

# How is New Puritanism affecting creativity?

## Discuss...



**Jonathan Lovatt-Young**  
/ Fortune Cookie

Now creative director at digital agency Fortune Cookie, Jonathan recently worked at Crayon London, where he was involved in the broadband and voice launches for BT. He's helped his new agency acquire such accounts as CBS Outdoor and Miss Selfridge. [www.fortunecookie.co.uk](http://www.fortunecookie.co.uk)



**Tom Muller** / Kleber

Tom is creative director at London agency Kleber Design Ltd, joining in 2002. Since then he's helped guide the music-centred agency through jobs for Sony BMG, Ninja Tune and Warp Records, among others. [www.kleber.net](http://www.kleber.net)



**Darrell Wilkins** / Specialmoves

Specialmoves is a London-based high-end interactive consultancy and production company, of which Darrell is creative director. Working in conjunction with advertising agencies, Specialmoves has created sites for MTV, Sony Ericsson, Toyota and more. [www.specialmoves.com](http://www.specialmoves.com)



**Graeme Aymer** / Computer Arts

Graeme is a freelance journalist based in London, specialising in design and technology. He moderates this issue's Round Table discussion. [www.computerarts.co.uk](http://www.computerarts.co.uk)





## Round Table

### New Puritanism and creativity

●● Every small change has to be signed off by the lawyers. What you end up with feels so committee-driven ●●

Darrell Wilkins Specialmoves

**Beer, fast cars, cigarettes, gambling, videogames, risqué comedians and salt have all attracted the ire of politicians recently. Bans and regulations have been enacted or called for on packaging and ads, leading some to dub the government – once party-on champagne socialists – ‘the New Puritans’.**

**What are the repercussions for the creative community? Could the beady eye of the regulator cause cowering within the industry, or might the New Puritanism inspire brighter, better ideas? Our panel chews it over.**

**Graeme Aymer: Creatively, what are you noticing about current advertising?**

**Darrell Wilkins:** The good is getting better. Everything else is getting more mediocre.

**Jonathan Lovatt-Young:** The use of celebrities is just a disaster. I absolutely cringe when I see the Iceland ads.

**GA: McDonald’s has become more interesting – innovative and witty. You don’t see Ronald McDonald anymore...**

**DW:** It did that really nice ad, where they’re in the farmyard. It’s a different direction.

We’re doing some work for a drug company at the moment, which is really interesting because it’s heavily regulated. It was hoping to get a licence so it could sell its product over the counter, but it didn’t get one, although we’re doing the project anyway. You can’t advertise prescription drugs to the public, so the constraints you work under... Every small change has to be signed off by the lawyers. What you end up with feels so committee-driven rather than creatively driven. You lose a lot. And I really hope that doesn’t happen with lots of other industries. If it’s the lawyers that are deciding what you can say in the advert...

**JLY:** That’s the same as [some] financial services. You could write a dozen fantastic lines and they could all get rejected. You just can’t be that creative.

**GA: Is that sort of thing inevitable for chocolate, alcohol or snack food ads, for instance? Are the signs there?**

**DW:** I hope not.

**JLY:** What we try to do is put it in the mix from the outset. There’s no point in →



# It's going to be pretty much required from all agencies that content has to work on everything

Tom Muller Kleber

→ trying to create stuff if you know it's going to get rejected anyway. So it's about working within the boundaries when you know what you *can* do.

**DW:** What's frustrating is it's not always clear what you can and can't do. Sometimes the lawyers are coming back saying, 'We don't think we should do this,' rather than, 'It breaks a regulation.' That's where it really harms the creative process, because that's more [about] company fear [than restrictive regulations].

**GA:** So how big is the threat of being doomed to a future of bland advertising?

**Tom Muller:** I think it will probably stay the same. Brands like Guinness and Audi, for example, will just keep pushing and doing really innovative ads.

**DW:** One thing that will happen is that advertising is going to change and the way things are advertised is going to change.

**GA:** How?

**DW:** Digital is making a big impact and there will be more interaction with brands on a number of different levels. I think the

O2 stuff, sponsoring music venues and the like, is a really good example of that, plus the sorts of services they're giving you, such as priority access. That's genius.

