

# EVALUATION OF THE 2012 AMNESTY SECRET POLICEMAN'S BALL

Final

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# **1 Situation**

## **1.1 Background**

The Secret Policeman's Ball (the Ball / SPB) is an established comedy brand by Amnesty International, with the aim of raising awareness and attracting support (including from influential; artists) of its on-going work to protect human rights around the world.

The Ball originated in the 1970s and has since been a core part of Amnesty's engagement with the world, and specifically a means to generate awareness of its brand and interest among prospective supporters, current members, donors and partners.

The strategic context for the SPB 2012 was a need for AIUK to grow its supporter base and in so doing grow financially as AIUK's income model relies heavily on subscriptions from individual supporters). The primary role of the ball in terms of the growth strategy as outlined in AIUK's Strategic Directions was to create visibility of Amnesty to a more mainstream audience – the 'Caring But Not Committed' audience.

The 2012 event was the first to be held in the US (New York) and was subsequently shown on Channel 4 in the UK and EPIX in the US. In addition, there was a high level of PR, media and communication activity using both traditional and digital channels.

The course of developing, managing and delivering the SPB project encountered a series of challenges that impacted on the final event, and the extent to which it achieved its aims of reaching and engaging new audiences and breaking even financially.

As such, Amnesty have identified the importance of understanding the challenges and issues encountered in delivering the 2012 SPB project, in order to ensure lessons are learnt that can benefit the Ball and similar events in the future.

The purpose of this evaluation is to investigate the issues and challenges that impacted on the Ball, and understand its performance in encouraging engagement with a broader audience and as sound return on Amnesty International's investment.

## **1.2 Objectives**

An independent research organisation was commissioned by AIUK to undertake the evaluation and conduct a study to understand the performance of the Ball, in terms of its alignment with Amnesty's brand and values and against its stated objectives:

1. Building the profile and appeal of the brand in both the UK and the US
2. Encouraging the target audience to move from a place of shared values to one that is engaged and committed to take action
3. Opening up and developing new relationships with more mainstream audiences, as well as those of special interest (talent, broadcasters, digital partners etc.)
4. Breaking even financially and demonstrating a good return on investment

In exploring these objectives, it has become clear that at the time of this report, many of the longer term elements of success are have yet to be fully realized, as material and collateral generated from the Ball have yet to be used. This is important as a key stated difference between SPB 2012 and previous balls was the recognized need to integrate SPB (and all large externally-facing projects) into a long term strategy of engagement and growth as part of a wider, organisational strategy.

### **1.3 Methodology**

The evaluation consisted of a review of a knowledge sources, research findings and media responses made available by Amnesty, alongside a series of qualitative in-depth interviews with internal stakeholders, Amnesty International employees and partners working with Amnesty to deliver the Ball. It is therefore important to recognise that the evaluation is comprised of both objective material and the subjective opinion of external partners, staff and the project team.

A list of the available information sources is at appendix I. This list has been supplemented with a steady stream of ad-hoc pieces of data, information and clarification, that has contributed to the report as constructively as possible.

In total, 56 people from 13 organisations contributed their views to the evaluation. It is important to note that interviews were conducted in confidence, and so comments used within this report have been reported on an anonymous basis.

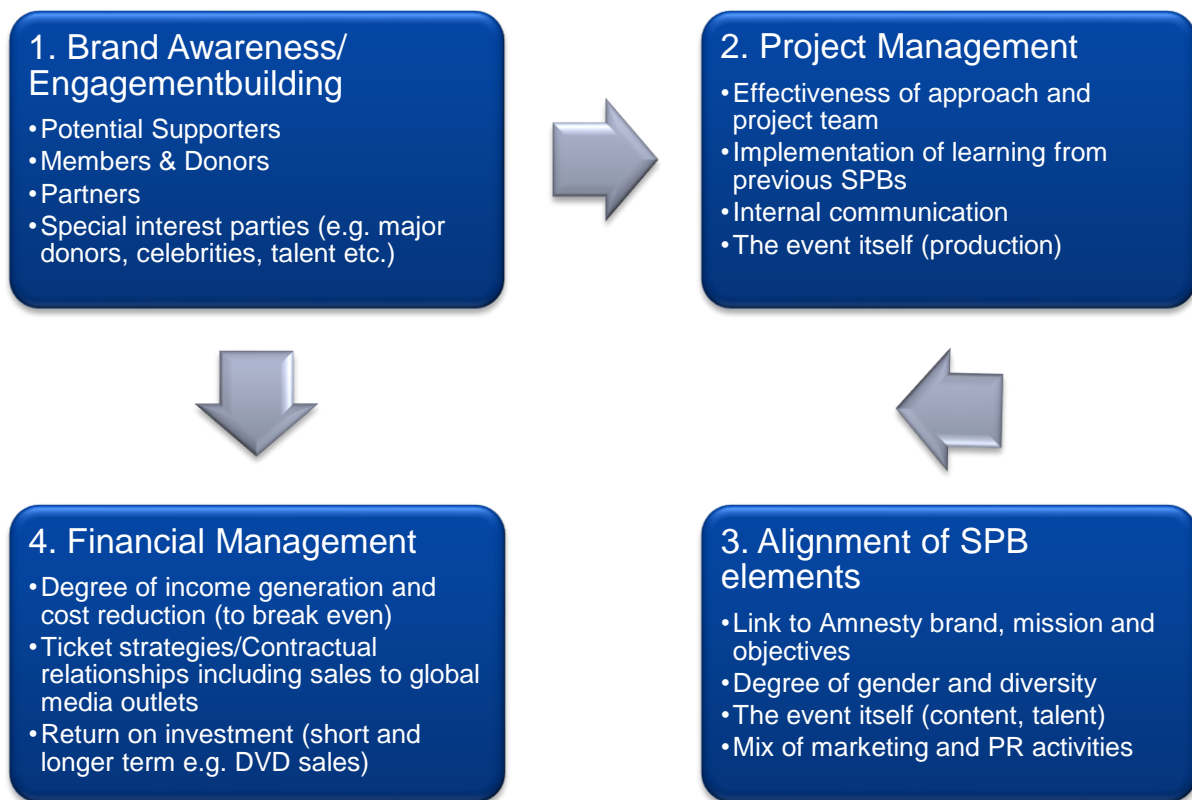
Amnesty staff participating in the evaluation consisted of senior stakeholders from the SMT and Leadership Team, external partners working with Amnesty to deliver the SPB, and the Amnesty SPB project team. These interviews were supplemented with group discussions of employees from across Amnesty International UK. The Evaluation did not seek the opinion of experts outside of Amnesty or the SPB project team.

### **1.4 Evaluation Criteria**

The evaluation centered on one key research question that informed the framework in which the evaluation criteria was set:

***How can Amnesty International UK maximize learning from the 2012 Secret Policeman's Ball to build short and longer term marketing and brand strategies which deliver a positive ROI?***

In order to ensure a thorough evaluation of the 2012 SPB, GfK NOP agreed an Evaluation Framework with AIUK which consisted of 4 main areas:



This report will deal with each of these criteria in turn, identifying the relevant issues and their implications.

## 2 Key Findings 1: Brand Awareness and Engagement Building

Amnesty aims to produce simple, participative, engaging and human communications. Culturally, communications tend to be driven by messages from the International Secretariat and are perceived to be characterised by a heritage of controlled and precise language. Turning this content into engaging material relevant to new audiences can be challenging for teams responsible for raising awareness and building engagement around events and campaigns.

The Evaluation was primarily concerned with the project's performance in building awareness and engagement among four audiences of interest.

- Potential Supporters
- Members and Donors
- Partners
- Special interest parties (e.g. major donors, celebrities, talent etc.)

The following section will not deal with each group separately but will highlight how different audiences have been reached and engaged within the key themes that arose from the evaluation. These are as follows:

The November Blueprint outlined two core objectives for the Ball:

- *Increase visibility of Amnesty amongst our target audience in the UK and the US.*
- *Develop warm leads and start a dialogue with SPB comedy fans that could lead to an on-going relationship*

In addition a selection of KPIs evolved to further track success.

Overall, the Ball achieved significant successes in meeting its two main objectives via successes against its publicity and awareness KPIs, and achieving its objective in building the profile of and appeals of Amnesty and achieved a high percentage of publicity carrying Amnesty messages, and positive coverage.

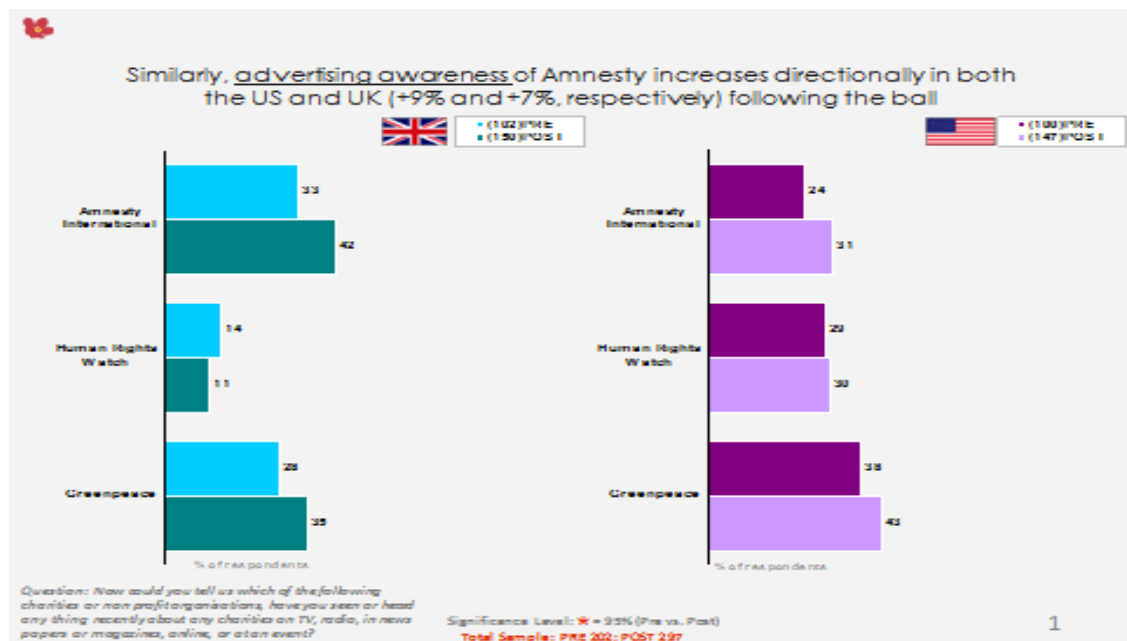
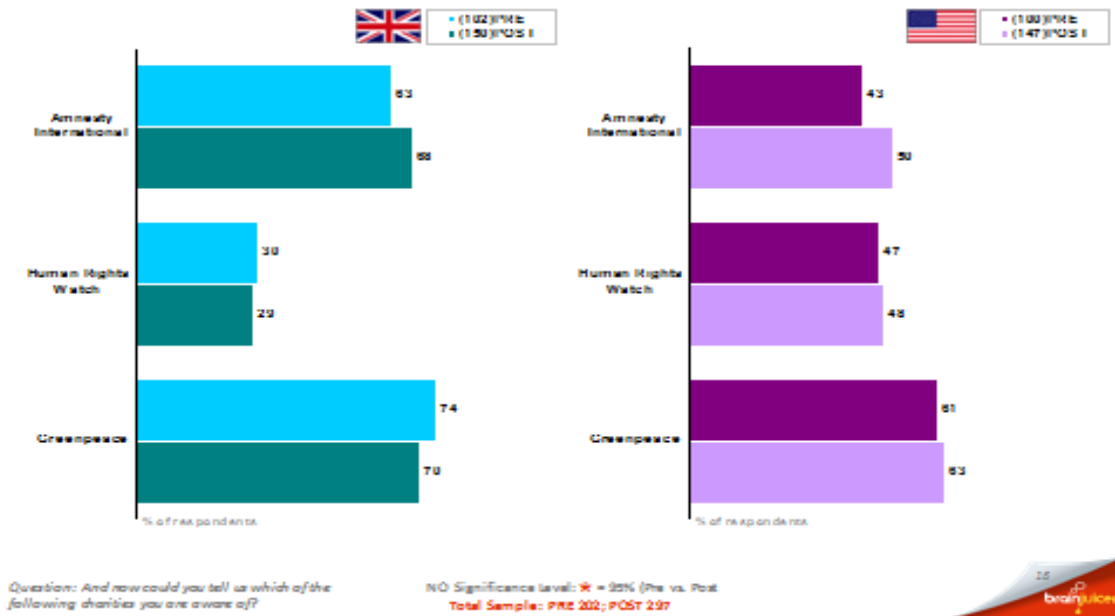
One of the most compelling metrics provided by Gorkana is the monetary value of this coverage equates to an advertising equivalent of £3,344,343, an equivalent that exceeds the total spend on the Ball.

