

Justin Stokes, film-maker

Where does a commercial end and a film begin? The distinction has become more blurred of late as even the most mundane brand has attempted to create something that offers its target market less of a hard sell and more a subtle evocation of its products' values in story, imagery and sound.

One of those who has been at the cutting edge of this transformation is film-maker **Justin Stokes**. The 27-year-old has recently directed films for companies as varied as Skoda and Swiss Airlines. 'I started with photography but soon realised that still images were not what I wanted to do,' he says. As well as working as a researcher on TV programmes such as *Watchdog*, he became a camera operator and film editor, working on projects for Sony and Nokia among others. 'Having experience of other aspects of the business has been very useful.'

Other clients include Grand Marnier and Range Rover, and **Stokes**'s sweeping, elegantly cinematic style lends a sense of drama and excitement to filmed ads for these well-known names. Range Rover's has been playing on TV across the US, while the Skoda film was aired in the UK on Channel 5. 'In the original Grand Marnier script, there were a lot of shots of the product, but they let me use fewer of these and do other things in the final edit,' says **Stokes**.

His film debut, *Method Actor*, was part of the official selection in the 2011 Palm Springs International ShortFest film festival and has been screened at art-house cinemas around the world. Its success demonstrates how the explosion of online video has changed the game for film-makers. Instead of having to rent a cinema and drag an audience along to it, talented individuals can now produce professional-looking movies for a fraction of their traditional costs and, in days, these movies can reach a mass audience online.

Unlike many up-and-coming directors, **Stokes** feels no desperate rush to break into the world of big movies and big budgets. 'I'm not quite ready to handle it,' he says. 'In the meantime, I'm very happy doing what I'm doing.' *crusty-thought.tv*

