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Advertising: Hugh Downs on TV 'Silliness'

By **WALTER CARLSON**

Hugh Downs, who has delivered an estimated 40,000 commercials during a 26-year broadcasting career that has run the gamut from "Tonight" to "Today," viewed commercials from the other side of the microphone last night—and found many of them bad.

Mr. Downs, currently host on NBC's Today series, took broadcast advertisers to task for putting on "blind, callous and antiquated" commercials. He did so at an awards dinner at which excellence in advertising was cited by the Advertising Club of New York.

It was the second annual presentation of the club's ANDY awards at which five New York agencies took the top honors. Mr. Downs himself was the recipient of an award for "integrity in broadcasting," and it was in his acceptance remarks that he attacked "high irritation" commercials.

"Viewers, particularly the younger ones," he said, "are insulted by the patronage implicit in this sea of video silliness, and there's mounting evidence that they are rejecting this kind of advertising."

A whole generation is growing up believing it has hammers in its head and fires in its stomach, Mr. Downs said. His principal objections were to too many one-joke commercials being "repeated to a point of great unfunnyness," too much distortion of biological information and just plain incredibility. "A bite out of a hat may be funny," he concluded, "but not the 30th time you've seen it. . . . White knights on white horses, traveling salesmen with jars of instant coffee as the most im-

portant item in their luggage, women whisked out of their kitchens, tornadoes in sinks doing the dishes, may on first encounter put a lush on the wagon but the viewer deep down is saying, 'Come on, now!'"

Mr. Downs also conceded: "Ah, but you say, it works!"

"This isn't my point. It may work for a while longer but while its working it may be doing heavy harm to the credibility of all advertising."

The five agencies that won the top awards, which were presented at the New York Hilton Hotel, were Young & Rubicam, Inc., and Doyle Dane Bernbach, Inc., winners in three categories each; the Gilbert Advertising Agency, Inc., in two categories, and Delehanty, Kurnit & Geller, Inc., and McCann-Erickson, Inc., in one category.

The awards follow, by category:

NEWSPAPER BLACK & WHITE: Young & Rubicam, Inc., for Life magazine; Wesley Hotchkiss, concept, for Life magazine; Ron Brello, graphics, for B.O.A.C.; Len Sirowitz and Ron Rosenfeld, concept, for Sony Corporation; Harold A. Langerman, copy, for Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

NEWSPAPER COLOR: Young & Rubicam, Inc., for Arrow company; Don Egensteiner, concept, for Arrow company; Phil Parker, graphics, Dick Raboy, concept and copy. All for Talon, Inc.

TRADE PUBLICATION BLACK & WHITE: Delehanty, Kurnit & Geller, Inc.; Frank Siebke, concept and graphics; Dick Raboy, concept and copy. All for Talon, Inc.

TRADE PUBLICATION COLOR: Doyle, Dane, Bernbach, Inc.; Jack Beck, concept and graphics; Dick Raboy, concept and copy. All for Talon, Inc.

TRADE PUBLICATION COLOR: Doyle, Dane, Bernbach, Inc.; Jack Beck, concept and

graphics; William Sedutto, concept and copy. All for Polaroid Corporation.

CONSUMER MAGAZINE BLACK & WHITE: Gilbert Advertising Agency, Inc.; Gennaro Andreozzi, concept; Paul Margulies, copy. All for Berlitz. Len Sirowitz, graphics, for Sony Corporation.

CONSUMER MAGAZINE COLOR: Doyle, Dane, Bernbach, Inc.; Rick Levine, concept; Carol Anne Fine, concept and copy. All for Warners Bros. Robert Wilvers, graphics, for Gillette.

POSTER: Doyle, Dane, Bernbach, Inc.; William Taubin, concept and graphics; Judy Protas, concept and copy. All for Levy's bread.

RADIO: Gilbert Advertising Agency, Inc.; Harry Gittes, concept; for Guerlain, Inc. Warren Pfaff, copy, for Pan Am. Lou DuCharme, production, for Balantine beer.

TELEVISION BLACK & WHITE: McCann-Erickson, Inc.; Tony Parisi, concept and graphics. For Westinghouse. John Burghardt and Pat Steel, copy, for Cluett, Peabody International.

TELEVISION COLOR: Young & Rubicam, Inc.; Lear Levin, concept; Mike Slosberg, copy. All for Goodyear. Stewart Greene and Dick Rich, graphics, for Alka-Seltzer.

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