### 2.1 Raising awareness among target audiences

**External research, conducted by Gorkana, Brianjuicer and Splendid, verifies that there was a positive spike in awareness around the Ball. Full reports can be found at appendix II.**

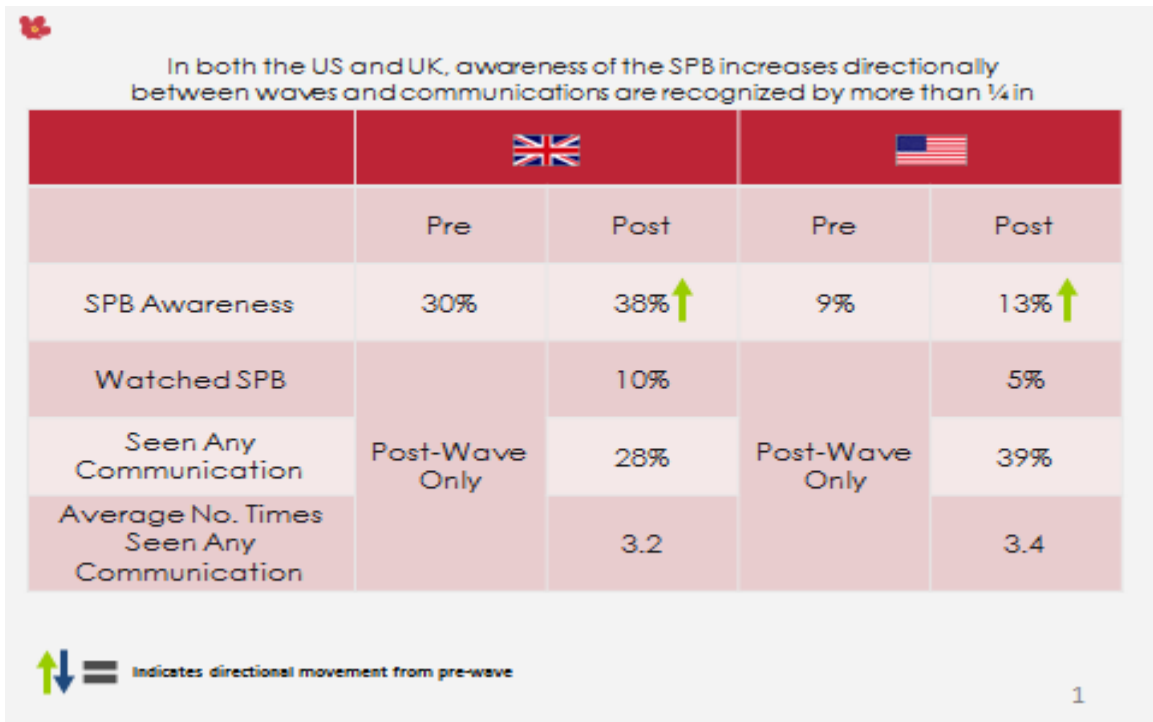
Brand tracking and social media measurement conducted by Brainjuicer<sup>1</sup> verified that the media activity around the Ball successfully created a buzz that achieved a rise in awareness of Amnesty. In Summary Brianjuicer's research found that the Ball and its media campaigns had made positive noise and increased awareness of Amnesty.

**While not significant, Amnesty International sees a bump in prompted brand awareness in both the US and UK (+5% and +7%, respectively)**

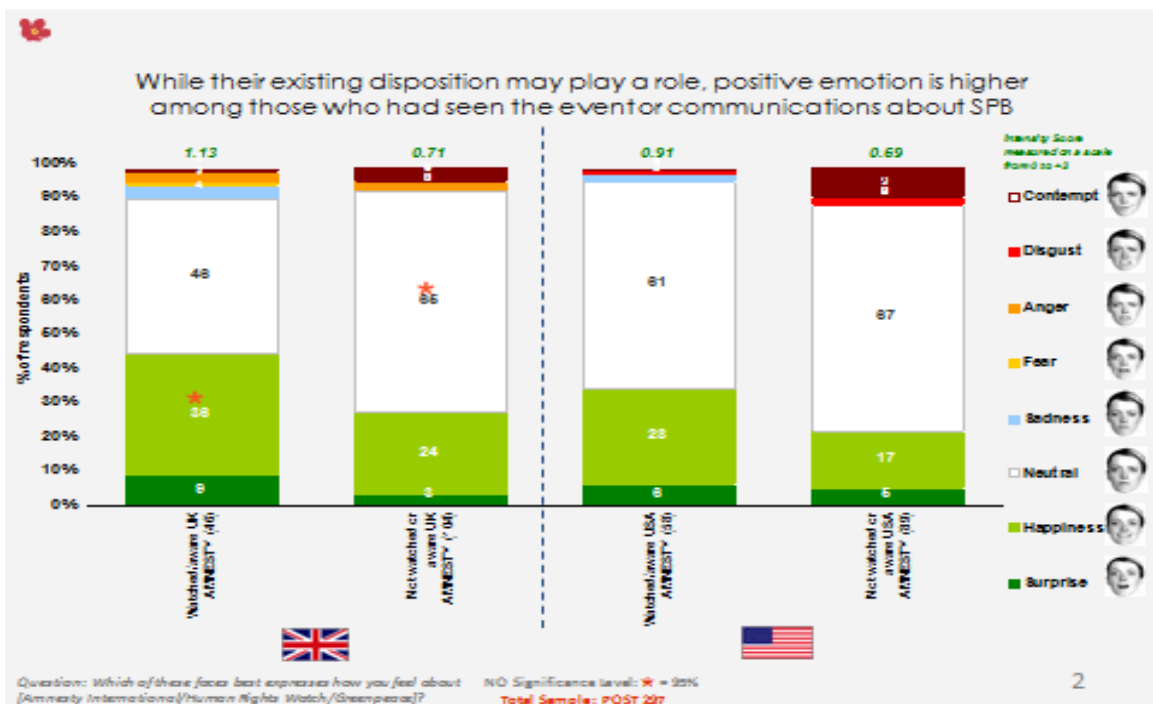


<sup>1</sup> Flamingo / Brainjuicer: Secret Policeman's Ball 2012 Pre/Post Research

As well as awareness of Amnesty, the PR campaign successfully raised awareness of the Ball itself, on both sides of the Atlantic, with reported rises in awareness from 30% to 38% (UK) and 9% to 13% (US) in March following the SPB.

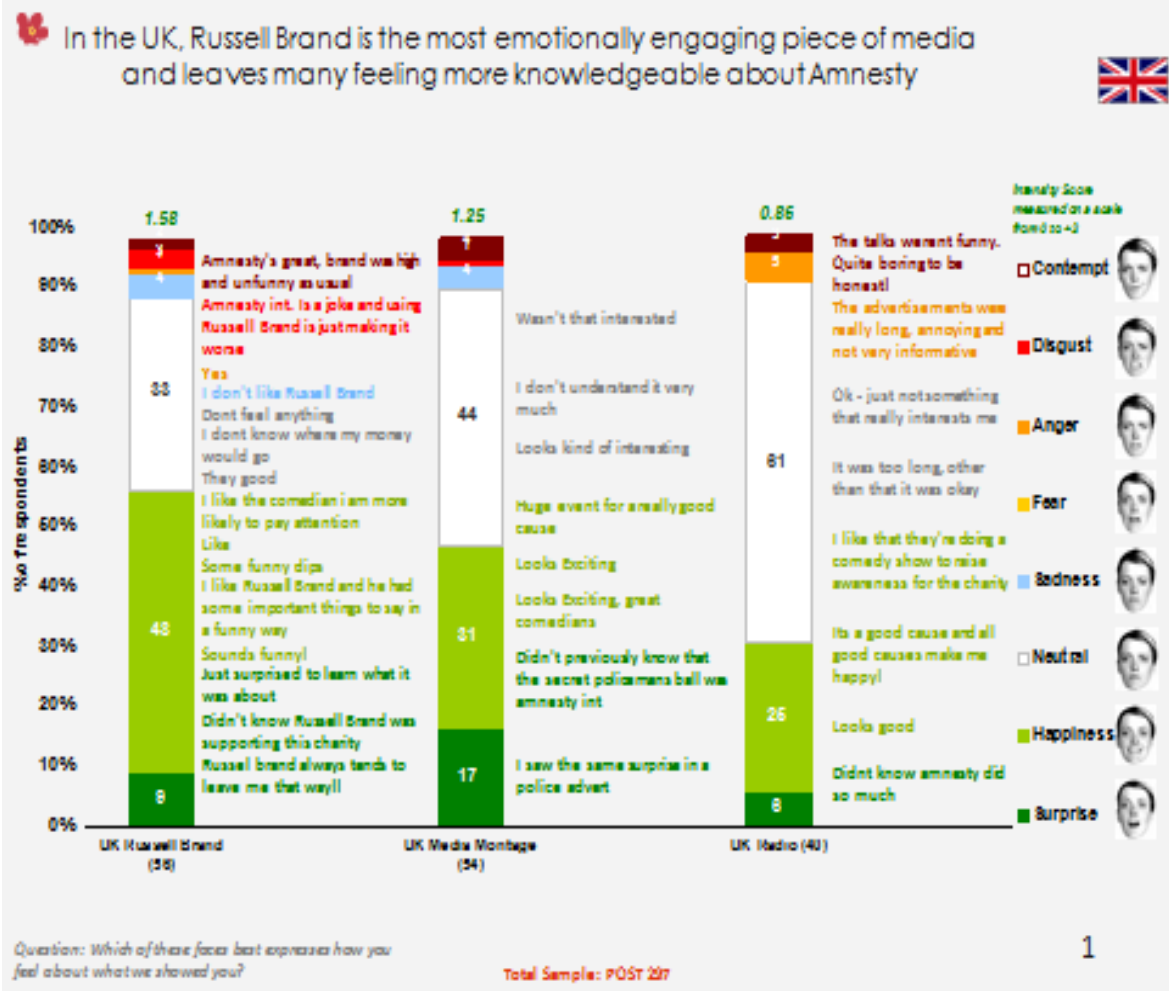


In addition, the findings from Brainjuicer report an increase in positive appeal of Amnesty amongst those that had seen the SPB or communications around the SPB.





In the UK, the most emotionally engaging element of the media campaign was coverage of and content generated by Russell Brand, with over 55% of responses to the Artist responding to his appeal, the importance of the message conveyed and the 'funny' way in which messages were conveyed. Importantly, respondents to Brainjuicer's research felt that what they had seen left them feeling more knowledgeable and aware about Amnesty and its activities.



The high level PR coverage was supported by an excellent 70% of coverage carrying the SPB message, and 90% of all coverage mentioning at least one celebrity, indicating that not only was the SPB message widely circulated, but retained a high level of impact by retaining Amnesty presence alongside celebrity.

## Message delivery

Figure 4a: number of deliveries of Secret Policeman's Ball messages. This is an indication of the overall quantity of message delivery.

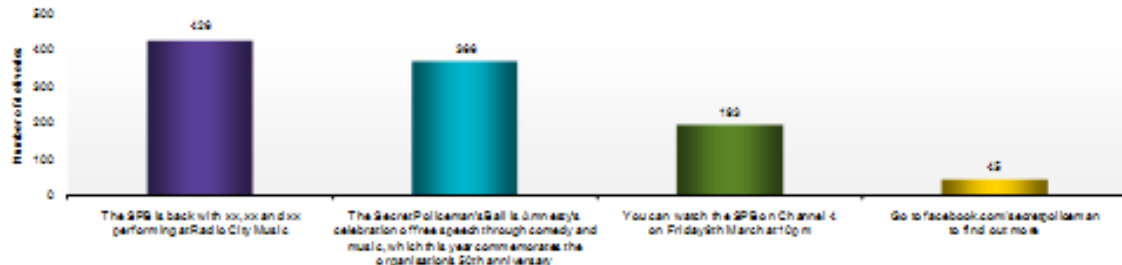
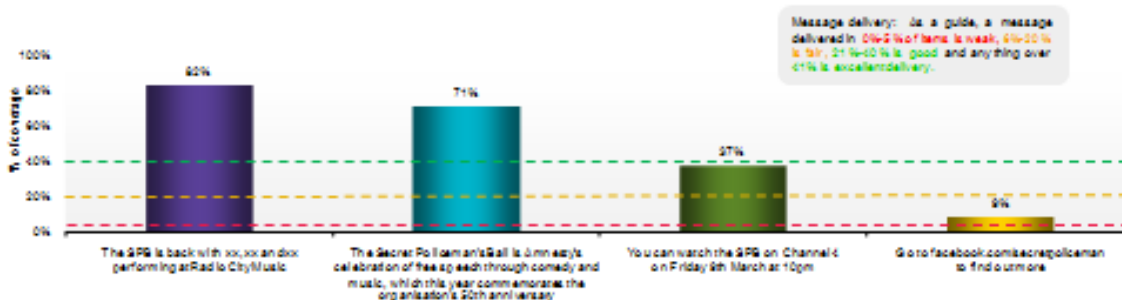


Figure 4b: percentage of coverage to feature Secret Policeman's Ball messages. This is an indication of the overall quality of message delivery.



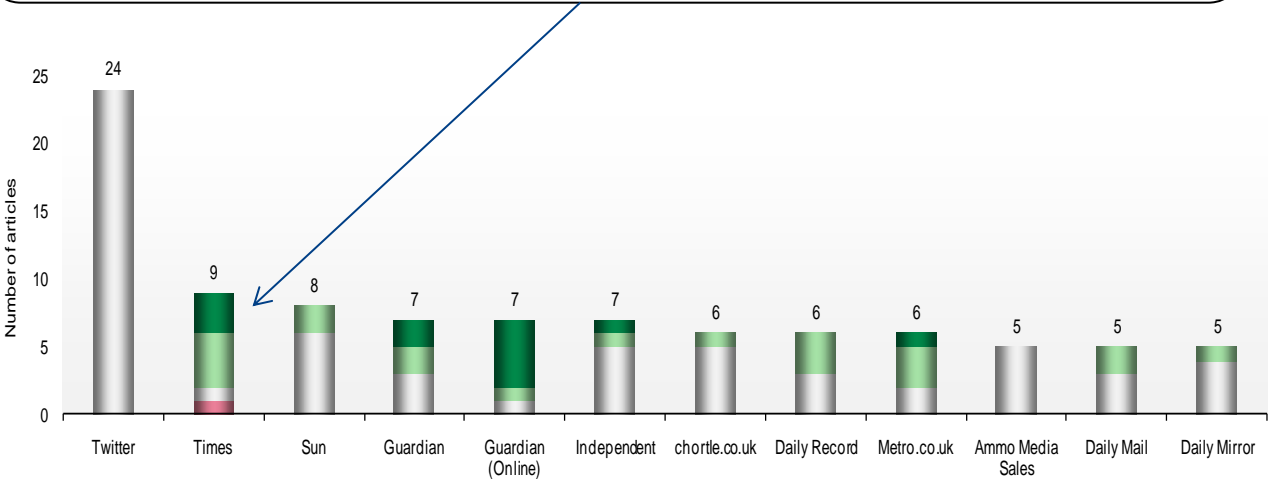
A further indication of the success of the media activity around the Ball is highlighted by the wide reach of coverage around the Secret Policeman's Ball. Gorkana analysis shows that in the UK almost 78% of adults were reached by coverage of the SPB, with each adult in the UK being exposed SPB coverage on average 11 times between December and May 2012. This success is replicated in the exposure of UK adults to Amnesty media content over the same period.



