

Now that's what I call creativity

by Brett Spencer

While the finest brains of the BBC reveal our creative future next week, some of our European counterparts have already been creating their own interactive vision, and there are lessons for us.

Nowhere in creative future does there appear to be any mention of interactive gorillas. There is also no consideration of the merits of French karaoke video blogging. Hard to believe we missed them.

The EBU staged its recent multimedia-meets-radio conference to look at how public service broadcasters are bridging the gap between new media teams and broadcast teams.

Podcasting was high on the agenda and while the UK leads the way, CBC in Canada now has a programme of unsigned music which, with a million downloads under its belt, has more people listening as a podcast than as a traditional broadcast. Danish radio, meanwhile, is offering a suite of online only radio stations to complement its mainstream offering. This would be like Radio 1 launching four separate online streams of different music strands.

The event gave us an opportunity to see how smaller operations are tailoring content for different platforms and how other broadcasters are managing the tricky balance between the opportunities available and the resources at hand. Finnish radio's experiment with video blogging has its radio reporters blogging with a cameraphone that allows them to post direct to the web. They did this after the tsunami, around the rebuilding of an orphanage in Sri Lanka and on election night with two bloggers covering the event from the two candidates' viewpoint.

How did they get their busy radio reporters to do this? By convincing them it was a form of groundbreaking journalism and their colleagues would be humbled by seeing them do it first. A tactic I must try.

User generated content is at the heart of Cult, a multimedia French proposition. Forty percent of the television show is made up of video bloggers and viewers on webcams. One clip they showed even had musicians playing in the studio with viewers singing along on webcams. The website has a MYSpace sort of feel about it with the audience building its own community around the show.

But the best thing on display were the gorillas. Somewhere in the Czech Republic a group of execs sat down and thought about Big Brother and someone chimed in, 'why don't we do it with gorillas. They'll make less mess and won't need agents afterwards'.

Bizarrely, nobody dismissed the idea and stranger still, it worked. This multimedia project was online, on the radio, on public television and on cable. The public voted for their favourite gorilla by mobile. The winner was Richard who received a special award – 12 melons, and presumably a percentage of the premium rate sms. Maybe that's Davina's next move, Big Brother with hamsters.

This article originally appeared in the BBC staff newspaper, Ariel. Brett Spencer is interactive editor, Radio Five Live