

'Cross media is no longer an option, it's a must!' - Jan Willem Huisman (IJsfontein Interactive Media, The Netherlands)

'Cross media is new today, but will be normal tomorrow' – Raymond le Gué (Les Entreprises Le Gué, The Netherlands)]

Seminar Cross Media: No Longer an Option

Pilot Junior Cross Media Market

For both film and television Cinekid already has a market where international producers and financiers can meet up, get to know each other's projects, and initiate and encourage co-operation. Next year Cinekid hopes to host a similar gathering place that also involves professionals of the important third segment of our festival: new media. This year there was a pilot session that started with a public Master Class where experienced producers, developers and publishers provided insight into the current state of affairs in the cross media world. Afterwards, in a private session, Cinekid 'picked the brains' of the participating experts to get a clear view of what a Cross Media Market should contain.

'Cross media is no longer an option, it's a must!' Most people present already realise this, but it's a good thing that Jan Willem Huisman (IJsfontein Interactive Media, the Netherlands) underlines it once again. IJsfontein is a specialist in interactive communication and media productions and, active since 1999, it is seen as the first European cross media production company. A lot of its work is centred on children, so new projects have often been part of the Cinekid new media programme. They have won the Cinekid New Media Jury Award twice (in 2005 and 2008) and they have, of course, developed the Cinekid Studio.

ABC of cross media

The strength of cross media lies in the use of the specific characteristics of the different platforms, making it possible to change viewers into participating users. Next to that it is an excellent way to create more involvement in the concept or product. Let's go into these specific characteristics a little more: television and film are linear, excellent storytellers and have the ability to reach a mass audience as well as creating involvement. Websites and online games are interactive, can be used at will and users can collaborate (in the future: for now this is a 2.0 dream). Phones with GPS can be used everywhere and anytime and have the possibility to do space-specific things. Magazines and books give depth, leave space for the imagination and are linear storytellers.

To provide a better insight into what cross media exactly is and can be, Huisman makes use of an article on Wikipedia that distinguishes the following levels of cross media.

*** Cross Media 1.0 Pushed**

Almost the same content is distributed on different platforms (e.g. podcast);

*** Cross Media 2.0 Extras**

Different contents on different platforms that are not interconnected (e.g. film, tv series, game or site based on a book);

* Cross Media 3.0 Bridges

One storyline on different platforms, each of which needs to be used to catch the full experience. Built-in triggers (or bridges) instigate people to move on to another media form. This is the dream of many producers but it turns out to be quite difficult to realize (e.g. *Who Dunnit? (Wie is de dader?)*, developed by IJsfontein, which consists of a television programme that contains clues to solve a murder case and an online game where the murderer can be unmasked);

* Cross Media 4.0 Experience

A non-linear storyline where the audience creates its own experience on different platforms (e.g. *Typotoons*, also developed by IJsfontein, where children in a game (aged 8-14) co-write the script of a short story together with a children's book writer. They can also contribute drawings. The resulting animation film is broadcast the following week).

Do's and don'ts

Feel no fear; feel the fun is, according to Huisman, always a helpful state of mind when working on a cross media production. Thinking through exactly what you want and implementing this from the very start is probably the essential point in his view. This goes for all kinds of levels: how the different platforms should be used (another media form shouldn't be just an extra, but should represent a real addition); if the platforms have to be interconnected; what the level of interactivity is. Also very important is to start co-producing right away. And: respect the expertise of the different partners.

Also smart to keep in mind: maintain an open narrative approach (interactive storytelling is really difficult), don't rely on user input (the audience is lazy) and realise that a portable is powerful but unpredictable (users can be everywhere, get interrupted and are often not in the neighbourhood of a television or computer screen).

