



HOW TO MOJO IN THE OUTBACK

Ivo Burum is an award winning TV writer, director, and producer who's worked in more than 40 countries. He is a pioneer of the user generated style of production in Australia, and here he describes how the mobile evolution is enabling Indigenous mobile journalists to report from the most isolated communities, using only their smartphone and 3G telephony

In November, at the *Fist Full of Films* festival in Darwin, Australia, mobile journalism came out of the closet and into the public spotlight. "And the winner is — *Ramo News* by Gerald Yawulkpuy."

For Gerald, who made the long trip to attend the awards from Ramingining in West Arnhem Land with his mum Mia, the win brought mixed feelings. "I'm sad my dad is not here to see this, but proud of what I did, really proud."

Recently the multi award winning feature film, *10 Canoes*, put the spotlight on Ramingining but this was different - Gerald the local lad made good didn't have a crew of 100 helping make his news programme - he did it all on his own. Just a few months ago Gerald was a community DJ. However at the awards, in front of 500 people—almost as many as live in Ramingining—Gerald's work was being acknowledged in a way that would change his life forever. Almost overnight he'd gone from local hero to an award winning mobile journalist—a mojo—with a social message and the skills to promote it. "Culture is very special for us, and we can teach kids not to

“The real magic of mojo is the lack of gate-keeping”

do bad things with mojo work”, said the proud Yolngu man after receiving his award.

Gerald is one of a group of nine Indigenous people from isolated communities in the Northern Territory who signed up to learn how to use smartphones loaded with editing software to create and publish self-contained stories to the web.

“This little gadget is not video (but) it's powerful for telling our stories” says excited Louis Kantilla, from Bathurst Island in the Arafura Sea. Louis decided to learn to mojo because he found the technology liberating. “You can do it right in your hands, maybe you can go fishing and do editing when you throw (in) the line.”

Mojo's equipment enables them to plan, shoot, edit and upload stories to the web—from the phone without having to leave the location. A mojo's local knowledge and ability to stay with the story can provide a unique perspective and unparalleled access to unfolding news events.

OLDEST STORY TELLERS

Indigenous people have been telling stories for many, many years. The contemporary history of

their use of media begins in the early 1980's, when Francis Jupurrurla Kelly and Dr Eric Michaels created Walpirri Media in the Tanami desert and CAAMA was set up in Alice Springs.

Phillip Batty, one of the founders of CAAMA and 8 KIN FM Indigenous Radio says "We just wanted to give the community a voice and job prospects and before we knew it, we had radio and were thinking—what next?"

THEN CAME TELEVISION

The launch of the Aussat satellite in the mid 80's enabled Indigenous people in remote communities to watch mainstream television for the first time. This led to growing community concerns about the negative impact of western media. In response the Australian government introduced the Broadcast for Remote Aboriginal Communities Scheme (BRACS), which involved installing basic satellite receiving and re-transmission sites in 80 remote communities.

Gerald says of his BRACS radio role, "I like this job, it's like being a voice for my community." An ideal that was realised only in some BRACS communities partly because of a lack of training. "This mojo training is different, it's about teaching the job, not just the kit."

COST-EFFECTIVE AND PERSONAL

Video delivery models, like BRACS, usually take the form of hub systems where access to tools to create and broadcast content generally means having to negotiate with equipment providers and gatekeepers.

Louis believes the real magic of mojo is the lack of gatekeeping. "We can do it in our own time when we want to", he says, "and send it up to the satellite by yourself." This is a level of control over the production and distribution process that's only possible because of the accessibility to training, equipment and telephony.

Twenty years ago for the documentary *Satellite Dreaming*, I filmed Francis Jupurrurla Kelly



reading the evening news in the \$40,000 BRACS unit at Yuendumu. Today, in *Ramo News*, Gerald is shown doing the same using an \$800 mojo kit.

Bathurst Island mojo trainee Harry Munkara believes mojo is less about the equipment and more about application. "Mojo is all about telling stories...it's passed on from generation to generation, my grandfather taught me and I teach my young ones." Mojo skills are enabling people like Harry to continue their culture of oral story telling and knowledge transference in the digital age.

PROFESSIONAL PACKAGE

In 1993 I pioneered a formatted version of self-shot user generated content (UGC) on Australian television. The mojo training package, which I delivered at Batchelor Institute for Indigenous Education, is based on these and other lessons learned on frontline current affairs shows like *Foreign Correspondent* and *60 Minutes*, and offers an affordable and professional method of empowering Indigenous people to create a diverse media landscape.

Unlike the BRACS operation, which cost the Australian government over \$3m to set up, a mojo production kit—that's effectively a broadcast quality creative suite in a pocket—can cost as little as \$300.

Mojo kits come in many hybrid forms. Our kits, which comprise an iPhone4, an Owle for steadying the camera, a rechargeable light and a microphone, cost about \$800 each. We chose the Apple iPhone4 because its camera records in HD



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and it works with VeriCorder's 1st Video edit App. We mostly used 3G to upload our stories because of its accessibility in the outback.

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Mojos produce stories, not just raw footage because they employ journalistic and editing skills that enable them to finish their own work and to own the story from start to finish.

This training paid dividends at the film festival as mojos continued to trump the pros. "I'm so excited I need to write a speech just in case", said Brendan Yunupingu moments before *Bush Medicine* won the hotly contested 'Best Indigenous' award.

Mojo is much more than just a buzzword. The skills are real and so are the opportunities. NT mojos have already produced messaging for the Australian Government, who funded the project. A number of mojos have found work in local media and all nine have been invited by ABC television to work as community freelance stringers. This potentially creates a foundation for building a sustainable community based mojo workforce, to support local mainstream media.

Brendan travelled for seven hours in a bus with his wife and baby Marsha just to be at the awards night - recognition he thought was an important step towards self-determination. "This is great for our community to stand up and have our say."

And that's what mojo is all about—local stories giving voice to local people on a global stage. Go Mojo. ■

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