



## Hey Stupid! Diesel Thinks You're Awesome

By Ken Carbone Wed Jan 27, 2009 at 3:12 PM



With every new day, the phrase “I’m just not the target demographic” seems to be more relevant for me.

Earlier this week I saw a couple of striking posters that caught my eye. They were bold, typographic and used hot colors. That was the good part. Then I read the message: SMART LISTENS TO THE HEAD. STUPID LISTENS TO THE HEART. BE STUPID.



This is a new ad campaign from Diesel fashions. Their pitch is that smart is cold, intellectual, and cautious, and has only one good idea. Stupid is exciting, hot, emotional full of possibility, and has “balls.” The logic seemed pretty weak.

I decided to visit [their Web site](#) for some clue as to what I was missing, I found an animated typographic video with thumping soundtrack spewing wisdoms such as “Stupid is the relentless pursuit of a regret-free life” and “Smart has the plans, stupid has the stories.”

This campaign hopes to capture video from people (aka customers) who will become part of their online video catalog and “give them the great opportunity to demonstrate their stupidity to the world.” It asks, “Are you doing something stupid like starting a band or building a tree house?” Not bad ideas to me.

Diesel's strategy exploits the rampant obsession with fame—YouTubing, reality TV, and the chance for instant stardom in the social networking space—to create buzz and lure shoppers to buy their clothes.



Graphically, this campaign is strong, simple, and punchy. Twisted logic aside, I agree with the basic premise that risk and failure can be enormously energizing, if not essential, to the creative process. There is value in this message. It's just that the Diesel's blatantly provocative campaign is so forced. It's meant to challenge to convention but uses old techniques. Stay tuned for plenty of worm eating, lousy singing and gross stunts that can be seen on any episode of *Jackass*. Unfortunately, it will give credence to any lame brain idea just for fifteen minutes of fame.

But there I go again, using my head instead of my heart.

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*Ken Carbone is among America's most respected graphic designers, whose work is renowned for its clarity and intelligence. He has built an international reputation creating outstanding programs for world-class clients, including Tiffany & Co., W.L. Gore, Herman Miller, PBS, Christie's, Nonesuch Records, the W Hotel Group, and The Taubman Company. His clients also include celebrated cultural institutions such as the Musée du Louvre, The Museum of Modern Art, The Pierpont Morgan Library, The Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and the High Museum of Art.*

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