Change

How utterly important an open and positive approach is for a successful cross media production (as also said by Huisman) is something Raymond le Gué (Les Entreprises Le Gué, the Netherlands) cannot stress enough. For the last thirty years he has been working as both a programme maker (e.g. at Sesame Street) and a technology builder. Currently he is preparing the BBC for the 21st century by retooling it from tape to disk. He was producer and technical pipeline architect on the Bafta Award winning and multiple Emmy Award nominated children's television production *LazyTown*. A very important key to the success of *LazyTown* is that the content is strong - it is about sports and staying healthy. Otherwise it would have been a gimmick that doesn't last. The series combines live action, puppets, animation, VFX, and HD cinematic shooting, and was produced in Iceland in a remote, specially built studio. The good thing was that all the necessary skills were available, but not the whole apparatus of procedures and commissions which often obstructs (the) progress. The state of mind was: "you want something new? Nice, let's make it!"

In Le Gué's view smaller companies are much more advanced, the place where interesting things are happening. This means the way business is constructed today should change and be adapted to current production methods. In the last ten years there was an explosion of developments. A big difference is that user information now comes back to the developers. The result: the whole chain has changed very quickly.

At the moment there are big forces at work in the background. Cross media might be new today, but it will be normal tomorrow. Out of sight, the infrastructure to make this possible is being built right now.

Short presentations

Eight cross media products in different stadiums of development were presented by an educational publisher and production companies in the field of games, new media, cross media and mobile entertainment content. Le Gué sees secularisation and individualisation as partly responsible for the success of communities like Facebook and Hyves. A few of the projects try to build communities around one or more characters. Interactive storytelling brings a lot of planning and organising with it: writers of content need to come together regularly to keep all the storylines together. A common problem is that there is no infrastructure for financing the projects. Therefore broadcasters are often asked to step in, even if projects are completely web based. All projects are looking for partnerships and co-funding.

* *KetnetKick / Adventure Rock* - David Walgrave (Larian Studios, Belgium).

Kids Interactive Community (KIC) is a very successful PC2TV cross media game that was developed for the Belgium children's channel Ketnet, called KetnetKick. Under the title Adventure Rock it is currently doing very well at the BBC. It is an online game in a fully-featured 3D world where children can play games and make all kinds of creations such as pictures, movies, music and cartoons. They can send all the content they produce to the broadcaster, who then uses it on television or on a website. A few months ago Adventure Rock had 70.000 users. Future dreams: a change from a multi-user to a multi-player environment. So a MMO creative community, where people meet each other and play and create together in a modifiable world. Brand owners and broadcasters can join in!

* *Life Swap* - Rik Lander (U-soap Media Ltd., UK)

Life Swap is a new, web-based telenovela, a teen soap that is larger than life. Or: Desperate Housewives for children. Two European teenage girls take over each other's completely different lives, including boyfriends and pets. Culture clashes and stereotypes that are proven wrong or maybe right are part of the fun. Users communicate with the characters and tell them both what the other one is doing in *her* life. In the next episode the characters use this new information. It is about belonging or not, about being in or outside a group. Producers from both countries are needed.

* *Owning Beauty* - Mike Dicks (Bleedin'Edge, UK)

Owning Beauty is a multi-platform shopping drama about design, fashion, shopping and friendship, targeting girls aged between 13-16. The main character is Zelda, a not wealthy wannabe fashion designer, and her posh peers. The audience should become involved in a very early stadium. First a movie is planned, to establish the characters, after that the online environment is released. There is a place for gossip, a place where people can choose the side of a character and feed them with information, a shop where Zelda's own fashion brand is sold, and a set of design tools to create your own fashion that can be chosen for realisation. Dicks is looking for producers, broadcasters and retailers.

* *It's a Zoo* - Jacob Møller (Kiloo, Denmark)

Møller founded Kiloo in 2000 at the age of 19. It develops and publishes high-quality games for a broad range of mobile phones. Their games are currently available live through various telecom operators and media channels in more than 40 different countries worldwide. *It's a Zoo* is a new game around five wacky animal characters for the age group 8-12. It starts on the mobile platform so it will be easy to play. Looking for co-production partners for video and music (both mobile and web) and games (web/flash).

* *Aisling's Diary* - Trevor Curran (Campbell Ryan Productions, Ireland)

Aisling's Diary is a multi-format interactive drama series for teens that consists of television screenings, short films for web and mobile phone, books, e-mail and v-blog elements. For each platform there is specific content. Teenagers (the target group) can chat with the characters that all have their own blogs and profiles. The television series, about a girl who relocates from the States to Ireland, is filmed beforehand but nonetheless interactive: at certain points there are different options for the audience to choose. The company believes in high production value, also when the product is made for mobile phones. Broadcasters, online platform distributors, mobile and online networks and international distributors are welcome to participate.