The Majority of coverage was largely favorable, again, Gorkana analysis showing that 11% of coverage was strongly favorable, 25% favourable, and 53% of coverage neutral. Only 1% of coverage is reported to have contained slightly unfavourable content. A strong example of the positive press generated around the Ball was the double page spread in the Guardian, that included both Amnesty and SPB branding as well narrative on the along term impact on fundraising, with messaging delivered through interviews with Kate Allen, Peter Serafinowicz, John Lynn and Reggie Watts.

The only unfavourable piece of coverage was from the Times:

*The Times* generated the highest number of favourable mentions by a single channel. The only unfavourable piece of coverage featured was a review of the Ball in an opinion piece titled *“Flashes of brilliance lose some shine on the journey.”* The writer felt the Ball had lost its edge due to the mixture of US and British comics and said the comedy was *“gleefully filthy, flashed brilliantly but too sporadically”*.



**Figure 7a: volume and favourability of the most prolific publications.** Please note: This chart shows publications which featured five or more articles about the Secret Policeman’s Ball: Gorkana

Alongside the success of PR activities, Splendid’s campaign analysis highlights some missed opportunities, which stem from Channel 4 changing the date of broadcast late in the production process, and the difficulty the media had accessing talent, for example by being denied access to the after-show party. As such, some pieces of secured media could not be used in the UK<sup>2</sup>:

- Front cover interviews in The Observer New Review, The Sunday Telegraph, The Independent Magazine, Mail on Sunday Live, Daily Star Hot TV and The Sun Buzz
- Talent-led features including The Sunday Times News Review, The Sun, OK!, Shortlist, Fabulous, Closer and Zoo magazines
- Talent appearance broadcast hits with Sky Sunrise, The Jonathan Ross Show, Daybreak, Absolute Christian O’Connell Show, BBC 6 Music, The Alan Titchmarsh Show and Loose Women
- TV picks in Radio Times, Reveal, Star, Best, Take a Break, Total TV Guide, TV Choice, TV Times, What’s on TV and Woman magazines.

<sup>2</sup> Splendid: PR Campaign Analysis

These secured pieces could have further extended the reach of the SPB campaign messages to the broad audience the Ball was attempting the reach. Since similar issues were reported by the US publicity campaign managers, there were potentially further missed opportunities that are undocumented. Essentially the missed opportunity is that the SPB strategy was not sufficiently integrated into AIUK and AIUSA marketing and communications strategies to perpetuate and sustain the high level of buzz created around the Ball.

### **The Value of the success**

In total the Ball created over 540 million opportunities to see coverage about Amnesty or the Ball. As well as being a success for coverage and awareness of the Ball, Gorkana states the monetary value of this coverage equates to an advertising equivalent of £3,344,343, a total that exceeds the total spend on the Ball. The Gorkana report highlights this success by stating that for every £1 spent, this would equate to 5,927 opportunities to be exposed to Amnesty content.

## **2.2 Audience Engagement and New Joiners**

**There is evidence that the Ball has driven audience engagement and has contributed to a spike in supporter numbers around the time of the Ball itself, despite not being an objective of the project. However, Brainjuicer's brand tracking research suggests that the media activity around the ball has had little impact on consumer engagement with the charity or on understanding of what the charity does.**

- **Audience engagement via email and SMS**

The social media campaign included email and SMS activity to make contact and engage new prospects on the supporter journey.

Levels of engagement generated by **SMS and email activity** were reported to start out well compared to other prospect welcome emails, which tend to have the percentage of 'opens' vary from 15% - 50 % depending on the source. However, for the SPB journey both clicks and opens decreased and opt-outs increased throughout the series, particularly pre-to-post Ball.

The data below shows that response to Freedom of Expression related actions was fairly weak. By comparison, the response rate to the Cuba SMS action for other members of the network was 22.09% compared to the FOE action generating 19.37% response,

Message title	Date	Received	Opened	Open %	Clicks	Click %	Click to open	Actions taken	Conversion %	Click to conversion	Opt out	Opt out %	
SPB new supporters email #1	20/02/2012	1414	414	29.28%	159	11.24%	38.41%	N/A - people sent to Facebook	N/A	N/A	9	0.64%	
SPB reminder email to prospects	09/03/2012	1741	437	25.10%	55	3.16%	12.59%	N/A - people sent to Youtube clip	N/A	N/A	6	0.34%	
FOE action to SPB prospects	15/03/2012	1616	313	19.37%	26	1.61%	8.31%		14	0.87%	53.85%	20	1.24%
SNL clip to SPB prospects	18/04/2012	1594	274	17.19%	18	1.13%	6.57%		3	0.19%	16.67%	23	1.44%

Data indicating response and actions to SPB emails

Message title	Date	Sent	Delivered	Actions taken	Conversion	Opt outs	Opt out %
Cuba hip hop FOE action	04/04/2012		1229	1157	7	27	2.33%
SNL clip to SPB prospects	17/04/2012		1229	1175	N/A	34	2.89%

Data indicating response and actions to SPB SMS messages

In hindsight, the project team suggests that email prospects should have been included into the mass e-comms stream (i.e. Syria fundraising), much sooner rather than waiting for the SPB-related content. Waiting for SPB related content led to a large gap before people heard from Amnesty again.

- **Analysis of new joiners since March 2012**

The first quarter of 2012 showed an increase in the numbers of supporters joining AIUK online. Telephone research with new joiners showed that awareness of the Ball is strong amongst internet joiners. Almost two-fifths of supporters were able to name the Secret Policeman's Ball when talking about Amnesty's comedy events. A similar proportion said they had heard of the ball when prompted. One in five of the people contacted watched the ball and six people gave this as the reason for joining Amnesty (4%).

This is borne out by further analysis conducted within Amnesty that shows there were almost twice as many joins via both organic and paid Google searches in March. Single joins rose to 121 via organic searches and 44 via paid search (versus 59 and 27 respectively in November 2012).

- Regular joins rose to 186 via organic search and 80 via paid search (versus 100 and 40). There was also an increase in joins via other search engines.
- Brand terms drove the most traffic - the clear peak on 10 March suggests much of this brand awareness was driven by the Secret Policeman's Ball broadcast.

There were also notable increases in the number of joins via email (up nearly 200%) and the homepage (up 100%), due to the promotion of the SPB-related 'join ask' across Amnesty own channels.

**Between 1<sup>st</sup> March and 31st March 68 online joins were directly attributable to SPB in Google analytics.**

In addition, joins increased significantly in March against the same period in January and February. March generated 509 new trust or regular givers vs. 304 in the previous 31 day period. This was particularly marked at the beginning of March. However, it should be noted that this coincided with increased digital activity around Syria which could also have contributed to the uplift.

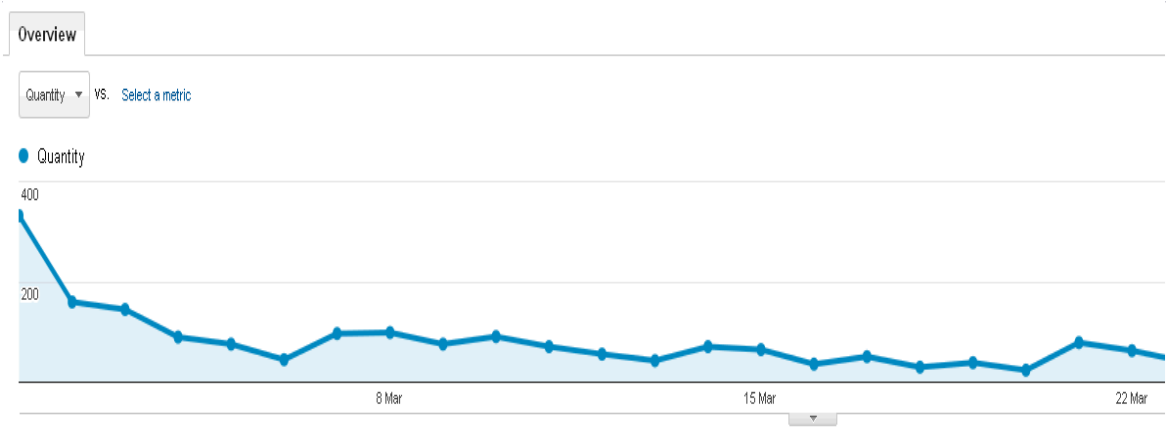


Chart indicating new joiners. Peak at the beginning of the chart is Thursday 1st March):

**2.2.1 Engaging with special interest parties (major donors, celebrities, talent) and developing warm leads**

- **Success with Major Donors and Talent**

There have been notable successes arising from the Ball, which began early with a major donation from an existing donor to help fund the project. Since the Ball, Amnesty’s strong connections with Talent have also led to a number of smaller donations.

In addition, the Ball has led to the support of a new wealthy prospect and significant influencer. This person has since engaged more with Amnesty and tweeted positive messages about its work, for example following the Ball, referencing an Amnesty report to his 4 million followers in a Blog post about the situation in Syria<sup>3</sup>

The Ball has also led to potential success in the US with three new prospects for major donations identified, with early aspirations of this translating into a six figure sum. However,

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.virgin.com/richard-branson/blog/civilians-suffer-in-syria>

the AIUSA team expressed concern over the content of the Ball, and how elements of it were considered to be offensive for key audiences there.

The tone expressed by Talent engaged with the SPB has been positive, with the high profile UK artists expressing commitment to continue vocal support (which is contrary to the reservations that employees viewing the Channel 4 edit expressed about artists levels of engagement).

Examples of feedback from talent are given below:

*“The most extraordinary collection of people in one place I have ever seen... Amnesty is a superb organisation that unfortunately has to keep fighting for people's rights. So if I can help get the message across, I will be back in a heartbeat.”*

*“It was funny, it was moving, and it made me so proud to be part of this incredible movement.”*

*We simply had the best time last night. We were thrilled to attend such a fun event. The show was just a blast. And the after party! So often those sorts of things are a bit of a snore, but your party was a riot. Amnesty knows how to party!*

Plus;

- High profile and respected writer Seth Myers offering to write 'next SPB in entirety.
- Amnesty was featured and mentioned on Coldplay's subsequent tour, as well as contributing a donation from one of the artists' trusts as result of the SPB). This support has continued as Coldplay have shown interest in contributing to the SPB DVD promotion.
- Jay Pharaoh on red carpet at event subsequent to SPB wearing SPB t-shirt.

A key success for the Ball was in the partnership created with Zarganar. Following his success at the SPB, Amnesty arranged his first UK gig. This has led to talks with Tiger Aspect around a possible documentary film of his work, and a contributed to Amnesty's activities at the Edinburgh Festival. This itself has led to a positive reviews of 'No pressure to be funny' from the Huffington Post. As Zarganar's first UK comedy gig this created a link between Amnesty, freedom of expression and SPB. 'No pressure to be funny' was part of Amnesty's Edinburgh programme this year, and illustrates an example of successful follow-up activity the Ball is intended to cultivate.

- **Missed opportunities with Major Donors**

However, work with major donors was always recognised as a challenge, and be logistically more difficult once a decision was taken to stage the Ball in the US. Being in the US, this perhaps created difficulties for the UK team to follow up with talent. Despite

holding the SPB in the US contributing to improved working relationships between artist relations and the creative teams at AIUSA and AIUK, no formal systems to follow up with talent were in place. This situation had become more difficult now that the AIUSA creative team has been lost in recent cuts and current AIUK ½ time post is vacant at time of writing.

Relationships with celebrities have made little progress. In addition, when celebrities and high end donors have attended and are “warm to AIUK”, the organisation has not been quick to update their details on MASCOT, so there is a risk of missing opportunities to understand and build the network.

Furthermore, Art for Amnesty were not involved in the project which has been recognised as an opportunity to develop artist engagement but currently there is a view that systems and processes not working to facilitate this.

There can be little doubt that the Ball is a strong means for Amnesty to engage the support and contribution from high profile celebrities and talent. The issue appears to be whether the organisation has the structures, processes, and in some cases the collective drive to make the greatest use the opportunities this engagement creates.

There were also issues linked to the internal opposition to the Ball that hampered of Amnesty’s ability to get the most out of the opportunities created. Talent ‘membership ask’, which worked best when tested in research groups but was stopped from being used as the talent behind the ‘ask’ was deemed too controversial.

This point further illustrates the difficulty Amnesty faced in creating the broader joined-up supporter journeys to engage the audience attracted to the SPB, as on reflection the SPB project team were not comfortable or clear on what material could or could not be used.

- **Continuing Engagement with Talent**

Despite missed opportunities, activities to reach out to artists and talent have continued, particularly around promoting the DVD and book, as well as future podcasts around SPB content. This serves to reiterate the point that the connections made via the SPB have enabled Amnesty to reach out to high profile artists to promote awareness of the organisation’s activities, use these routes to continue to build relationships, and to use these relationships to make access to talent for future comedy activities and campaigns easier.

However, the ability to make the most of these ongoing opportunities has been severely hampered by a lack of resource / personnel in post to keep up the momentum behind artist engagement and the ongoing internal resistance to activities around the Ball. Both serve to severely hamper the project team’s difficulty in keeping up momentum around these activities crucial to the long term return on the investment into the Ball.

**Both internal and external participants in the evaluation commonly cite the lack of clear ‘calls to action’ as one of the Balls biggest missed opportunities. For many the buzz around high profile acts outshone the messages, and AIUK leaders and staff were disappointed that there wasn’t more of a direct “ask” to Supporters and Prospects.**



Many employees felt that the SPB had done more to promote the Comedians than the Amnesty message. A number of low-cost campaigns (e.g. Troy Davis, Koney) were felt to be more beneficial in raising the profile of the Amnesty brand and in providing donations.

