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3.8 Million Grammy Live Fans Can't be Wrong: Case Study

The interactive, complementary Grammy webcast drew a huge audience and boosted TV views to boot.

By **Marc Scarpa**

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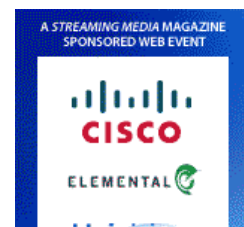
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In 2010, for the first time in its history, The Recording Academy (TRA) brought an unprecedented digital and social media experience to bear in celebration of the 52nd annual Grammy awards, recognizing that music fans discover, share, and consume content in a radically different way today. The participatory media strategy harnessed the best elements of social media engagement, blogging, web development, and live video streaming.

The media campaign centered around the [We're All Fans](#) website—created by agency TBWA\Chiat\Day as a new interactive fan experience—that featured portraits of Grammy-nominated artists composed entirely of real-time, fan-generated YouTube, Twitter, Flickr, and Facebook postings. These media assets were also included in the online broadcast. TV, print, out-of-home, and interactive advertising all supported and drove traffic to the site.

In addition to launching the first FanBuzz Visualizer (a real-time barometer of Grammy-nominated artists with the most social media buzz) and the We're All Fans ad campaign, a Grammy iPhone/iPod touch application was launched for the second consecutive year. More than 180,000 consumers downloaded the app.

Grammy Live—a robust experience leveraging the power of streaming technologies to provide a deeper fan experience with the Grammys—is a 72-hour participatory online broadcast featuring live video, photos, blogging and microblogging, official news reports, and personalized updates from three mobile Grammy vloggers. Fans worldwide experienced the Grammys beyond

the telecast with never-before-seen Grammy clips, exclusive Grammy cams, live coverage at various Grammy Week events, and additional behind-the-scenes footage. This complemented the telecast of the show with red carpet coverage, backstage interviews, exclusive photo sessions with winners, and press room interviews.

The online event festivities kicked off on Jan. 29, 2 days before the awards night, with TRA's Social Media Rock Star Summit hosted by CNN at The Grammy Museum. It was a participatory panel discussion among social media trailblazers including Pete Cashmore, Nikhil Chandhok, David Karp, Kevin Rose, and Jared Leto along with an online and studio audience that spotlighted the intersection of music and the digital space.

Grammy Live contained 72 hours of continuous live streaming video coverage on [www.grammy.com](#), 6 hours of streaming on Myspace (Jan. 30-31), and 6 hours of streaming on [www.cbs.com](#) (Jan. 31). There were 3.8 million unique visitors to the website who viewed more than a million live streams and 1.5 million video-on-demand plays. They also consumed a total of more than 140,000 hours of video during a 3-day period. In total, viewers consumed more than 3 million plays of the live stream plus all video-on-demand clips on Grammy Live and [www.grammy.com](#).

The Recording Academy provided millions of fans in more than 150 countries behind-the-scenes access with roaming live coverage using four LiveU Ltd. field packs at various Grammy events including the MusiCares Person of the Year honoring Neil Young, the Special Merit Awards honoring Leonard Cohen, the Nominee Reception, the Pre-Grammy Gala and Salute to Industry Icons hosted by Clive Davis honoring Doug Morris, and the Grammy Pre-Telecast ceremony in addition to exclusive behind-the-scenes coverage of official Grammy celebration after-party.

The live, online Grammy Pre-Telecast stream generated more than 200,000 unique viewers collectively across [www.grammy.com](#) and TRA syndication partners—that's more than four times greater than in 2009. Combined with video-on-demand plays, it reached 328,000 views. More than 50,000 registered

users signed up at the Grammy website in the month leading up to the show.

In addition, TRA's official YouTube channel posted impressive numbers with the Lady Gaga We're All Fans pre-event promotional spot surpassing 2.1 million views by event day alone, as well as rising to the 27th most-viewed video in the music category and the 30th most-viewed video overall.

During the online broadcast in near real time, live video assets were taken from the line cut, turned into video-on-demand files using a Turbo system, and then exported and uploaded to www.grammy.com. As a result, Taylor Swift's Pre-Telecast acceptance speech garnered more than 1 million video-on-demand views alone, and Maxwell's Pre-Telecast speech garnered an impressive 205,000-all within a 24-hour period. The official Grammy YouTube page had more than 6 million views within the weeks following the event. To date, the collective streams from all syndicated partners elevated this number to more than 12 million views for the online experience.

