# Alan Cumming champions authentic collaboration to transform advertising creativity



Alan Cumming, the Scottish actor renowned for his vibrant personality and eclectic career, is no stranger to the world of advertising. At the recent Clio Awards in New York, which he hosted shortly after his appearance at the BAFTAs, Cumming shared insights on how brands can effectively collaborate with talent to create memorable campaigns. His philosophy hinges on the importance of open collaboration; as he succinctly put it, “Collaborate. Talk to them. Ask what they can contribute.” This ethos not only stresses the value of talent but also highlights the potential pitfalls of neglecting their creative contributions.

Cumming's own experience in advertising dates back to a landmark project in 2009, when he co-created a 1950s-style musical advertisement for Trojan Ecstasy condoms with his friend Ned Stresen-Reuter. This whimsical campaign featured a humorous take on the product, complete with Ricki Lake and filmed at the iconic venue, The Box, in New York. In reflecting on the project, he noted the playful approach to marketing, remarking on the uniqueness of the condom's design. Such inventive campaigns are not only entertaining but also push the boundaries of traditional advertising, evoking laughter while addressing important themes of sexual health and safety.

More recent work saw Cumming lending his charisma to Virgin Atlantic’s Upper Class lounge at LAX. Here, he played a theatrical version of himself, embodying a blend of grandness and charm that resonated with audiences. "They completely got it," he reminisces, appreciating how the brand allowed him the creative space to express himself authentically. This successful partnership, akin to his earlier projects, underscores the necessity of allowing celebrities and influencers to shine even amidst commercial constraints.

The flair and eccentricity that Cumming brings to his roles extend far beyond conventional acting. His hosting duties on the Peacock reality series *The Traitors* exemplified this transformation beautifully. Infusing the programme with maximum vibrancy, he presented in eye-catching outfits—from full-length tartan gloves to flamboyant capes—his performances elevated what could have been a standard competition reality show into an engaging spectacle. “As you go through life, different sides of your personality come out,” he explained, attesting to his evolution as a performer. This playful rediscovery has not only resonated with contestants, inspiring them to adopt bolder styles, but has also captivated audiences who appreciate the visual distinctiveness he brought to the screen.

Cumming's visual choices, such as his statement attire at the Clio Awards, reflect his belief that creativity thrives at the intersection of culture and commerce. Wearing an outfit he described as a “tartan concision” by Charles Jeffrey Loverboy, he channelled a sense of theatricality that was well-received by his audience. For Cumming, blending creativity with marketing isn’t merely a necessity but a fertile ground for innovation. He argues, “The arts have always relied on patrons. If no one pays for it, no one sees it.” The trick lies in finding synergy, whereby both the art and the commercial aspects enhance each other rather than compete.

Ultimately, Cumming’s insights serve as a clarion call for marketers navigating today’s talent economy. As the lines between influencer partnerships and celebrity-led campaigns continue to blur, his message is clear: to evoke real magic in advertising, brands must nurture and engage their talent, rather than simply fitting them into a pre-defined mold. Creativity flourishes not just from individuality, but from the authentic collaboration that allows unique voices to resonate, thus creating campaigns that are both memorable and impactful.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraph 1: 1, 4
2. Paragraph 2: 1, 2, 3
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6. Paragraph 6: 1, 4, 6
7. Paragraph 7: 1, 4

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.thedrum.com/news/2025/05/14/alan-cumming-trojan-ads-tartan-capes-and-how-get-the-best-out-talent> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.alancumming.com/2009> - In 2009, Alan Cumming collaborated with friend Ned Stresen-Reuter to create a 1950s-style musical advertisement for Trojan Ecstasy condoms. The campaign featured Cumming and Ricki Lake, and was filmed at The Box in New York City. Cumming recounted the experience, highlighting the condom's unique design and the creative process behind the ad.
3. <https://www.out.com/michael-musto/2016/2/16/alan-cumming-ive-seen-lot-penises-his-carnegie-hall-triumph> - In a 2016 performance at Carnegie Hall, Alan Cumming recounted his experience creating a musical condom commercial for Trojan Ecstasy condoms. He humorously described the initial meeting with Trojan's advertising team and the creative process that led to the ad, which also featured Ricki Lake. The performance showcased Cumming's comedic timing and storytelling abilities.
4. <https://www.thedrum.com/news/2025/05/14/alan-cumming-trojan-ads-tartan-capes-and-how-get-the-best-out-talent> - At the Clio Awards in New York, Alan Cumming discussed his approach to collaborating with brands and talent. He emphasized the importance of open communication and allowing creative freedom. Cumming shared insights from his experiences, including his work on the Trojan Ecstasy condom ad and Virgin Atlantic's Upper Class lounge campaign at LAX.
5. <https://www.designcurial.com/news/virgin-atlantic-upper-class-lounge-lax-4663697> - The Virgin Atlantic Upper Class lounge at Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) was designed with a Californian 1950s minimalist aesthetic. The design incorporated elements like white interiors and references to LA's lifestyle, aiming to create a stylish and comfortable environment for travelers. The lounge reflects Virgin Atlantic's commitment to innovative and customer-focused design.
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2009/jun/24/virgin-atlantic-cannes-lions> - Virgin Atlantic's 'Plain Insanity' campaign, promoting fare deals from South Africa to London, won the Grand Prix for radio at the Cannes Lions International Advertising Festival in 2009. The campaign featured eccentric characters who secured amazing deals flying Virgin Atlantic, highlighting the airline's unique approach to advertising and customer engagement.
7. <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1991-11-19-fi-271-story.html> - In 1991, Trojan brand condoms made history by airing a 15-second commercial on Fox Broadcasting Co., marking the first time a condom ad was broadcast on network television. The ad featured a close-up of a man discussing the importance of protection, signaling a significant shift in advertising norms and public discussions about sexual health.