

Live 8

A Case Study

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Introduction

Two major events happened the first week of July, 2005: first, the leaders of the eight richest and most powerful countries met for the G8 summit at Gleneagles Hotel in Scotland. The second event was the Live 8 concert – a series of concerts around the world featuring hundreds of popular artists all rallying around a common cause. This case study connects the G8 summit, the Live 8 concerts, and how 3 billion people witnessed this musical event both in person and online.

Live 8 Summary

According to Sir Bob Geldof, the organizer of Live 8, over 50,000 people die each day in Africa due to extreme poverty. When the leaders of the attending countries gathered at the G8 summit, they were given a plan that was developed over the last year by the Africa Commission. The goal of the plan was to drop 100% of the debts owed by the world's richest countries by the world's poorest countries, to double the amount of high quality aid which is spent in those countries adding an extra \$50 billion, and to change the injustices of the trade laws so that those countries can build a future for themselves. It is believed that the eight leaders of the G8 countries could easily save millions of lives if they took advantage of this plan and put it into place. Sir Bob Geldof organized the Live 8 concerts in an attempt to raise awareness to the issues faced by those in Africa and to help people communicate to the leaders their desire to help.

On July 2nd, 2005, nine concerts took place all over the world. Over 10 million people attended the shows in person in Philadelphia, London, Paris, Berlin, Rome, Barrie (Canada), Tokyo, Johannesburg (South Africa), and Moscow. The concerts were broadcast to roughly 3 billion people via television and online. AOL has recently provided streaming versions of

every song played by every artist at all 9 shows. All this content was difficult to organize and distribute. Both MTV and VH1 came under criticism when they interspersed commercials and educational material with the live footage. MTV program directors were trying to educate the audience, balance live footage from artists who were playing at the same times in different countries, and accommodate commercial contracts that were in place before the concert was organized.

The Internet broadcast rights were purchased by AOL early in the concert's planning, something MTV wishes it had done.. Jim Bankoff, executive vice president of programming and products for America Online stated, "What we're finding is, in the case of our space shuttle coverage or Live 8 coverage, people are getting more sophisticated. They are comfortable having their own control. They don't necessarily need a whole lot of editing on top -- they want information, but they can be in control of how they consume that information." This observation brings up a fundamental difference between television broadcasting and online broadcasting. With on-demand content, the online streaming media is already prepared to allow the audience to choose how they watch the content, and in some cases, what camera angle they'll watch it from. Just as the first Live Aid concert in 1985 was a turning point in the history of MTV, the Live 8 concerts marked a watershed for the online consumption of video, a development made possible by the growth of broadband Internet access. AOL's Live 8 coverage achieved more than 5 million unique users on July 2, which was far more than the online service expected, and streams of the concert performances, which are still available at AOLMusic.com, continue to get millions of hits.

Industry Trend – User Defined Content Distribution

As was stated in the previous section, Live 8 had roughly 5 million audience members who streamed content in through AOL. Because the event was being simultaneously broadcast from 9 locations, the audience member could choose what concert location they wanted to watch. Furthermore, once the concerts were complete, AOL provided live video streams of each song. This allowed the audience member to select specific songs or moments in the concerts and watch the footage on demand. Although I'm unclear on the specifics for the live streaming experience (I didn't watch the live stream), I've started to see an industry trend in allowing the audience members to choose their vantage point or perspective during a live event. Most recently with the Shuttle Discovery launch, MSNBC provided the means for the audience members to choose any three of eleven camera angles to watch simultaneously. (See the launch at:

<http://msnbc.com/modules/spaceshuttle/discoverylaunch/>)

Implications, Relevance & Significance of Live 8

There is no doubt that the Live 8 event raised awareness for its cause and allowed its audience to take a moment and think about the world we live in. It is also clear that this event was unique in terms of its broadcast and massive audience. From my perspective, the implications of an event like this are very positive for both the television and Internet broadcasting industry. In fact, an event like this is often necessary in order to give the broadcasters an excuse to try something new and groundbreaking.

This event and its relationship with broadcasting is a necessity to its ability to succeed. The only other way this event would've been successful is if they had a concert in every city around the world. Broadcasting is the only realistic method of content distribution

that can allow one half of the earth's population to watch an event simultaneously.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Live 8 was an event that brought together 3 billion people. I'm unsure of the influence this event had on the leaders of the 8 richest countries, but I am sure that the event set new benchmarks in broadcasting, bandwidth balancing and content distribution. This event was a landmark in the history of streaming media. Its relevance is strong and the opportunity for anyone to view segments of this concert (via streaming) has laid the groundwork, and provided a framework, for all large events to come.