* *Hello You! Game* - Rutger Verhoeven (Malmberg Publishers, the Netherlands)

Children don't read anymore, which you might think is problematic for an educational publisher of children's magazines. Fortunately there is the 'cone of learning' developed by Edgar Dale. This theory looks at the correspondence between the level of activity and the level of remembering. When one says and does something, two weeks later one still remembers 90 percent of what was said and done. While with reading, only 10 percent is remembered. Malmberg developed the online *Hello You! Game* (winner of the Cinekid New Media Jury Award 2007), that teaches children English while they play. *Hello You!* used to be a magazine. The target group is 8-13. Schools are often interested but Malmberg doesn't want children to associate the game with school - they will soon become bored by it. Nevertheless there are 29.000 subscribers.

* *Picnic With Pie* - Felix Bruno (Submarine, the Netherlands)

Picnic With Pie is a picture book by the Dutch illustrator Thé Tjong Khing that is published in over 15 countries. In the form of drawings (so no words) multiple stories are told around two pies and 26 figures that go for a picnic. Submarine wants to dedicate a four-

minute episode to each figure. Parallel storytelling from different perspectives, but also in different genres. Retelling the same story again and again is very suitable for the target group: pre-schoolers. Next to that there will be a DVD, website and CD-ROM for children to explore the characters for themselves or together with their parents. Walking the Dog, the animation studio of Les Triplettes de Belleville, is a co-producer. Possible partners: producers of different platforms and broadcasters

* *Aqua Patrol* – Raymond van der Kaaij, Anthony Alleyne (Revolver, the Netherlands)
When young teens (12-15) become accustomed to environmentally friendly new products like backpacks with solar panels or electric vehicles, this will influence their future behaviour - this is the rationale behind *Aqua Patrol*. Sustainable branding in an exciting animated educational series about five troubled young heroes that have to work together in order to save the world from an ecological disaster. The platforms: console game, massive multiplayer (role playing) game or virtual world, community involved and community based distribution (Bebob, MySpace).

Wishlist Junior Cross Media Market

In a private gathering, Cinekid discussed with the industry what the co-production market of 2009 should look like. Which parties should be involved, how would they like to meet up with them, what are their technical needs, etcetera?

In general there are four needs:

1. A co-production market consisting of one-to-one meetings;
2. A selling market for existing products;
3. A selling market for existing software or at least a listing of what is available;
4. An update of the latest developments in the field (in seminars)

1. Co-production market

- A controlled pitch is preferred above an open one. It is too tricky to present (or give away) new ideas to a room full of producers. The best ideas are often the simplest ones. Therefore it is safer to present projects to a possible investor or participant.
- Most people who are present prefer the one-to-one meetings. It's the best way to really get the ideas and all the layers across to people: talk them through all the aspects of the project, while showing demonstrations.
- The biggest challenge is: where to find the buyers and co-producers for a project. Best to have producers from different platforms involved at a very early stage. Better even is to work with producers and broadcasters from different countries right from the start: build the software together and get a national version for each country.
- Cinekid could be helpful in matching the following parties.
 - o Project developers (different disciplines)
 - o Broadcasters (both from television and the new media)
 - o Local funds

- Producers of all the different platforms
- Publishers of different platforms (games, film, DVD, website, telephone)

2. Selling market for existing products

- Necessary tools: a booth with three screens: one each for DVD, online projects and mobile projects. There should be an online listing with all the products. Just by clicking on the link, people can view the project.
A guest from the demo-oriented game industry even proposed to create a living-room-like space to mirror the situation at home.
- Problems with subtitling et cetera are the concern of producers and not Cinekid

3. Selling market for existing software

- The back-end of cross media products is very valuable and can be a starting-point for new productions. Often broadcasters start from scratch, like building their own camera every time they want to make a programme. Good to show them the difference.

4. Update of latest developments