Web Video Didn't Kill the TV Star

In contrast, the Grammy Awards telecast on CBS jumped 35% from 2009 with 25 million viewers, notching the highest total viewership since the 46th Grammy Awards in 2004. Along with the successful telecast numbers, web traffic on www.grammy.com also showed a significant increase over previous years both leading up to the event and throughout the year. The historic digital media distribution strategy was partially credited with driving a record increase in viewership of the CBS broadcast.

During the telecast, Grammy Live allowed users to have a dual-screen viewing experience by mirroring the CBS broadcast with corresponding content blocks selected from the rich archives of The Recording Academy. For example, during Michael Jackson's lifetime achievement award presentation, the online broadcast featured acceptance speeches from the music legend dating from his first award with the Jackson 5.

Following the show, the music industry once again benefited from the "Grammy Effect" when Grammy performances made available on iTunes took six of the top 10 positions on the video download chart the week after the show.

Behind the Screens

The digital media team at The Recording Academy partnered with the most progressive online broadcast companies and leveraged the best of both open source and proprietary technologies to deliver a cohesive, exciting, and more enriching user experience for the relaunch of www.grammy.com, newly launched Grammy iPhone/iPod touch app, and Grammy Live. Technology partners included AEG Digital Media Group; Akamai Technologies; Diversion Media; LiveCast Media, Inc.; LiveU Ltd.; Lullabot; NeoSpire, Inc.; Ooyala, Inc.; Reliam, Inc., along with creative and executive production provided by Simplynew for Grammy Live.

Syndication partnerships included Myspace, CNN, CBS, and YouTube. For Grammy coverage, updates, and breaking news, TRA used the social networks Twitter and Facebook. Facebook also provided an exclusive behind-the-scenes experience backstage during the awards show itself. Twitter coverage during the show was optimized for alerts and artists' tweets, which were incorporated into the live stream of Grammy Live.

The Grammys' innovative blogger program set the bar high by allowing a handful of past Best New Artist winners and current Best New Artist nominees, including the Zac Brown Band, José Feliciano, Carrie Underwood, and Jody Watley, to blog firsthand about their amazing experiences from nominations to the awards telecast. Other participants included the official artist of the 52nd Grammy Awards, Shepard Fairey (creator of the Barack Obama "Hope" poster); Rolling Stone contributing editor, The Huffington Post blogger, and Emmy-nominated TV and Grammy writer David Wild; and a variety of genre-specific music bloggers.

AEG Digital Media provided complete technical management for the live stream. AEG Digital Media provided access to its industry-leading engineering facilities featuring an extensive HD encoding farm, broadcast quality control room, professional editing suites, and capture and upload facilities for near-real-time, video-on-demand posting. AEG Digital Media's expert production staff provided ongoing technical production consulting, facilities, and expertise throughout all aspects of this industry-changing event.

Ooyala, in partnership with Akamai, provided adaptive bitrate live streaming through Adobe Flash and the ongoing content management system, which currently powers the site's video content. The player was engineered to allow for specific Grammy updates to be incorporated via Drupal across the website.

The Recording Academy's vice president of digital media, Peter Anton, said of the initiative, "We are starting to establish a strong and engaging presence in the digital space, and the multiple other ambitious initiatives we are rolling out represent just the beginning of a life-size mosaic in the digital world. We want to offer music lovers a higher level of interaction with the Grammy brand on Grammy.com, and across our social media channels including new and exciting digital applications that they've never before experienced, resulting in a much more meaningful connection."

As the executive producer/director of the Grammy Live program, Simplynew spent 6 months working with The Recording Academy team (digital, marketing/PR, sponsorship, IT, video production, event, and TV committees) to define the creative direction of the show, identify and secure the technology partnerships required, acquire sponsorship and syndication partners, develop the programming schedule, and cast the talented vloggers who did an outstanding job covering all the action.



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Current Digital Edition

The success of the program continued with this year's 53rd Annual Grammy awards: Grammy Live was stronger and more vibrant than in its inaugural year. We collectively learned a lot from the first show and, as someone who has produced live, online video experiences since 1995, I can say that if you don't approach an event or property as a participatory media experience with multiple platforms intersecting and fueling one another in real time, you are not delivering a modern-day program.

[Note: Streaming Media publishes vendor-submitted case studies such as this one based solely upon our assessment of their value to our readers.]

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