

The Live Experience vs The Remote Experience

John Gisby, formerly of Yahoo!

Fiona Morris, Initial Television / Endemol UK

Facilitated by David Aukin, Daybreak Pictures

Fiona Morris (FM) gave the first presentation of this session, starting by explaining that her job covers both reportage on existing live events and also creating live events which are then translated to screen. Television is increasingly averse to live events unless they are guaranteeing a large audience return. They are expensive and there is a lot of pressure on the schedule in terms of the length of time required to broadcast a live event. This means that the main live events to be screened are sport, music and one or two big cultural events, such as the millennium and the Queen's Golden Jubilee. Given that this is the picture, what can be done? Fiona described the wide range of events they do cover and played a show reel with the following examples.

The first example was the Vodafone Live Music Awards. The creation and the funding is driven by Vodafone, not Channel 4. It is aimed at young people who consume their media through a variety of platforms. The viral marketing and ticket competitions are run through mobile phones and massive internet support is given to it. By the time it is broadcast, the audience already know a lot about it. This is what TV wants: coverage on camera, access to stage, VT packages and everything that it needs to keep its audience entertained and keep it moving forwards for 90 minutes.

The second programme was *Cape Farewell*, which is about taking groups of artists, environmentalists and scientists to the High Arctic on board a wooden sailing schooner. The idea is to prompt a debate about climate change, but also to take the participants on an arduous voyage – they have to sail the boat – and take them to the front line of climate change. A film has been made from previous voyages, but only got a small audience. This time, they wanted to give the audience a different experience, so it was streamed live, which prompted a series of blogs from people, commenting on the voyage as it was happening live. A comedian, Marcus Brigstock, was also on the voyage and is now creating a new routine about climate change which will be part of another event on the South Bank in January 2008 and which will also be streamed live. All of the material will then be turned into a documentary and a dvd.

FM said it is important to think always about cross content options and always think about longevity. Content-ownership is now the new buzz; broadcasters are just a platform, just a medium. In order to get an audience, you must have good content - good stories and good characters - but the event producer can be just as responsible for who those are and for documenting them. Editing systems and camera technology is much cheaper and so you can be more in control of your content.

The third clip was from a documentary made for BBC 1 about Damon Albarn and Jamie Hewlett's *Monkey* project which opened the Manchester International Festival. BBC wanted the film because of the pop profiles of the people involved, not for the

artistic project. Chatelet Theatre, as the principal producer, did not want more than 10 minutes of the actual performance on stage to be in the 75 minute film. Luckily FM was involved early on and, in addition, the creators had been documenting their first meetings which was added to the material presented.

The final clip was *The Sultan's Elephant*. Again, there was a restriction, allowing only 5 minutes of actual coverage in the film. To get around this, the director took the decision to film the material through the eyes of four Londoners who have no idea it is about to happen and who see this magical event unfold in front of their eyes.

FM reiterated the importance of feeling a sense of ownership of content across your event and not feeling that you need a broadcaster to tell you what they want. You should record and archive everything that happens – early creative meetings, first set designs - as it could turn out to be useful material. You should look for cross-platform options along the way. Broadcast may not be the only way. There may be opportunities through the internet or mobile phone contact. If you have an audience, broadcasters and others will want to know how they can get a part of it.

FM then played the show reel.

John Gisby (JG) then gave his presentation, beginning by introducing the following areas he would be discussing:

1. The colossal digital footprint the elephant left on the internet!
2. How you can think about using new media to do 3 things:
 - a. provide a new experience for people who are part of the live audience.
 - b. reach new audiences.
 - c. harness the audience in making them part of the event, in advance of the event.

JG then talked about *The Sultan's Elephant* as being the moment when he understood what social networking sites are about. He showed the delegates a photograph he took of the elephant. Prior to the show, he hadn't shared his photos online except for privately, with a password. He didn't see why he should make his personal photos available. With his photo of the elephant, however, he changed his mind. Within 24 hours, he had a comment from somebody he had never met.

The following day, JG was out again following the elephant and realised how impossible it was to get a photo of you or your children with the elephant. The scale of the elephant meant you needed to be far away, but the density of the crowd precluded this. He realised, however, that there would be someone, somewhere, who had taken the photograph that you want and may well be uploading these photographs onto Flickr. Suddenly, there was sense in participating and sharing with other users.

Before 4th May, there were only 29 photos on Flickr with the words *The Sultan's Elephant* attached to them (as a title or tags). During the event, 7,000 were uploaded. Over the rest of the summer, another 6,000 were uploaded and between the summer and the end of October 2007, another 2,000. This is only on one site, and there are many more, and it happened without Artichoke doing anything at all. If you think about it ahead of time, you can add a whole other experience for people attending your event. JG used the example of Innocent (the smoothie company) who ran a "village fete" each year in Hyde Park. As part of the advertising, they ask people to upload their photos to Flickr.

