

Quizoola!: a 24-hour webcast and trending on Twitter



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Background and objectives

Forced Entertainment is a theatre company based in Sheffield, UK who produces contemporary devised performance that tours worldwide. The company's own website states: "We have been making performance for over 25 years – questioning, pushing, stretching and breaking theatre in many different ways to see what can be built from the wreckage."

One of their most popular pieces is *Quizoola!*, in which a changing pair of performers, in smeared clown make-up, take it in turn to ask and answer questions, both prepared and improvised, in a game-like structure with a constantly changing live dynamic. Part of the company's repertoire of 'durational' work, previously the piece has been performed for 6 hours, during which the audience members are free to come and go as they wish. However, in April 2013, a super-sized version of *Quizoola!* was performed at the Barbican continuously for 24 hours as part of the SPILL festival and the entire piece was also viewable online via a live webcast.

One objective of the webcast was to make this unique performance available to Forced Entertainment's world-wide audience although Sarah Cockburn, the marketing manager at Forced Entertainment, did see it partly as an exercise in developing new audiences. She explained: "As our work is quite avant-garde, those who have never seen it can feel unsure about what to expect. We know that sometimes this element of risk can be a barrier to them buying a ticket to a show so the live webcast was an opportunity for people to watch a sample of our work for free. In effect it was a way for a new audience to learn a bit more about us and experience the work on their own terms with no financial outlay."

How did work and what happened?

Sarah explained how they went about planning the performance and the webcast: "We decided to use a third party company to run the webcast, it was so important that it worked and was reliable and by using an experienced company it meant that the creative team could concentrate solely on the performance and the two of us in the marketing team could focus on ensuring people were tuning in, as well as monitoring and stimulating the online conversations."

The webcast could be viewed either via the Forced Entertainment website, the Barbican's website or on a standalone site for SPILL festival.

There was a feed below the webcast viewer that displayed the hashtag #Quizoola24 and Twitter users were encouraged to comment on the performance and to submit questions for the performers as the 24 hours unfolded. The performers changed every two hours and those going on stage were handed sheets with newly-submitted questions as they went in for their shift. Although most of these questions were either devised by the creative team prior to the performance or submitted by the public in advance via Twitter and the hashtag, webcast viewers who submitted during the broadcast also had the opportunity to have their own questions featured in the show. This added an extra dimension to the piece since the audience was directly impacting on the piece they were watching. Although people could

also comment on the performance and submit questions via other social media channels e.g. [The Forced Entertainment Facebook page](#), it was certainly Twitter that provided the majority of input and Sarah puts this down to the real-time nature of the platform.

Outcome and results

The live performance was deemed to be a huge success with many audience members remaining for the entire 24 hours. The online reaction was equally positive and Forced Entertainment shared the following figures:

- 4541 people watched the live webcast
- Over 3000 questions were submitted
- The online audience was made up of people from 58 countries
- The hashtag #Quizoola24 was the number 1 trending topic on Twitter for a period during the event
- Over 1.8million impressions on Twitter
- Over 30,000 people reached via Facebook posts

The online reaction to *Quizoola24* took them by surprise. Sarah said that while they obviously hoped it would be successful they were taken aback at the scale of it: “The popularity of the webcast and overall online reaction really blew us away, we never expected it to be that big. Afterwards we did a fair amount of analysis of the response, which gave us the figures for the infographic we posted to our blog.” ([This can be viewed here](#)).

On the question of audience development, Sarah explained that they are waiting to see if there is any direct impact in terms of attracting new audiences to Forced Entertainment live performances. She said: “We have a UK tour in autumn 2013 and I think that if we see a larger percentage of new audiences at these performances then that will certainly be partly due to the online profile that *Quizoola! 24* and the webcast gave us. Our website visits, Twitter followers, Facebook likes and YouTube views were all boosted by the project.”

Quizoola24 is also a measure of how much the digital world has changed in a relatively short space of time, back in 2009 one of Forced Entertainment’s performances was webcast from Germany where it was staged but it was just prior to the explosion of Twitter and Sarah is clear that the webcast and associated online conversations this time were much more significant: “For *Quizoola24*, the webcast was an integral part of the performance and not just an add-on”.

For more background on *Quizoola24* and to view a 30-minute edit of *Quizoola24* go to the [Forced Entertainment blog](#).

Forced Entertainment’s latest show, *Tomorrow’s Parties*, running at a rather shorter 80 minutes is touring the UK throughout October and November 2013, find full details here: <http://www.forcedentertainment.com/page/3020/Tour-Date>