*“Into the talents’ contracts should have been ‘appearance on stage and at least one media offer for AI in the run up to and/or during the SPB – to be decided and discussed with the individual’. (Employee)*

The analysis conducted by Brainjuicer verifies this perspective, and suggests that more could have asked of talent and artists *“to drive home what the ball is about.”*

Jack Whitehall was one of the artists to tweet immediately before the SPB broadcast and point followers towards Channel 4, whilst Russell Brand, Coldplay and Mumford and Sons sparked interest in the SPB on Twitter. However, these efforts were not enough to drive people from interested to ‘engaged’.

The analysis by Brainjuicer offers insight by suggesting that the SPB should rethink whether it should be about the most popular acts or the most suitable. But regardless, as stated above, the Ball benefited from positive associations made with high profile talent, but there may be occasions where more target celebrity profile is appropriate. What it does indicate is that Amnesty needs to preserve and cultivate excellent access to talent and build on this access to engage with a core of high profile artists.

The team following up on those signing up via Facebook commented on the absence of engagement generated by the social media campaign. Despite gaining awareness of Amnesty, and linking with the Secret Policeman’s Ball, *excitement* appeared driven by high profile acts, and an opportunity to see a one-off performance, rather than caring or committing to Amnesty’s message. The team attributed this to ‘shyness’ around asking directly for people to care, commit, and/or contribute.

*“We conducted some telephone calls to convert those who had signed up via Facebook. It revealed people wanted free flights to New York. There was no interest in Amnesty. We were too shy in asking for money and using celebrities to endorse for people to join.” (Employee)*

So despite a hugely successful PR campaign generating a high level of buzz and an excellent share of content containing an Amnesty message, there has yet to be a significant drive to use the collateral, contacts and interest to move people from that place of shared values to commitment to action.

### **2.3 Performance against KPIs**

**The Ball achieved high levels of PR coverage in the UK and US and achieved or exceeded each of the agreed publicity KPIs, with the exception of blogs and social media channels and broadcast viewing figures. The majority of this publicity was positive, but ran alongside a small amount of negative commentary on the lack of diversity of line-up discussed at section 3.4.**

In summary, the publicity campaign was successful in generating positive coverage around the Secret Policeman's Ball and Amnesty across a range of national media platforms, exceeding expectations for opportunity to see (OTS) in several areas. However, awareness and engagement via social media, blogs and digital channels have been less successful.

Highlights of the publicity campaign included<sup>4</sup>:

- **On-going support and coverage from the BBC, before during and after the event:** Including, Jack Whitehall with a 7 minute slot on BBC Breakfast, interviews with Zarganar and Kate Allen on Radio 4's Today program and DJ Javerbaum giving Ball and free speech messaging on Radio 5 Live, conveying both the Ball and Amnesty messages.
- **Media coverage in National Press in the run up to the Ball:** positive features in the i newspaper, Independent and Guardian show-casing the Ball history, Amnesty and the free speech message.
- **Comedy blog presence:** Maintained a profile on Chortle, potentially putting the Ball in front of a new audience of comedy lovers.
- **US coverage of Zarganar:** In the US, the Liam Neeson and Zarganar piece was mentioned in almost every major media story as one of the highlights of the show.<sup>5</sup>

*"We got some great 'free speech' and 'heritage of the Ball' messages in the PR. It delivered better than previously." (External partner)*

The November Blueprint outlines four KPI's to accompany and support the objectives of the event. In summary these objectives were;

**KPI 1 - 3 million in the UK watch the Ball on TV:** A peak of 1.38m on the Friday night screening of the SPB (exceeding the 805K average for this slot. Repeat slot on the Saturday achieved a peak of 153K.)

**KPI 2 - 9 million see the Ball on the TV in the US and rest of the world:** Figures are not available, but as planned, after the initial live screening was made available through Epix and their TV subscriber base, it was made available on Netflix in the US, accessible by its subscriber base of many millions.

**KPI 3 - 8 million eyeballs through social media:**

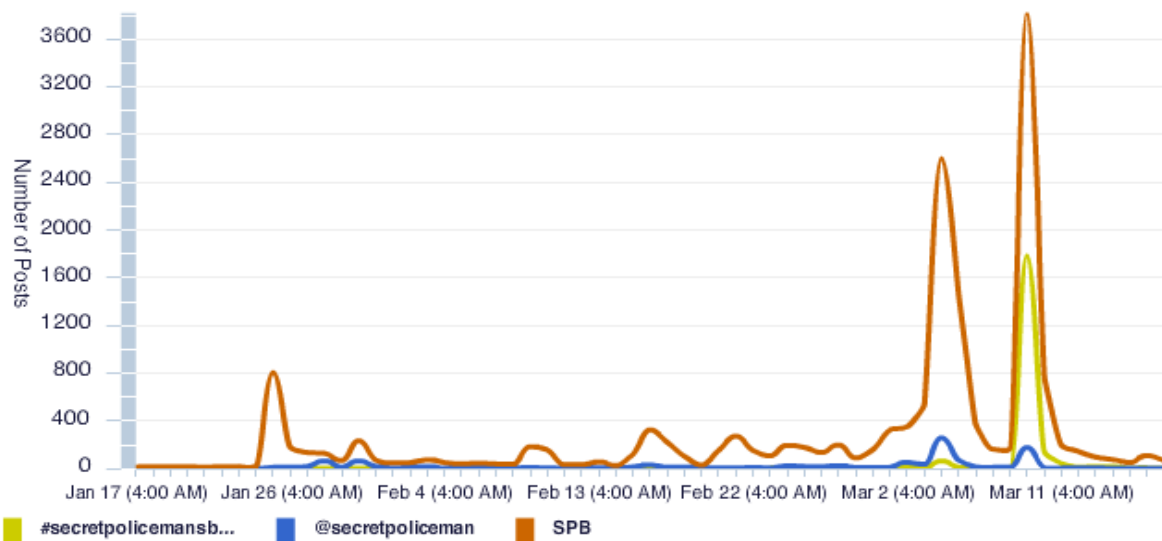
- Over **16,000** tweets about the Ball since the project was launched
- A combined reach of **88 million twitter followers** from those 16,000 tweets (This is the total, potential reach of all of the tweets – much like press OTS, but not an actual figure for the number of people who saw Amnesty messages)

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<sup>4</sup> Splendid: PR Campaign Analysis

<sup>5</sup> 2012 Media Coverage Summary and Brief Analysis

- **2,500** tweets about the Ball on the NYC live date; **5,500** tweets about the Ball during the Channel 4 broadcast day
- A minimum of **3 trending topics** in the UK throughout the Ball broadcast - including #SecretPolicemansBall and most artist's names
- On the night of the C4 broadcast positive tweets from Coldplay, Jimmy Carr, Serafinowicz, Nick Frost, Jack Whitehall, Graham Linehan, David Walliams & GQ Recommends had a combined follower reach of **9.9million people**.



Based on initial feedback from Radian6's automatic checks the positive commentary outweighed the negative by a ratio of 5:3. Although this is subject to further analysis and checks for reliability there are indications that many tweets categorised as negative were in fact either positive or neutral. In general there was very little negativity about Amnesty and the Ball, with most negativity generated around subjective opinion as to whether people appreciated a particular comedian or not.

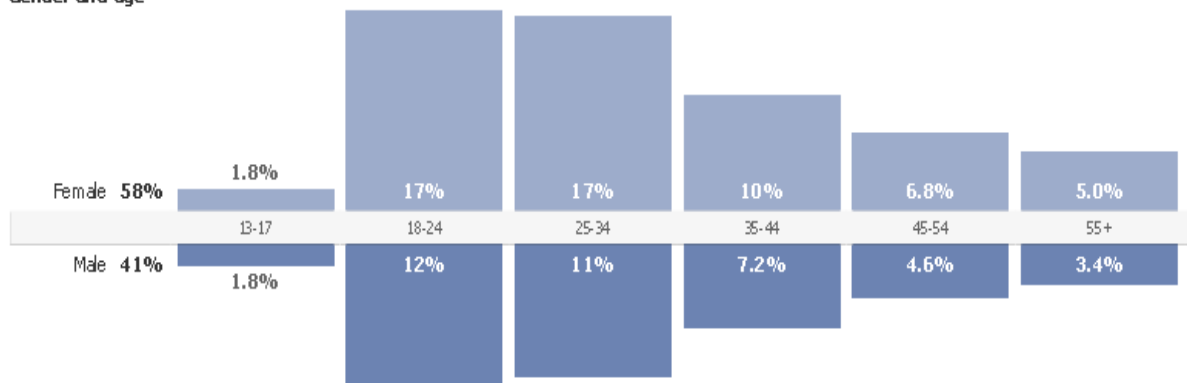
#### KPI 4 - 150,000 interact with SPB on SPB Facebook

- There were **19,500 likes over a 6-week campaign**: 7,700 in the UK and 8,500 in the US.
- 13% cross-over with Amnesty UK Facebook
- Over **1,800 new UK prospects** were generated with email marketing permissions created through the ticket prize draws
- On average across the campaign, **3,000 people were talking about the Ball** on Facebook in any 7 day period – that's the number of people who liked, commented on or shared Amnesty content

People Who Like Your Page (Demographics and Location)

See Likes

Gender and age<sup>2</sup>



Countries<sup>2</sup>

8,592 United States of America  
7,739 United Kingdom

Towns/cities<sup>2</sup>

2,036 London, England  
975 New York, New York

Languages<sup>2</sup>

10,520 English (US)  
7,072 English (UK)

- In addition to this, the combined reach of SPB coverage on Facebook pages is over **20 million people**. This includes coverage about the Ball and Amnesty on the Facebook pages of artists and talent supporting the Ball such as Coldplay, Epix, Peter Serafinowicz, Russell Brand, Funny or Die, and the C 4 comedy portfolio.

In addition to these KPIs, further targets for the UK were agreed with Splendid, the UK publicity campaign managers, to ensure coverage, reach and penetration of messages at key stages of production. At each stage of production, KPIs were achieved in the main, with coverage of the Talent Competition being the only aspect falling short of its targets:

- **Launch announcement:** Exceeded KPIs for coverage across all national press media digital platforms.
- **Talent Update:** KPIs were largely achieved falling short on blog coverage, but limited comedy blogs exist. It should be noted that AIUK has been made aware of some negative blog coverage regarding talent (see section 3.4).
- **Talent Competition:** Coverage of the Talent Competition was the least successful area of the publicity campaign, falling short on all KPIs for pieces in the media.
- **Post event coverage:** KPIs for coverage after the ball was largely exceeded in print pieces but fell short on pieces online.
- **TV listings:** coverage in TV listings exceeded KPIs, even though there was a significant challenge presented by the change of broadcast date.
- **Interviews quotes and images:** Again, largely achieved, falling short on national print features but largely achieved despite the challenges caused by lack of media access to talent.

### 3 Key Findings 2: Project Management

This section will evaluate the effectiveness of the project team and the project management approach in delivering the project against four criteria.

1. Effectiveness of approach and project team
2. Implementation of learning
3. Impact on commitment to mainstreaming gender equality and diversity
4. The event itself (content and talent)

The production of a large comedy event in New York in what became such a short space of time is widely held to be the result of sheer determination, effort, and dedication to delivering the best possible project for Amnesty.

Overall, the effectiveness of the project team and its approach was severely impaired by what became inadequate lead times to deliver crucial elements of the project to the desired objectives. In essence, delays to the final decision to go ahead with the project were caused initially by protracted and involved negotiations between AIUSA and AIUK over the planned timing of the New York show (October 2011) conflicting with a potential AIUSA music project intended for broadcast in the same quarter. The delay caused by these negotiations *may* have led to the subsequent loss of the US broadcast partner, and in turn created further pressure on the projects timings.

As the project entered the final three months before the event, it became clear that the production budget was likely to significantly overrun, the focus of the project team necessarily need to focus on reducing costs across the project. Some members of the project team also felt that project timescales were tight at this point, adding to the pressure to deliver a successful event. These elements impacted on Amnesty's presence in final outputs, the alignment with the organisation's values and principles of gender equality and diversity, and the wellbeing of the project team.

#### 3.1 Effectiveness of approach and project management team

**Members of the AIUK project team have been widely praised for delivering a project despite facing difficult challenges. Among AIUK employees and stakeholders, this success is almost wholly attributed to the tenacity, stamina and sheer hard work of its key members. However, the approach suffered from the absence of a stable long-term strategy arising from a punishing timetable for delivery, and too little resource dedicated to the project at crucial times.**

##### 3.1.1 Shorter-term tactical decision aiming

**The decision to go ahead with the Ball, in the format of a comedy event in New York, was given the green light in November 2011, with an event date set for March 2012. Although a large part of the preparation, scoping and key relationships had already**

**been established to get to this point, in hindsight four months was not sufficient time for AIUK to deliver an event of the Ball's size in an unfamiliar market.**

However, the difficulty of the decision was clear. The March 2012 date was decided to avoid competing with preparations and buzz around the London Olympics 2012, which would have seen costs increase, and introduced a risk of key personnel (and talent) being unavailable or less willing to participate.

External partners, AIUK employees, and the project team acknowledge that project management became fraught as key challenges such as communications around the project, implementation and evolution of digital strategy, ticket sales, supporter journey development and securing an appropriate line-up were addressed by short-term troubleshooting. All parties involved in the project recount high levels of pressure and stress experienced in the final weeks leading up to the event, as all the elements had to come together. External partners described the decision-making as being “very last minute”; however, some acknowledged this wasn't “out of the ordinary” for such an undertaking, but recognised that an integrated approach, involving all partners, is required to deliver any big project like the SPB.

*“When one thing gets late, it all gets late – it's a constant game of catch up – you need to be driving a strategy, not driving projects.” (External partner)*

*“You are not able to gain traction on anything in a shifting landscape.” (External partner)*

As noted above, another key element in the final three months leading to the event was the need to reduce costs across the project, to mitigate the impact of overspend in the production budget. Examples of decisions taken and their impact:

- Cuts to the planned opening number of the show as the production proved too expensive. The project team suggest this may impacted on the feel of the show and relationship with show writer
- The planned three music acts was reduced, which arguably restricted opportunities for more female talent to participate in the show (given the low representation of women in comedy)
- The project stripped back on the wider engagement communications strategy as the planned campaign was unaffordable
- Time and resource that would have been spent on communication activities and other planning activities was taken away to focus on continual budget management
- All UK live elements were removed, including pop-up regional gigs with AI students / Groups etc. which had proven to be an engaging element of the Ball amongst many employees.
- The budget issue influenced decisions made on broadcasters as there was little financial leeway to make different choices.