**JLY:** One of the things that we're into as an agency is multivariate testing. It's about building pages based on previous journey behaviour and all the rest of it. From my experience working with DART (Dynamic Advertising, Reporting and Targeting) and things like that, ads are usually based on some sort of keyword or content. I'm sure those engines are going to become smarter ... based on a whole load of variables, for really tailored advertising.

**TM:** It's kind of what Facebook is now pushing. It's like the contextualised ads, based on your status, messages or whatever. You get singles ads depending on your relationship status. The thing that you write [as an advertising copywriter] really depends on the boldness of the ads. So I think the way interactive advertising is going to work, in the future, is based on user-generated content.

**DW:** The thing with contextual advertising is that it's brilliant when it works, but when it doesn't it's rubbish. We're not there yet.

There's a long way to go. The thing with advertising is that people don't mind it if it's appropriate and they need it.

**JLY:** Do you think some of that could become a reality with RFID (Radio Frequency Identification)? AKQA used that kind of technology for the Run London event, so when you ran over the finishing line it took your mugshot and slapped it over the website.

**DW:** It's used on buses as well. They've put GPS and electronic signs inside the buses, so as the bus drives by a certain shop, for instance, the advert will alert you to that.

**GA:** What will that mean for you? Does it put creativity onto the back burner?

**DW:** I don't think so. You've got to embrace what's happening. If you sit there and just want to design display ads, you're going to get left behind. You've got to understand about RFID and GPS and all these other enabling technologies. You've got to understand that they're just another tool you can use.

**JLY:** I think of things as being a lot more snippet-based. So I might not want to see



## ●● There's no point in trying to create stuff if you know that it's going to get rejected anyway ●●

Jonathan Lovatt-Young Fortune Cookie

all of your content on the website, but I might just want to steal this bit I'm interested in, have that on my dashboard – that's the bit I want to look at. It's just about considering all the elements instead of thinking about a single piece of creative.

**GA: Is web usability consultant Jakob Nielsen, who pushes internet usability over visual appeal, the web's prime New Puritan – and did he win?**

**TM:** You don't really hear much about him these days.

**DW:** I think the argument is won – usability is good! It's like, 'job done.'

**JLY:** The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 1.0 are over 10 years old now and people who thought they had to strictly adhere to them always ended up with something that looked [completely stripped down], like Jakob's website.

But the Accessibility Guidelines 2.0, which are out at the moment, are quite specific. They've moved on massively, now considering a wider audience of people, including those with disabilities. I see no reason why everything on the web can't be

available to everyone. The key thing to think about is that [this] doesn't mean everyone has to have the same experience.

**DW:** I think that applies to platforms as well. So you can have different content on your mobile than you do on the web.

**TM:** We've been doing lots of iPhone versions of sites, scaling them down for the iPhone platform.

**GA: So you'd have two versions of the same site running concurrently?**

**TM:** Yes. So there's basically a sniffer [a program that monitors network traffic]. I don't think that's going to stop. The other mobile phone companies are jumping on the bandwagon now with touchscreen phones, so it's going to be pretty much required from all the agencies that design content has to work on everything.

**DW:** We're doing a site at the moment that's very rich. The client wants an FWA (Fixed Wireless Access) site on the front end, as well as search engine optimisation, accessibility and all these things. The only way to have both is to effectively do two sites. If that's the price of doing beautiful

and glossy on the front, as well as conforming to the client's other needs, then that's what we have to do.

**GA: So, to conclude, are the New Puritans forcing us into a lean time for creativity?**

**JLY:** I think it's going to [get] better. We'll have more devices and be more connected. I think integration is a big thing, particularly when you're thinking about devices such as the Apple TV and BBC iPlayer, which is a fantastic product.

You're going to stop consuming the media you've been used to in traditional environments and it's going to be more on-demand.

**TM:** It's going to be about multiplatform and sharing content across signs and TV.

**DW:** The good stuff's going to get better. The poor stuff's going to get worse.



With thanks to Eliu, 1 Hoxton Square, London www.eliu.co.uk