin travel show on Korea.