### 3.1.2 Lack of adequate lead times to allow for effective problem solving

From an external perspective, a common issue was timings and delivery to schedule. In the words of one partner, *“Everything was late. The problem with this kind of event is that one aspect of the project being set back impacts on all the others.”* A compelling example of this was the communications around the event and securing the final line-up.

*“The talent was not locked down when we had to announce the show.” (External Partner)*

External partners in the US developing PR around the event felt they should have brought into the project much earlier, in order to lay down plans with sufficient lead times to address problems, without impinging upon other elements of the project.

*“Everyone brought in was working long hours for the cause. We were brought on late in the day. It was a bit of a scramble day-by-day.” (External Partner)*

As a consequence of changing circumstances e.g. venue costs Amnesty International was placed in a position where it had to react to challenges as they arose. Foremost among these were:

- **The unanticipated cost of booking of Radio City Hall on Sunday**

The US-based Live Event Production team significantly underestimated the cost of the venue, whilst timelines ensured that a series of other commitments already made in the project made securing another venue or adjusting dates virtually impossible. The AIUK project team in London were informed over Christmas and flew to New York – with the Head of Finance – in early January to focus on trying to reduce costs. This again meant the focus of the project was taken away. More importantly, at the point where decisions were taken to green light the project, other venue options were available, but not taken as the budget information provided was wrong. The Exec Producer could have done more to get the budgeting write before the project was green lit. This became a serious issue and contributing factor to the overrun in costs.

- **Getting the most from communication and marketing around the event**

External partners working to develop communications and PR in the US felt that AIUK did not have the necessary understanding of the US media market, again citing the need for longer lead times to fully leverage communication and market campaigns.

*“We couldn’t deliver for students at the end. We couldn’t tell them the date or time of the Ball until 10 days before the event. We wanted to provide help with screenings, supporter journeys etc. but very few were able to organise as there was no time.” (Employee)*

### 3.1.3 Adequate personnel and sourcing throughout the project

**The SPB project team worked with leading professionals to deliver the event, who were either based in the US or had significant experience of working there. However, a too few Amnesty personnel on the project increased pressure on individuals, and hampered the ability of the project team to be properly and effectively integrated.**

*“[The project manager] was clued up and calm. They knew what they wanted. They ran the show from Amnesty and were very good, but needed a bigger team from AIUK”. (External Partner)*

*“[The Director of Communications] didn’t have the support team they needed.”  
External Partner*

The core team was too small from the outset, leading to additional resource being brought into the project, sometimes exacerbating already fraught internal relationships. However it should also be noted that the experience that was brought into the project team was crucial to the delivery of the event. A key example is, that despite issues with ticketing and venue costs, the Executive Producer can be credited with securing a commendable array of talent and delivering a well received show.

- **The Project Team**

Previous SPBs had been produced by bringing independent TV producers, researchers and other key project roles into work from the HRAC (SPB 2008) or appointing live event and TV production companies based in different offices (SPB 2006). The intention in 2011/12 was to largely follow the 2008 model and create a project team working from the Brand and Events team in HRAC and to bring in producers and other external support as necessary. The difference to the 2008 model was that rather than go directly to TV producers and live event producers, the Brand Team briefed its creative agency Mother to ‘reinvent the SPB’ as a creative brief. The project team then evolved between Mother and Amnesty. However, in hindsight both Mother and the Amnesty project team would have benefited if roles had been clearer from the outset.

- **Working in an integrated project team space:**

The project team attempted to create a suitable working environment, by trying to create a space to enable the project team to sit together (including all internal and external personnel and the Brand and Events Team). Plans were made which were approved but were resisted internally and ultimately dropped. This impacted on the team’s ability to integrate external members of the project team and to create a joined up approach – especially with the wider Brand and Events team.



- **Seconding personnel for key tasks**

Early on in the project scoping, a condition was accepted that the Ball would not use resource from other teams – and that AIUK would continue to deliver all its annual projects (many of them relying on support and delivery from the Brand and Events team). This was a recommendation that came directly from the evaluation of the 2008 SPB. However, the project team was too small and was unable to bring in effective support at the appropriate times. Consequently additional personnel were seconded to the project to assist with due diligence, and social media campaigns.

- **Impact on Senior Management Team time and attention**

AIUK employees felt that the Ball took away a disproportionate amount of SMT time and attention from other issues of concern. From an internal point of view there was real concern that other challenges and activities facing AIUK would not have slipped off the agenda as they did had it not been for the Ball. One example cited is the delay in the Activism Strategy getting SMT approval.

- **The Brand and Events team felt overlooked**

Whilst broadly supportive of the Ball and the project team, members of the team felt excluded, and that other work activities had become unimportant. Often, consultants from external agencies would be working in the same open-plan environment, with discussions going on across the room. The wider team felt this was slightly invasive, not conducive to a productive work environment, and showed disregard towards the fact colleagues had work of their own to complete.

- **Skills and knowledge were bypassed.**

Across AIUK some employees felt that there was a culture of “*an outside agency has got to be better*”, with internal teams assumed to be inadequate. However, considering the hostility towards the Ball and the project team, it is understandable that the project team was reluctant to approach other teams, and in some cases report difficulties in getting assistance from colleagues. This led to a situation where internal help was often sought to resolve pressing problems, rather than provide benefit to the project. Examples given were:

- seconding to help with due diligence
- approaching the Major Donor team to contact supporters and givers with ticket offers or request for support and,
- pushing teams holding relationships with talent to leverage their position for the benefit of the Ball.

### 3.1.4 Impact and well-being of the project team

**The fraught timelines and ensuing challenges meant that delivering the event put the project team under extraordinary pressure and stress.**

Throughout the evaluation, AIUK staff stated they were aware of the stress the project had on those closest to it, and were concerned for the welfare of those staff. Considering that the project was conducted in a context of opposition and even adversity from colleagues, many of those involved in the project suffered significant physical and emotional stress.

However, it must be acknowledged that whilst the approach to the project perhaps overlooked the well-being of the project team, those members report they did generally feel supported by the SMT, the FSC and Board as well as the Marketing Management Team and key posts on the Leadership Team including Gender Mainstreaming Manager, Head of Finance, as well as each other.

### 3.2 Implementation of learning from previous SPBs

**Employees felt that several important lessons that should have been learnt from previous Balls were not successfully implemented in the 2012 ball, most notably control of content and appropriateness of the talent sharing the stage with Amnesty, the timely implementation of a robust due diligence process, and embarking on a project without the support of the organisation.**

It should be noted that employees did not refer to the formal lessons documented following the 2008 Ball, but tended to form their own opinions of what lessons should have been learned.

*“There were lots of performance issues there were never dealt with from last time. When raised, people working on the project saw it as a personal attack.” (Employee)*

*“This is not the first time the organisation has been under scrutiny in our work on Women’s human rights” – “We f\*\*\*\*d up again. The again is really important”. (Employee)*

*“Annoyingly it feels like the mistakes are getting worse with a bigger price tag each time” (Employee)*

The key lesson from the 2008 that was not learned, and remained central to the challenges faced, was not to embark on a project that is not fully supported by the organisation as a whole. Other issues arose, that were anticipated, but strategies put in place to mitigate them were not always successful.

- **Appropriateness of talent and content**

The event team recognised the risk in bringing stand-up talent to the stage and the need to retain control of the content of both sketch and stand up material. As discussed above, the SPB strategy was clear in its approach and outlined a clear plan to direct content around freedom of expression. However, it was found that the project team was not was able to maintain scrutiny of the content as the project accelerated.

*“Content was poor in how it positioned us as a brand. From a gender perspective it was unnecessarily problematic. It was completely prevent able and all stuff we knew from last time” (Employee)*

- **Better integration with the organisation**

In giving the project the go ahead, Amnesty wanted to minimise the impact of the SPB on other teams by stating that the Ball should disrupt or interfere with other work (including that of the Brand and Events team. However, on the one hand some employees wanting greater involvement in the Ball (e.g. other members of Brand and Events, members of Digital, and those teams engaged with the project, was contradicted by the lack of Campaign input (as is broadly expected to be the case on other Amnesty projects), despite the project team Ball team making requests for Freedom of Expression cases. At one point Zarganar’s involvement, which proved to be a seminal moment in the Ball, was rejected.

A number of AIUK staff taking part in the evaluation stated they were highly involved in the initial stage of the Ball with resource invested in developing thinking and engagement strategies with different groups. Once the concept changed from “A Night of a Thousand Balls” to the New York Ball concept, employees felt that the efforts made on the original concept were wasted, and did not seem to be aware or understanding of the reasons for not embarking on what was considered by the project team to be an overly ambitious event.

- **Understand employee feeling and the impact of the Ball on morale**

There is likely to be little tolerance for these issues to arise again, particularly in the context of the CAPP process, which has reinvigorated the anguish against the Ball, with some drawing direct lines between what is seen as a ‘loss’ on the Ball to cuts to budgets and risk to jobs. From discussions with staff, it is the Ball itself that drives the negative impact on morale, rather than the broader strategy to engage and reach a more mainstream audience.

*“The Ball is poison before, during and after. It’s the legacy from previous balls. These issues have been raised many times and never sorted”. (Employee)*

*“We’ve put something out on the TV that I feel ashamed of as a worker.” (Employee)*

*“SPB has had a negative impact on staff. There’s no goodwill to draw upon.”  
(Employee)*

*“There was a very negative effect on staff morale. There were different truths out there but people are still feeling anger on the investment decision and the content.”  
(Employee)*

*“Some people cried in the meetings we had. They felt we had abandoned the values that Amnesty had.” (Employee)*

One lesson that was learnt was not to make the Ball a fundraising project, as with the 2008 Ball. However, this intention was not well communicated, making it difficult for them to be convinced of a short return on the investment made.

### **3.3 Due diligence processes**

**The SPB project team made significant efforts to secure a diverse line-up; and a line-up of high-enough profile to secure TV broadcast deals and other high profile value partnerships in UK and USA. In addition, project timescales in the later stages, pressures from third party partners (specifically Channel 4) and competing priorities in the later stages all served to undermine these efforts, despite greater attention being paid to due diligence in the later stages of the project.**

The selection of talent for the event began as a defined process, used in previous event, Amnesty for Art, with Amnesty defining criteria for appropriate talent before approaching them. The criteria reflected the need for talent that brought profile to the event and had the necessary appeal, as well as ensuring diversity was represented in the line-up.

As the line-up developed it was recognised that it did not reflect a strong degree of diversity, and lacked female representation. This was recognised by the project team and significant efforts were made to secure a balanced line-up; however, due to much lower representation of women in comedy, it proved difficult to secure talent in the line-up within the timescale.

*“I know how hard the Amnesty team worked to try to get a more diverse line-up...they must have called almost every female comedienne out there.” (External Partner)*

- **Limited resource allocated to due diligence**

It was clear that with other project priorities, the team lacked resource to complete full checks on artists. However, support was not sought from other teams until late February. Employees across the business found it surprising that a significant part of the due diligence for such a flagship project with £2.8m expenditure should be done with seconded volunteers

- **Robustness of the due diligence process and involvement of Gender Mainstreaming**

The Gender Mainstreaming Manager was brought into the project team following concerns raised at booking on the event. The role of Gender mainstreaming at this stage was not to ensure a greater diversity within the line-up, but to ensure greater scrutiny of the talent and their material. It is arguable that the involvement of this scrutiny role arguably came too late in the project cycle to mitigate the controversy of some artists.

However, it is also very apparent that there is a much wider internal debate that Amnesty needs to have to establish the criteria by which artists are passed due diligence, and the level of risk that the organisation is willing to entertain when in the artists that it approaches, and how explicit Amnesty are to state who they are and are not willing to work with.

- **Gender considerations focussed on representation with little consideration as to *why* demonstrating commitment to equality and diversity is important to Amnesty**

Early considerations of gender equality focused on achieving equality through 'numbers', (i.e. 50% of talent, or a minimum of x artists, should be women). At early stages what was lacking was clear vision of what a diverse line-up would look like, how that vision keyed into the objectives of the Ball and how artists' content and history aligned with Amnesty's values. It has been stated above that relationships with artists were difficult to cultivate, and the project team were hindered in getting close to many of the artists to brief them on the message of the Ball (some artists were briefed by the executive producers rather than Amnesty). These issues suggest that Amnesty may need to consider relying on / returning to investment in longer term relationships with artists to mitigate the risk posed by lack of control of artists' content.

- **Amnesty did not have enough control of the line-up**

The project team and its broadcast partners held conflicting views as to what constituted 'equality, diversity, acceptability', and the influence it should have on choice of talent and creative content. Whilst the project team made several attempts to exert control of the line-up, broadcast partners were firm that particular artists would need to be included for them to continue involvement with the production. This pressure was applied at a point where the project would have been unable to secure alternatives, and so the project team faced a choice of jeopardising the project by losing broadcast partner (a key source of secured revenue), or accepting Broadcaster's preferred talent on to the Bill.

External partners in the US, whilst recognising the importance of gender equality and diversity, expressed some exasperation at what they saw as unwillingness to accept mainstream artists in order for the production to be successful.

At this point it is important to reiterate the success the project team had in securing the high profile talent that the event brought to the stage, and the importance this level of talent

played in the securing the positive associations between the event and Amnesty. Alternative approaches to Events that potentially offer greater control of taken acquisition (smaller scale events for instance, that perhaps attract less attention), do not necessarily answer questions about the appropriateness of certain artists and their material to be on an Amnesty sponsored stage.

