

ADBLAH from London



By [Mark Fiddes](#)

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Can someone clear the animals out of here?

Maybe it's all to celebrate the launch of Russell Crowe's new toga-buster Noah. But London advertising has been flash-mobbed by zoology.

Fur, feather and scale were already pretty over-represented anyway. For years, those Russian meerkats have been busy selling us insurance comparison website Comparethemarket.com. Mind you, they have been a lot less visible since the spot of bother in the Crimea. Perhaps they have been redeployed to Sebastopol where they're flogging ComparetheFREEmarket.com.

Then we have saggy old bulldog Churchill doing car insurance, not to mention the pack of other hounds representing everything from Andrex toilet tissue to television commercials themselves (Thinkbox). Add to this the cast of polar bears (Bird's Eye), brown bears (John Lewis), cats with opposable thumbs (Cravendale Milk), and don't get me onto bunnies. Somehow, we even managed to get horses into a perfectly decent commercial about surfing and Guinness.

Then, demonstrating the mordant irony for which we Brits are famed, Marmite spoofed animal welfare workers raiding consumers' homes to rescue neglected jars of the product from dusty cupboards. Needless to say, it was the most complained about ad of year at the Advertising Standards Authority.

Looks simple, but isn't

So you'd think we had endured enough, but no. Along comes trusty British biscuit brand McVitie's looking to re-establish its Masterbrand status with three ads that feature hyper-cute animals crawling out of packets. Now the corgi puppies and shorthair kittens score around 300% on the yumminess scale but then the big-eyed tarsier pops out of the Jaffa Cakes. No wonder "Sweet" is their new strapline.

It would be easy to criticise McVitie's and agency Grey London for exploiting UK advertising's lowest common denominator. But in doing so, they have made it the highest denominator too. These films are exquisitely crafted and cast. It's so hard to make advertising look this simple. Most important of all, the client has realised the place the brand could reoccupy in the nation's hearts. Biscuits, pets, complaining about the weather and you've more or less summed us up. And in a year when sugar will replace tobacco as public enemy number one, "Sweet" is a braver positioning than you think.

If I'm right and animadvertising doesn't get better than this, can we stop it right now and get to back to some creative work

from London that really does challenge convention?

The only downside, of course, with shooing the elephant and his pals out of the room is the mess they leave on the floor. No way am I cleaning that up.

ABOUT MARK FIDDES

Mark Fiddes is founder of Ideamotelier at IdeaMotel, a private network of world-class creative directors, from Beijing to New York. International brand briefs check in and big ideas check out in anything from 24 hours to 2 weeks. Previously he was a global creative director at Havas and FCB working on Reckitt Benckiser, Jaguar and Nivea.

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