

ADVERTISING STAR



## Tom Simons: President and Creative Director of PARTNERS+simons

[By Robin Salisian]

As president and creative director of PARTNERS+simons, Tom Simons's job is to "make sure that the trains run on time and that no one goes to sleep at night mad at the company."

But more than that, Simons lives and breathes advertising—the proof is in *Adweek*. He was named print art director of *Adweek's* New England "Creative All-Stars" in 1992 and *Adweek's* creative director in 1994.

But it was earlier, at Harvard University, when Simons' creativity began to develop. He majored in visual and environmental studies, taking the courses because "it was really a studio art major. I was originally drawn to it because the courses didn't conclude with exams, which I thought was seductive."

He soon realized, however, that "not concluding with exams" didn't mean less work. But with the encouragement of two instructors "who convinced me I had some creative/artistic mettle," he plowed on. "I owe them a lot," said Simons.

Simons' first advertising stint was with the ad agency Hill, Holliday, Connors, Cosmopolos, Inc., where he was "completely enchanted by the environment and the creativity."

"I had studied art and design, and the ad agency route seemed like a semi-responsible career strategy. Besides, my wife [we were married in college] had a great job, so I could afford [to] follow a dream."

At Hill, Holliday, Connors, Cosmopolos, Inc., Simons became art director before moving on to Arnold & Company, where he later became associate director. "In 1981, he co-founded Rizzo, Simons, Cohn and in 1989, PARTNERS+simons, now one of the largest independent advertising and marketing services firms in New England, depending on

who's counting," says one website.

Simons, the current president and creative director of PARTNERS+simons, works with clientele involved in the healthcare, life sciences, technology, and financial services industries, including Blue Cross plans in Massachusetts and New Jersey, Agilent, EMC, and Sovereign Bank.

"I have a real skepticism about advertising as a cultural driver or societal influence," admitted Simons. "I think that stuff is all about the creative conceit. I am much more interested, in this stage of my career, in honesty, authenticity, and, ultimately, credibility."

Which is why, when asked about his favorite ads, Simons, instead of boasting about "advertising as a cultural driver," explained how proud he is of PARTNERS+simons's growth since 1989 and said the agency's steady growth is a real testimony to "the insight in our organizing concept and our ability to evolve over time."

Simons has the same attitude toward TiVo-entertainment will evolve over time.

"Creativity will become more relevant all over again, of course. But it's not going to be just about entertainment, though

**Q. What do you do for fun?**

A. I play guitar in an alt-folk rock band. Our CD [The Loomers' *Tomorrow Today*] is available on iTunes, or you can check it out on [Pandora.com](http://Pandora.com). We've had the good fortune to play with John Mellencamp; we've played the Knitting Factory, Irving Plaza, and The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame as part of a *Fortune Magazine* program. What a gasser.

**Q. What CD is in your CD player right now?**

A. Kruder & Dorfmeister's *The K&D Sessions*

**Q. What is the last magazine you read?**

A. *Hitting the Note* (The Allman Brothers Band's fan magazine) and *The New Yorker*.

**Q. What is your favorite TV show?**

A. The local news.

**Q. Who is your role model?**

A. My dad.



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entertainment will be very important," said Simons. "We will have to strive for relevance and acknowledge the temporal nature of our creative products. The objects will no longer be long shelf lives of campaigns. The days of creating a campaign that runs for a year or five are going the way of the ghost."

But there is one thing Simons could say has a "long shelf [life]." His advice.

"Your initial objective: a bad job at a great place is a lot better than a good job at a bad place. Make sure you get initial exposure to talented people, good work habits, and high ethical fiber."

**ON THE NET**

PARTNERS+simons  
[www.partnersandsimons.com/index1.htm](http://www.partnersandsimons.com/index1.htm)

*Adweek*  
[www.adweek.com/aw/index.jsp](http://www.adweek.com/aw/index.jsp)

Harvard University  
[www.harvard.edu](http://www.harvard.edu)

Hill, Holliday, Connors, Cosmopolos, Inc.  
[www.hhcc.com](http://www.hhcc.com)

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