### 3.4 Internal communication and relationships

**The Ball has a legacy of unpopularity within Amnesty due, in no small part, to the wider cultural divide associated with the last SPB event in 2008. However, despite support from the Senior Management Team, some of the project team felt as though they were working in an unfairly hostile environment, whilst other teams were frustrated by the lack of involvement and consultation. These difficult internal relationships severely impaired internal communications.**

Internal communications and relationships were affected by several issues:

- **Support and decision making accountability of Senior Management and the Leadership Team**

There was clear support from the Senior Management team for the Ball and the SPB project team. Whilst the project team prepared and presented strategy, risk assessment and financial projections to Board, SMT, Leadership team and Finance Committee, employees were not aware of the level of scrutiny, control and decision making that they expected. An example cited was the decision to green light the Comedy Gala approach was made in November 2011, but at this point employees recall little evidence of the decision behind the change in concept from the 'Night of a 1000 Balls', despite the rationale being presented to LT, SMT, Financial Scrutiny Committee, and staff themselves.

*"The content approval processes for the Ball were not in line with other AI processes, which seemed contradictory." (Employee)*

- **Key issues were not felt to have been constructively discussed.** Although there were monthly catch-ups chaired by the SPB project manager, the content tended to focus on presenting what had been decided, whilst lacking information on the rationale and discussion behind those decisions. For example:

- **Discussions about talent and appropriate artists** were not opened up to the other teams, right up until the very end. Had such discussions happened earlier, key teams could have alerted the SPB Core team to their concerns about artists.

It should be acknowledged that the lead times on the project would not have allowed for drawn-out processes, and so such discussions would need to take place as early in the scoping of a project as possible.

- **Change in format** is still an area of confusion, since the 'Night of 1000 Balls' was seen by many in the organisation to better reflect the Amnesty brand. There was a lot of confusion

as to why it moved away from this concept, with some supposing that it perhaps couldn't bring in sufficient revenue.

*“When I heard about the Night of 1000 Balls, I really felt we had learnt the lessons from last time.” (Employee)*

At the root of these issues lie the difficult relationships created by differences in opinions as to what Amnesty's values are, what the future growth strategy should be and subsequent poor communications around the Ball and the decisions being made. These differences in opinion seemed to create confusion and disrupt the attempts that were made to update colleagues.

### **3.5 The event itself (production)**

**The project team is credited with delivering an event that ran smoothly and successfully on the night, despite issues in managing relationships with external partners, producing the event in an unfamiliar overseas market, and the recurring issue of lead times. These issues were well managed by a project team that have been applauded for their dedication in delivering the Ball.**

Both external and internal teams acknowledge that the team pulled off an amazing feat in terms of setting up the Ball in the US in a relatively short space of time.

*“The production in the US was faultless.” (External partner)*

#### **3.5.1 Delivering the Ball in New York**

**Delivering an event in the US to deliver objectives focused on AIUK was always going to be a huge undertaking. The rationale was that amnesty had been trying to attract international talent in previous SPBs with some success (Jimmy Fallon, Sarah Silverman, Kristen Schall, Russell Peters, Seth Myers and Chevy Chase) but felt there would be greater success, create a more 'global event' and inject new energy into SPB brand by 'going to the (predominantly US) talent whilst retaining support from UK high profile talent.**

The rationale itself was sound, as an event on each side of the Atlantic fit with the Balls core objectives of using great entertainment to reach mainstream and special interest audiences. But in doing so, several challenges arose, that should be reflected upon if considering such an event in the future:

- **Relationships with US partners were difficult at times**

One of the factors that made delivering the SPB more difficult was that the UK project team was delivering the event in New York. Not only did this heighten the level of contractors involved, there was also an additional learning curve to be followed in understanding the

US market. However, relationships with a team of highly experienced partners, with impressive credentials to bring to the event, were positive and ensured that issues that arose because of unfamiliarity with the US market were overcome.

Relationships with AIUSA at times caused friction. The UK team's vision for the Ball was at times felt to take priority over taking practical advice from those that knew the market, but equally input from AIUSA on production or communications often served to delay or create additional pressures on an already stretched project team. In this respect, AIUK may have underestimated the extent to which Amnesty is a fully joined up global organisation.

- **Priorities for AIUSA not recognised by the project**

In terms of content, the project was delivering to two markets and many stakeholders recognized that the comedy tastes of the two audiences were very different in what they expected to see. Channel 4 wanted to ensure that there was a high level of known UK comedians on the billing, in order that a UK audience would want to watch it. As a result, there were some frustrations from partners in the US at what they saw as AIUK team's failing to deliver on some of their expectations around talent and content.

- **The AIUSA team felt un-consulted and uninvolved**

The AIUSA team judged the AIUK as lacking experience and competence to deliver an event in New York, and hence over-relied on "hired help". A key point of frustration was the perception of the UK team taking decisions and then informing AIUSA. Consequently, the relationship "didn't start on a good note and carried on that way." (AIUSA), leaving a sense that those relationships with the US team may need to be repaired.

*"No understanding by AIUK of New York as a market. You can't just transplant London to New York and expect it to work the same way." (AIUSA)*

*"If I said something we had a real battle, and most of the time I'd end up being overruled – I was cut out of the loop." (AIUSA)*

**From the UK perspective, it was felt that the AIUSA team could have delivered more.**

This was attributed to the challenges facing AIUSA and recognised that the team may have felt invaded and were also going through a difficult context of management challenges and threats to job security.

*"We completely over-estimated AIUSA's ability to seize the challenge." (Employee).*

### **3.5.2 Creative control of production**

**Several factors contributed to an apparent lack of some aspects of creative control that impacted on AIUK's ability to completely control the direction of the project and its alignment with the organisation's values and gender equality commitment:**



– **Clear lines of communication, roles and responsibility**

Given the size of the project, a project team made up of internal teams and Amnesty's creative agency was needed to implement the project. The additional partnerships with broadcast and communications partners working with the project team did mean that at times those partners were confused as to the lines of communications, roles and responsibilities, and did not necessarily see the project team, made up of Mother and Amnesty, as a joined-up body.

– **Control of the broadcast edit**

When developing content and editing the televised material, there was an underlying tension between the production of a show and maintaining Amnesty's message and position. Those running the project from AIUK were seen by external partners to be making a valiant effort in delivering such a large programme of work, but recognised that delivering TV productions was not the project team's core business. A key point here is that Channel 4 did not grant Amnesty the right to approve the broadcast edit, which had previously been built into all broadcast contracts,

– **Preserving Amnesty's values within external relationship**

Employees question whether there was any scope to walk away from external relationships when insisting on courses that undermine or contradict Amnesty International values. As discussed above, lead times were compact, making it very difficult for Amnesty to walk away from relationships or insist on greater creative control.

Three areas are highlighted where more robust processes could have been implemented in terms of building the wider project team;

1. Recruiting and briefing new partners on Amnesty's aims and objectives, for example the Live event Executive Producer, writers and communications agencies
2. Ensuring amnesty was close enough to and 'calling the shots' in key third party relationships for example with broadcasters
3. Ensuring that it was *Amnesty's* aims that were always 'the reason for doing this', and ensuring that partner aims aligned with Amnesty's

*"We were both on very different agendas. We wanted it to be UK heavy and they had to deliver a big event to their American broadcasters." (External partner)*

*"The Channel 4 edit was not the show that I saw." (External partner)*

## 4 Key Findings 3: Decision Making and Financial Management

The short-term financial aim of the Ball was to be cost neutral. At October 2012, the Ball had failed to break even and recorded an investment of around £860,000<sup>6</sup> for Amnesty. Amnesty currently expects at least a further £120,000 of income from the marketing of books and DVD's giving a net investment of £740,000. This will improve if the organisation is able to expand the geographical coverage of licensing deals in relation to the Ball.

The aim of this section is to identify management issues rather than a detailed audit / analysis of the project finances. The evaluation provides 3 key criteria.

1. Degree of income generation and cost reduction (to break even)
2. Contractual relationships including sales to global media outlets
3. Return on investment (short and longer term e.g. DVD sales)

The issue remains a sensitive one as the evaluation found there to be deep anxiety about the implications of having lost this revenue in a difficult economic climate.

Overall, the SPB failed to break even, in contrast with hopes during the early stages of the SPB planning, that the event would either break even or have the potential to make a profit. The end result saw SPB make what many to perceive to be a significant loss.

<b>Summary Financial Report</b>	<b>Nov-11</b>	<b>Feb-12</b>	<b>Oct-12</b>
<b>Secret Policeman's Ball</b>	<b>Worst Case</b>	<b>Agreed</b>	<b>Forecast</b>
	<b>projections</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Outturn</b>
	<b>£k</b>	<b>£k</b>	<b>£k</b>
Ticket Income	<b>1,728</b>	<b>905</b>	<b>1,016</b>
Major Donor	<b>150</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>147</b>
TV Deals	<b>900</b>	<b>862</b>	<b>780</b>
DVD Distribution : Europe/N.Am	<b>50</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>78</b>
Book	<b>50</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>67</b>
Worldwide rights	<b>25</b>		<b>0</b>
Bank Interest			<b>4</b>
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>2,903</b>	<b>2,080</b>	<b>2,092</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>2,692</b>	<b>2,700</b>	<b>2,833</b>
<b>Net income/(investment)</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>(620)</b>	<b>(741)</b>

<sup>6</sup> At time of writing the financial process was still underway and so figures are given as approximates, based on information to hand

## 4.1 Decision Making and Risk Management

**As part of the project development, the November Blueprint referred to risk mitigation in place to offset potential worse case scenarios. In addition a risk mitigation plan was presented to the FSC as part of this decision paper in November 2011<sup>7</sup>.**

Once the potential for an over run on budget became apparent the Marketing Director implemented this plan. As such the risk inherent in the Ball was understood, and there was a plan to manage this risk, which was implemented.

The essence of the risk evaluation was that the quality of the Ball and its ability to deliver on its objectives was secure but the lack of secure funding in place to guarantee breaking even created a financial risk. This main element of this risk was, correctly, identified as *'ticket sales that form the single largest source of income to the project and are unsecure as a form of income'*.

Steps were outlined, and implemented, to mitigate the financial risk of the Ball, key of which included:

- Taking steps to minimise the impact of tax liability and exposure to currency fluctuations
- Building a contingency of 10% built into the production budget, along with a further contingency of 10% built into the marketing budget
- Ticketing sales strategy devised with New York ticketing experts and validated by AIUSA. At the time of compiling the mitigation strategy, ticket sales would need to have fell to 50% of the forecast to jeopardise the project break-even
- A revised ticket strategy designed to drive secure break-even rather than maximise profit being produced
- Following issues with the Executive Producers ability to sell tickets, Amnesty secured a deal with Amex to sell tickets through their customer base, which was ultimately responsible for a lift in ticket sales in the final weeks before the show.

The risk mitigation plan concluded:

*Ultimately, the choice now facing us is one of a balance of risks. If we pull the event now, our financial exposure is £210K. If we proceed, a reasonable estimate of our financial exposure is £620K. For a difference in financial exposure of £410K we will have delivered a powerful brand asset with a huge media value and the ability to communicate our brand in an inspiring and compelling way. We strongly believe that*

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<sup>7</sup> Secret Policeman's Ball 2012 Risk Analysis and Mitigation: Amnesty Internal Document

*this will directly support our growth strategy and therefore should proceed with the project.*

It is important to understand that the final investment in the project was broadly in line with that anticipated in the Risk analysis, and the risk was recognised, documented and plans put in place implemented in a transparent way, with scrutiny of the Marketing Director, the SMT and the FSC, It is also important to note the SMT and FSC attempted to manage the financial risk to AIUK of the project by insisting that broadcast deals were in place before the show was green-lit.

Therefore, within the project structure itself, the decision making was sound, well documented and transparent, reflecting employee views that the project team itself performed extremely well under pressure to recognise and mitigate the financial risk, whilst protecting the quality of the show that was delivered.

## **4.2 Cost control and Income generation**

**The SPB project manager, with support from the Head of Finance, was credited with having a very good grasp of the budgets and the financial challenges of running a one-off project of this nature, and worked hard to mitigate them. Throughout the project risks were identified and communicated to the SMT.**

The ball was broadly in line with the agreed possible worst-case scenario presented to the FSC in November 2011. The investment was therefore within the project's range of prediction and the project was given the go-ahead with full knowledge that this outcome might be possible. In total, overall project costs exceeded budget by 5%, which is considered to be within tolerance on a project of this complexity.

### **– Cost of venue**

Part of the reason why the final financial investment was so high was the venue (Radio City) costing considerably more than the executive producers anticipated, due to holding the event on a Sunday, due to local labour laws. This was the biggest variance within the project budget. It was felt that this was a simple oversight that could have been mitigated by talking directly with the venue to understand their view given their experience in putting on and delivering similar events.

### **– Income generation**

The major cause of the financial investment required was due to income being less than anticipated. The project is expected to generate 28% less income than was anticipated. As mentioned above, this shortfall may reduce if Amnesty are able to secure additional licensing deals.

### **– High-End Tickets Sales**

The best and worst case scenarios were found to be overly optimistic despite being benchmarked against similar shows (e.g. Stings performance for the Rainforest Foundation at the RCM), with ticket sales failing to reach the worst case scenario. However, the event sold out of normal priced tickets, and had even had to release, restricted view tickets

normally not sold generating additional revenue. The issue was with the high-end ticket sales. The sale of high tickets was agreed to be the responsibility of the US Executive Producer but did not allocate appropriate resource to deliver on this. To remedy this, Amnesty brought in an additional partner that succeeded in boosting ticket sales.

#### – **Relationships with external partners**

During the evaluation there were questions raised about the value for money that the organisation received from the range of consultants and agencies employed. However, from the project team's point of view, relationships worked well with a significant amount of goodwill (demonstrated at one point by UK partners willing to freeze fees to enable the project to continue whilst approvals were sought from the FSC).

There were also those relationships that did not come to fruition because of the change of concept, for example Live Nation to look at the prospect of Secret Cinemas. It is not clear to employees whether any costs associated with these relationships have been factored into the Ball balance sheet.