This doesn't just apply to still images. On YouTube, there is a video of the Little Girl which has been viewed 1.7 million times. In total there are about 200 videos of the elephant on YouTube with around 2.5 million viewings altogether. Since May 2005, the sharing of video and still photography has come on and hit the mainstream in enormous ways with more and more people feeling that they can be their own broadcaster.

JG gave the example of the Natural History Museum. Each day, a curator talks to a group of schoolchildren and this is now being broadcast as well as happening live. A bigger example is from a conference that happens every year in California, but which only 100 people can attend in person. Each session is filmed and hundreds of thousands of people can now view them. The content is already there, but the audience is extended.

There are other examples of ways to get the audience involved before the event has even started. Aardman are making a new Wallace and Gromit animated film for BBC which will take 18 months to complete. In order to keep people interested - from an initial press release until the film is finished – they have set up a blog which is updated each day with the tiny minutiae of what has been happening, and a video blog with outtakes. If you do this kind of thing, you create a community of people who care passionately about what you do, who will act as your ambassadors and who you can tap into for all sorts of areas of expertise.

Another example is *The Soho Project* which was set up by a company called Fictional Media. It encouraged people to make short movies about what Soho means to them. Those making videos had to put them on YouTube and the most viewed video won a prize. The project then used all the video content to create an online video experience around Soho.

The final example is Oldton.com, which is mass story-telling by the audience. A writer called Tim Wright set up a website about a town that never existed. The audience upload stories about the history of this fictional town. Is this a live event? Is it a story? Is it a piece of art?

These examples all demonstrate a shift in the way the relationship to the audience is changing. There is no longer such a distinct separation between audience and broadcaster. The content is becoming more of a conversation between creator and audience and using the audience to create is likely to have a big impact in the future. Using what your audience generate – pictures, video, etc. – can be an important tool in attracting new audiences.

JG finished by saying that if you take the etymology of amateur and professional, the only real difference is that the amateur is doing it for love. This doesn't not necessarily imply that the quality is lesser.

The session was then opened up to questions from the floor.

Bill Gee (BGA) talked about using an image from Flickr for a festival programme having failed to get the artist to send one of their own. The person who had taken the photograph was very pleased for him to do this and it worked well. He also talked about a project currently in development which involves a fictional family. Those developing the project want to offer the public the chance to write stories about this family, so it is similar to the Oldton.com example.

Another delegate asked who owns the material in terms of copyright?

FM answered that it depends how well known your media is. Within television there are specific criteria but this will have to change. It will need to be redefined. JG added that on Flickr, you can specify not only whether your images are public or private, but whether anybody else can use them and how.

Caterina Loriggio said that we need to find ways to protect street artists, as the work is in the public domain and people assume, therefore, that it is ok to copy.

FM agreed. It's hard to separate things out that happen in a public space: those which need to be protected and those that don't.

Hilary Westlake wanted to talk further about the difference between televising a live event and televising it at one step removed by concentrating on the audience reaction to it, rather than the event itself.

FM responded that audiences are always interested in process and what goes on behind the scenes which was what worked about the documentary on *Monkey*. David Aukin (DA) added, that some companies, like Royal de Luxe, do not want the illusion shattered by letting the audience into that part of the production.

Another delegate said that when he posted photographs on Flickr, one of the people who commented on them was a member of the Royal de Luxe team who then pointed the delegate to his gallery of behind the scenes pictures, so this rule of the company's was broken. Nicky Webb added that the rule wasn't agreed with by the entire team. Some people were more keen to let the audience in further.

Another delegate raised a question about how arts producers can learn the right ways to represent their projects in the media as they can come across badly although very good at their own job.

FM replied that it's important to generate trust between the people involved. Documentaries like the Royal Opera House fly-on-the-wall series, caused a lot of damage as arts organisations became much more difficult to gain access to. JG added that to create your own media coverage of your event is not that difficult as there are tools that are easy to use. Creating a blog or material about something that you are passionate about will create you an audience. FM added that, with broadcasters, there is a finite amount of time and money. They are looking for where the audience is. If you can demonstrate that audience then they will be interested.

BG asked Stephen Powell to talk about the Manchester Passion as an event that was simultaneously live and televised. SP responded that to create the feeling the televised version is exciting and "live" you have to build a degree of jeopardy and risk into the project, so that for both audiences there is the chance of something surprising happening. He also said that the internet-based aspects of the Manchester Passion were something that was totally audience initiated and generated, but that he would focus on it future.

Nicky Webb asked whether the panel think it is a new phenomenon that people want to participate? Before and in the early days of the internet, people who came to events would not necessarily communicate with the organiser or each other, but after The Sultan's Elephant there was an enormous amount of blogging, photograph and video sharing, emailing responses etc.

DA thought that for that show it was about the fact that people discovered it and felt a bond with everyone else who was there.

Another delegate asked a question about Second Life and whether events on this are replacing live events?

JG explained that Second Life is about creating an alternative personae that exists within a virtual world. He said that it is one thing that he doesn't get and has no answer to. FM added that Endemol have just announced the deal that allows Second Life characters to be contestants on Big Brother.

DA wound up the session.