### **4.3 Return on Investment**

**There is doubt as to whether the Ball will make a lasting return on the investment made. Whilst some feel the story is not over and the Ball is an asset that will continue to generate material, collateral and revenue, others feel that the investment of £740,000 could have been better allocated to other projects.**

There is real concern over how much the SPB project invested. Employees question whether, given the opportunity to invest the cost of the SPB, £2.8 million, a better and more lasting return could have been made.

In the short term, despite a successful PR campaign, the Ball missed an opportunity to capitalise on the PR successes to engage new audiences with Amnesty's cause. On the whole employees are not convinced that there have been worthy short term returns on the investment.

The exception to this is the consideration of the return for the US and for Amnesty International as a whole. Senior Managers are keen to think beyond Amnesty UK to the value of the Ball to the broader organisation, to the potential for support from major donors in the US, and the value of the PR collateral secured there. Examples of string platforms for continued ROI identified include:

- The success the Ball has had in building relationships with talent in the UK and US, and of course the relationship established with Zarganar and association with his work
- The media content, footage and that can be used, alongside celebrity endorsement and join-asks that can be made
- The evidence from Gorkana and Brianjuicer indicating an increase in brand awareness, equating to an advertising equivalent of £3,344,343, and achieving an OTS of over 540 million

- Stronger working relationships with other partners in the US and the UK
- Potential for future major donors and new donor support, alongside the realised support of a new and influential major donor
- Further opportunities for income and profile from the book and DVD.

There is still anticipation of a continued return from the Ball over the long term, and participants close to the project are keen to highlight that, despite the slightly disappointing engagement levels generated, the Ball is intended as an event that will continue to produce material and saleable assets.

*“It might have a greater life down the road – DVD, NetFlix and YouTube.”*  
(Employee)

Currently the gross figure for sales and licenses of back catalogue content since 2001 is around £1.2M since the large scale shows came back with We Know Where You Live! in 2001. With additional content being created, such as the History of Balls book and 2012 DVD available in UK from November, there is every reason to expect that the 2012 Ball will go on to play its part in building long-term income from the Ball concept as a whole.

Whilst some of the content has already, and will continue to be, used in Amnesty’s promotional work, the challenge is ensuring that there is commitment within the organisation to develop and support the use of that material to contribute to the Amnesty’s work.

## 5 Key Findings 4: Alignment with Amnesty's Brand and Values

This section will discuss the effectiveness of the project in aligning with Amnesty's brand, values, and supporting its commitment to gender equality and diversity.

In summary, the Ball has intended throughout its development and execution, to align, support and further Amnesty's brand values. However, because of widespread disagreement as to what the brand represents and what the organisation's values are, it was difficult for internal audiences to assess the extent the Ball aligned and supported those values and demonstrated the organisation's commitment to gender and diversity mainstreaming. Despite recognition in the media of some powerful messages around free speech and Amnesty's commitment to Human Rights activities, different perceptions of Amnesty's values and how the Ball supports the work of Amnesty, created a context whereby the SPB itself failed to convince all internal stakeholders, staff and a small number of vocal external commentators of Amnesty's commitment to gender equality.

The values the ball intended to align to are set out in the Amnesty Brand Book:

*FAIRNESS, HOPE, COURAGE, FOR PEOPLE, BY PEOPLE, CHANGE, TRUTH*

### 5.1 Supporting Amnesty's values mission and objectives

**Overall, the Ball achieved significant successes in meeting its publicity and awareness KPIs, achieving its objective in building the profile of and appeal of Amnesty and achieved a high percentage of publicity carrying Amnesty messages. A recurring theme throughout the evaluation is how the Ball can achieve such success and yet still be the source of significant internal issues.**

The general aim of the Ball - to raise awareness and engage with new audiences - aligned with employee and partner perceptions of the challenges facing Amnesty in 2012. However, the Ball itself polarized opinion, with many employees opposing the event as a means to reach new audiences – and even questioning the need to reach new (more mainstream) audiences.

The challenge facing Amnesty is stated as being the need to broaden its supporter base to engage audiences that care about Human Rights but are not actively supporting or contributing to the work of Amnesty, either through donations or voluntary action. Underlying this are two key challenges articulated by internal stakeholders and external partners.

- Amnesty is competing with other organisations operating in the same space, such as Human Rights Watch, Oxfam, and other charities linking their campaign areas to Human Rights.
- As a name, Amnesty remains well known but what the organisation stands for, and what it does, is less clear. In the US in particular, Amnesty no longer enjoys the same profile that it has enjoyed in the past, and faces a challenging financial situation.

These issues presented a further challenge; how Amnesty reconciles itself as an organisation campaigning for Human Rights of often marginalised or vulnerable people,

often with grass roots level support, whilst promoting its brand to leverage support and funding from individuals and major donors?

The Ball had mixed success in addressing this latter challenge, and consequently became a contentious issue among those employees unconvinced that the Ball was positioned to address Amnesty's challenge, whilst holding firm to their own compelling views of the organisation's values.

*"Our vision is compelling and clear but our projects don't communicate our vision."*

**Internal perceptions of Amnesty International's mission and its values is inconsistent, and so how the Ball intended to support the work of AIUK teams and activists was unclear and questioned from the outset.**

There is a clear passion for Amnesty and its work, and strong personal connections with the values of advocacy and equality that it is seen to embody. Throughout all conversations with participants during the evaluation there was no mention of the Brand Book values the Ball intended to align to.

Instead, Amnesty staff feel that there lacks a cohesive, consistent articulation of Amnesty's vision and objectives, and different parts of the organisation engage with the values in highly personal, and sometimes conflicting ways.

On one side is a view that Amnesty should focus on widening its appeal and building its brand to engage with new audiences, and achieve greater impact and grow revenue from new supporters and sources. On the other are those that feel such approaches risk diluting or compromising the credibility of Amnesty's Human Rights work, by prioritizing fundraising over campaigning.

The evaluation found that the majority of employees appreciate both sides; however, the Ball became a focus for these differences. The atmosphere of contention around the Ball required continual and extensive management by the SPB project team. At its worst, this division manifested in negative behavior, such as the way in which personal opinions were vented against the Ball and the project team, by using post-It notes stuck to presentation placards. This behavior had a damaging impact on the project team's morale, creating a feeling of harassment and anxiety that persisted throughout the project and continues to persist as focus moves to maximizing the return on investment from the Ball over the longer term. During evaluation discussions, employees expressed shock that as an organisation, Amnesty is capable of cultivating such behaviors.

**The objectives of the SPB were not clearly understood, making it difficult for internal audiences to 'buy-in' to the project, and keep up to date with progress, and achievements.**

The November Blueprint outlined two core objectives for the Ball:

- *Increase visibility of Amnesty amongst our target audience in the UK and the US.*
- *Develop warm leads and start a dialogue with SPB comedy fans that could lead to an on-going relationship*



Senior Internal Stakeholders and the SPB project team were clear on the core objective of the SPB creating an event that broadened awareness and provided a platform to engage with different audiences.

From the outset it was established that there was no short term fund raising objective, but a secondary objective to be cost neutral. Success was defined as building awareness among new audiences that would create supporter journeys by generating 'buzz' around the brand and establish a context that gives campaigns greater impact.

However, these objectives were not well communicated to the rest of the business, with many colleagues unclear on what the Ball was intending to deliver and how it intended to do so. As a consequence, Amnesty employees were somewhat disengaged from the formal objectives throughout the project.

- This general objective was interpreted further by internal audiences as engaging specifically with 'younger' audiences, and to establish relationships with celebrities, talent and potential major donors.
- The SPB message around '*freedom of expression*' caused some confusion amongst staff and internal stakeholders. Although generally accepted as a simple and effective message to convey, and one that was easy for artists to connect with, it was not considered a key aim for the organisation, not being an area currently being campaigned on.

*"My personal favourite was a celebration of freedom of expression, which was a new one for me that emerged near the end."* (Employee)

- However, despite this confusion and apparent lack of visibility amongst Amnesty staff, the '*freedom of expression*' theme was documented clearly as central to the Ball strategy, and continued to be central to the project team's thinking and approach throughout the development and delivery of the project. This included extensive briefings for producers and artists facilitated by the production of an Artist's Handbook reiterating the Amnesty brand values. However, the distance between content producers and artists hindered Amnesty's ability to ensure they '*got the message*'.
  - The financial aim was far less clear, with some internal audiences picking up on the secondary objective to break even, whilst others audiences (with examples from both employee and external partners) understood there to be a clear priority given to raising funds for Amnesty.

Consequently, employees tended to feel uninformed or unconvinced as to how the Ball aligned with their perception of the organisation's values and objectives, and how it supported their work.

**Amnesty's partners were clear on the objectives of the project, but were not collectively engaged with the importance of preserving its legitimacy as an organisation campaigning for human rights 'without discrimination'.**

There was a clear and common understanding among partners that the purpose of the Ball was about heightening visibility and building brand awareness in order to grow the

supporter base. However, there was generally only a broad acceptance of the need to be mindful of gender equality and how decisions reflected on an organisation like Amnesty.

There was considerable effort by the project team to ensure content producers and artists were continually mindful of Amnesty's commitment to equality and diversity. However, conducting the project in a manner preserving the credibility of Amnesty International's position was not an explicitly stated as a requirement, and did not form part of the Amnesty Brand Book.

## **5.2 Mix of Marketing and PR activities**

**The decision to produce a project which would make social media an integral and essential aspect has been applauded, not least for accepting and acknowledging the changes in how media is consumed and the opportunities this provided to raise awareness and engagement among new groups.**

In terms of aligning to Amnesty's values, the premise was sound. Using social media to create and maintain 'buzz' around the SPB was a key strand underpinning the Ball's objectives of strengthening engagement among target audiences (particular the 'caring but not committed' segment), building the profile and appeal of the brand in both the UK and the US, and opening up to more mainstream and special interest audiences.

The digital strategy was defined by the third party creative agency, and at the outset of the project they were responsible for delivering to the objectives. The objectives were set by Amnesty, but over the course of the project additional KPIs were built into the strategy, to ensure appropriate reach and coverage were achieved and to insert a clear 'ask' (agreed as a £5 donation).

However, delivery of the digital strategy was impaired by a shift in focus to delivering the Ball itself. As the nature of the project changed, it seems focus shifted to delivering the New York event, and from the point of view of Amnesty's Digital team, the Digital strategy became less of a priority. As such the Amnesty Digital team became more involved in delivering to a strategy inherited from the creative agency, rather than creating a new Strategy around the New York Comedy event.

Although objectives for the digital strategy had been set, the Amnesty project team were being measured on a series of KPIs that the creative agency were not able to engage with. From Amnesty's point of view, many of the promised partnerships that would have driven the digital strategy did not come to fruition. For example the original US Broadcast partnership deal with HBO and brokered through Bedrocket included significant partnerships with Twitter and Youtube and other major digital players and these partnerships were central to the thinking behind the digital strategy and plans to create and drive traffic. The Bedrocket deal did not materialise, partially because of difficult internal negotiations between Amnesty UK and AIUSA which meant AIUK had to delay the SPB and so key components of the digital KPIs became more difficult to meet.

**The change in format for the Night of 1000 Balls, to the Radio City Hall Gala meant that staff time and resource had been invested in marketing, networking and briefing activities that were ultimately unused.**

The development of the 2012 Ball moved from a concept of 'a Night of 1000 Balls', which highlighted localized communities building awareness from the bottom up, to a large Gala style event in New York as well as a number of 'pop up' regional events. When discussing the development of the SPB with employees the former idea was highly regarded, and employees across the business were warm towards this approach to the SPB as it sat well with Amnesty's values as an organisation working together with local networks and volunteers for greater impact. However, despite the warmth conveyed at the evaluation, at the time of development, significant effort was required to overcome resistance to the 'Night of 1000 Balls' concept.

Delivering the 'Night of 1000 Balls' was abandoned, due to concerns over the required resource and commitment needed to deliver an event of this scale with many facets requiring continual oversight to ensure delivery. The project was scoped to deliver an ambitious mix of 1000 gigs and regional hub events plus a New York based 'finale', delivered against a documentary exposing the challenges of putting on a comedy event in some of the most repressive regimes in the world. This led to a change in format at a point where Amnesty teams had already begun investing time into developing strategies, engaging with networks and producing briefing and communication material to spread awareness of the event. There was a certain level of resentment amongst some staff, since the change appeared to have come about quickly and with little warning/consultation, and represented wasted investment of time and resource.

**Internally, employees and senior stakeholders felt that the Ball lacked a cohesive and unified marketing strategy to achieve its aims.**

This can in part be explained by differing views and expectations as to what 'success' of an event in awareness terms constitute, and the extent to which success is a measure of 'awareness' vs. 'actual engagement'.

*"PR and Marketing are not connected. Marketing equals fundraising, getting new supporters, upgrading value, retention. PR equates to Media, so it's column inches, mentions, quantity rather than quality. We have different teams but we need something that connects them, a segmentation strategy. At the moment, we're looking at our audience in fundamentally different ways." (Employee)*

The disconnect between internal teams was reflected by the disconnect between external partners, some of whom were described as working towards different objectives and not necessarily subscribing to Amnesty's KPI's and objectives.

**Whilst the publicity campaign surrounding the Ball was a success, using that exposure to engage audiences and take them on the journey to Amnesty was felt to be a missed opportunity.**

Employees commented that the target audience was not clearly defined, and this has impeded on Amnesty's ability to reach the "newer" audience. One person was particularly concerned as to whom the Channel 4 show would appeal, and how this joined up with the intended audience.

*"AIUK is not clear on audiences, Young or Digital. Do we know they respond to these celebrities? AIUK has no understanding of who to appeal to." (Employee)*

*“There was no diversification of talent pool. SPB content was aimed at an affluent, ‘waspy’ community which is not a demographic growing in the US.” (AIUSA)*

*“It would be appealing to watchers who are sexist and homophobic. To me that’s who it spoke to because of the content.” (Employee)*

### **5.3 Comedy and the fit with Amnesty**

**Raising awareness of Human Rights issues through comedy is recognised as a difficult and potentially risky relationship, with the potential to offend as well as amuse. There continues to be strong support among staff for the role of comedy in raising awareness of human rights issues; however the Ball is widely believed by internal audiences to have missed an opportunity to use the medium to best effect, reflected by some external media reviews.**

Comedy has, and continues to be, a medium that works well for Amnesty. The legacy of the SPB and a strong presence at the Edinburgh Festival (Stand up for Freedom), provides opportunities for exposure, awareness and engagement to comedy lovers via multiple media channels (e.g. Secret Comedy Podcasts), and the Secret Policeman’s Ball appears in grass roots events such as an annual Ball staged by Glasgow University.

There is continued support within Amnesty to use comedy as a medium to raise awareness of the organisation and campaign issues, believing that charity work and comedy can work in harmony. Notable examples, such as Comic Relief and Channel 4’s Comedy Gala in aid of Great Ormond Street, were mentioned as good examples of where brand values and entertainment work well together, when the comedy ‘gets it right’.

*“People are more inclined to watch something and stick to it if it makes them laugh. Comedy’s a good way to inject information into people’s lives.” Contractor*

However, even the Great Ormond Street event attracted some controversy with high profile talent using what for some was inappropriate language and incidents of male comedians groping women in the audience. However, such actions did not raise emotions with Amnesty staff in the same way that similar controversies around SPB had. The concern within Amnesty is whether comedy is suitable for conveying *human rights messages*, and whether suitable talent is approached to deliver that message. Employees feel that a great deal of what Amnesty does is about identity and standing up to prejudice, and recognise how identity can be used as means to threaten, bully and victimize. The concern is that comedy often does the same, by using identity or vulnerability as means to parody, belittle or denigrate for the sake of humour. In addition, such humour is pursued to gain shock value or to test boundaries. It was this kind of comedy that generated the deepest levels of resentment amongst staff and audiences.

*“The content was not suitable. Stand-up makes fun of people. It’s not a good experience and not funny.” (Employee)*

The catch, and one that sits uneasily with the Ball’s premise of freedom of speech, is whether Amnesty can, or wants to be seen as controlling, or even censoring material, in

order to preserve its credibility. Such action is considered an infringement of rights and freedoms and at worst can appear hypocritical in the context of Amnesty's human rights campaigning.

*"You can't cut a Comedian's standup routine or remove a joke half way through. That's not fair." (External partner)*

*"You can't prescribe for art. If AIUK is going to be involved with artists, it's going to be dangerous. If we actually believe in Freedom of Expression, you've got to give it." (Employee)*

*"At what point do you censor free speech and comedy? Everyone should have the right to free speech even if it offends or not." (AIUSA)*

*"I hope we can still do comedy. It's high risk. You have to accept that stuff is going to happen that we don't like." (Employee)*

Whilst comedy can be a medium to engage and raise awareness on human rights and campaign issues, an event the size of the Secret Policeman's Ball, that is seeking to draw attention to the organisation, requires consideration as to what is acceptable and appropriate, and the level of control required to ensure that the content of that comedy, and those delivering it, fit and support Amnesty's broad values. Previous successes using comedy, such as Amnesty's presence at the Edinburgh Comedy Festival, proves that the medium can be sensitive, responsible and still have impact, and ensuring this may require Amnesty to be more discerning over its talent, preferring 'comedy for engagement' rather than 'celebrity for exposure'. Of course, this could be at the cost of getting a message across and engaging with the broadest audiences.

*"The key thing is talent, talent, talent...If you don't deliver talent, nobody will watch. With good talent, you will get viewers and get your messages across." (External partner)*

#### **5.4 The impact on Amnesty's commitment to gender equality and diversity**

**Amnesty's commitment to gender mainstreaming identifies gender equality as central to the organisation's legitimacy as an organisation campaigning for the enjoyment of human rights without discrimination. However, the Ball has failed to convince staff, and some stakeholders and supporters that gender equality is an organisational priority, and in some cases has tarnished Amnesty's reputation with its partner organisations.**

Overall, the organisation supports the promotion of gender equality, and progress is being made to mainstream new equality policies and guidelines to demonstrate Amnesty's commitment, set out in the Gender Action Plan (GAP). During the SPB project, it is arguable that GAP was not yet mainstreamed enough in Amnesty's projects, planning or culture to give the direction that (with the benefit of hindsight) the project required, early in its conception.

However, the vast majority of Amnesty International stakeholders and employees interviewed felt that some specific elements of the content in the Secret Policeman's Ball were in conflict with their perceptions of the values held by the organisation, the work it is carrying out with partners, and with its campaign messages. This was acutely felt in the selection of talent and lack of diversity within the final line-up, and the elements of content and conduct of the some members of the line-up.

**The strategy driving the selection of talent was predicated on a concept of using the Ball and high profile talent to create a positive association between a wide range of mainstream and special interest audiences. However, as the project neared the event date, the project team found it more and more difficult to retain control of the material.**

The SPB November Blueprint outlined the concept to use the SPB and performers in it to create a positive association between the audience and Amnesty international – to use entertainment and performers to make an introduction to a new, more mainstream audience. At this point, the target audience was identified in the blueprint as having three distinct characteristics:

1. They love comedy and are likely to go to comedy gigs, they watch comedy online and share it with friends
2. They share Amnesty values i.e. 'Caring but not committed'
3. They're active in social networks Broad socio-demo description:

The strategy to deliver the content and performance to engage with these audiences was to recruit and extensively brief a head writer, DJ Javerbaum, to create a three hour live show of predominately sketch material. It is noteworthy success that Amnesty is able to engage with celebrated and award winning writer with 10 years' experience writing satirical material for the Jon Stewart show. The approach was to return to earlier SPB formats and create an event built around more sketch material and less stand up so as to retain control of the content and the message.

The relationship worked well at the outset but as the project evolved the project team was less involved with the briefing of artists than the project team felt was required. However, Amnesty had no involvement or oversight of the stand-up material making up the content of the Ball. It is the stand-up rather than sketch material that created an element of risk that was ultimately the source of controversy.

**The line-up of talent was a source of controversy before, during and after the Ball. In particular, stand-up talent with known history of pushing the boundaries of comedy and controversy, as well as a line-up dominated by white males sharing a stage with Amnesty angered staff, equalities groups and commentators such as Cath Elliot.**

The presence of particular artists that have been reported/accused by some sections of the media as being sexist, disablist and homophobic was cause for controversy. The most negative of commentary suggested that by providing such performers with a platform that Amnesty was tarnishing its reputation. Such views were expressed by some staff, and reflected in public commentary from equality groups and commentators on equalities

issues. Prior to the event, members of Disabled People Against Cuts (DPAC) created a blog thread to vent anger at the decision to associate particular artists with Amnesty:<sup>8</sup>

*As an organisation whose purpose is to fight injustice and persecution, I find it shocking that you would provide a platform for a comedian with an enormous record of racism, misogyny, disablism, homophobia and transphobia. (Anonymous, DPAC website)*

Some comments were more succinct:

*Has Amnesty lost the plot? (Anonymous, DPAC website)*

The virtually all male, all white line-up was also an issue that attracted criticism even before the event itself. [www.womensviewsonnews.com](http://www.womensviewsonnews.com) highlighted the general concern felt by critics of the SPB:

*Critics have expressed their concern that the line-up of comedians and musicians for this important annual event is all male and virtually all white.<sup>9</sup>*

The article the above quote is taken from linked to opinion by two prominent commentators, Cath Elliot and Bidisha, who criticized the event for the message the line-up sends out.

*Seriously? This event “brings together an **incredible representation of the best comedians and musicians in the world**” and yet there’s not a single woman amongst them? .... Never mind making it a “bad night for dictators and a good night for free speech”, it seems Amnesty’s intent on making its 50th anniversary Secret Policeman’s Ball another bad night for women and a bloody good night for the boy’s club.<sup>10</sup> (Cath Elliot)*

*...anyone who gives a damn about women or indeed about anyone 'of colour', will be outraged that this is happening (laughably) in the name of international freedom of speech. Amnesty International are making it extremely clear to global dictators everywhere that...white men are the overwhelming majority of people who deserve the freedom to speak, sing, act, play or perform? They have made damn sure that as few women as humanly possible are speaking.<sup>11</sup> (Bidisha)*

Small scale qualitative research conducted by Flamingo on behalf of Amnesty identified that a minority of participants also picked up on a bias in the make-up of talent, but for these audiences the issue was ‘not a problem’, but perhaps represented a missed opportunity. However, larger scale quantitative brand tracking research conducted by

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.dpac.uk.net/2012/02/disablist-racist-and-sexist-comedian-joining-amnesty-line-up-say-no/>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.womensviewsonnews.org/2012/02/female-talent-remains-top-secret-at-amnestys-policemans-ball/>

<sup>10</sup> <http://toomuchtosayformyself.com/2012/01/31/all-the-big-guns/>

<sup>11</sup> <http://bidisha-online.blogspot.co.uk/2012/01/andy-hackman-head-of-brand-and-events.html>

Brainjuicer did not reveal any indication that consumer audiences in general were picking up on these issues.

**Despite objections to the profile of the talent, the Ball was given credit by employees for being able to attract high profile performers to the event, and widely applauded for the strength of the talent brought to the stage. This disconnect in internal and external perceptions of the profile of the talent can partly explained by a view shared by employees and external partners that many of the celebrities were not felt to be openly supportive of Amnesty's cause.**

Senior stakeholders within Amnesty, whilst acknowledging the lack of diversity as an issue, felt the line-up of talent was impressive, and employees were impressed with the ability of the organisation to attract support and commitment from high profile talent such as Coldplay, Jon Stewart, Mumford and Sons and Sarah Silverman etc.

Taking aside the lack of diversity within the line-up, the success in attracting such high profile talent to the event indicates that the organisation has a strong profile to build on. During the evaluation, external partners in the US and UK were keen to point out the challenge of engaging with this calibre of talent, particularly in the context of the Ball's time pressures and budget restrictions. General opinion is that very few organisations have the leverage to generate this level of celebrity support and create a buzz around a TV show. Considering the project challenges, it is important that this achievement is recognised, not just in terms of the project team and Amnesty colleagues' performance, but also as a strong platform for future projects requiring high profile talent.

The Ball is also credited with the success of bringing Zarganar to the stage, and bringing the human rights situation in Burma to the event. This aspect of the event was lauded as the 'embodiment' of the event, and there was appreciation for bringing a comedian to the stage that can accurately and powerfully represent Amnesty's cause. The high profile of the line-up was a key element of the positive associations made with the Ball, as evidenced by Gorkana Group's PR measurement report:

*"The strong association between celebrities and the Secret Policeman's Ball was evident throughout the campaign, with 90% of all coverage mentioning at least one celebrity. The majority contained statements from celebrities showing support or solidarity to the campaign, as displayed by Chris Martin of Coldplay who said: "We are so happy to be involved with the 2012 Secret Policeman's Ball. We have followed and supported Amnesty International - and the amazing work they do around the world in the field of human rights - for years, and it is a pleasure to be asked to contribute to such an inspiring event" (Daily Express).*

*"As we celebrated the 50th anniversary of Amnesty International, we were treated to LITERALLY one of the best line-ups to ever converge on the stage of Radio City Music Hall." (People's Choice (UK))<sup>12</sup>*

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<sup>12</sup> (PR Measurement: Amnesty International -Secret Policeman's Ball December – May 2012 Gorkana Group)



## 5.5 The alignment of content and messaging with Amnesty brand & values

**Overwhelmingly, the feedback from Amnesty International employees in both the UK and US was that the content of the 2012 Ball has not reflected well Amnesty's brand and values. However, it is also widely held that the event in New York was a much greater success in terms of messaging than the edited Channel 4 program screened in the UK.**

Setting aside the question of what is and isn't funny, there was generally a spectrum of views ranging from delight to disgust at the content of the Ball that was televised on Channel 4. Those actually at the event and seeing the full show were highly favorable to the content, agreeing that it was a great show that incorporated Amnesty messaging and visibility of the Brand, whilst those seeing the Channel 4 screening felt Amnesty to be lost within the comedy content.

*"It was a sensory joy." (External partner)*

*"I loved New York. It was such a venue with 6000 people and everyone stood for Zarganar." (Employee)*

*"I was there and I enjoyed it more than the previous one. It was faster and funnier and better produced". (Employee)*

**Despite some acknowledgement that the televised Ball was broadly funny, many staff members watched the Channel 4 show and found it uncomfortable viewing. The Channel 4 edit did not showcase the Amnesty brand in the best possible way. However, external perceptions of the Channel 4 edit, from media and audience sentiment research were broadly favorable.**

The qualitative research conducted by Flamingo found the content of the screened version to be 'broadly successful' in that it 'made people laugh'. However, Amnesty staff, including the SPB project team, expressed concern that key messages and videotaped slots were omitted by Channel 4 because of time limitations, or edited out because they were felt to be "too dry or wordy". As a result, the freedom of speech message was didn't come through as strongly as the actual show. In fact, some employees felt that the televised version actually highlighted what was perceived as the sexist and discriminatory content of the sketch artists' acts. A key issue, felt acutely by employees, senior management and the project team was removing Zarganar's piece, which most felt to be one of the most powerful segments of the show.

*"It was a shame to lose the Zarganar footage from the Channel 4 edit. We didn't have control on the cut or the Channel 4 comedians". (Employee)*

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*"I thought it was an utter disaster. I felt ashamed because I work for this organisation and I don't think it presented any of the good work it does" (Employee)*

The power of this piece was picked up and reported by in the media, with just one such example captured by Minassian illustrating the importance of this part of the event.

*There were few moments where politics intruded on the proceedings, but the Ball did feature one unusual comic who earned a standing ovation.*

*Burmese comedian Zarganar Thura took the stage, he said, not to tell jokes, but to thank Amnesty. Thura had been serving a 35-year sentence in a Burmese prison for "causing public alarm" after speaking to foreign media. After three years in prison, he was released last October in an amnesty that freed about 200 political detainees. A nominally civilian government has replaced a long-ruling military junta in Burma, but Thura said that 25 percent of the country's parliament is filled by military officers.*

*Thura suggested another 25 percent of parliament seats be filled by comics: "That way, half the parliament would be crazy." (Brit and American comedy dance at 'Secret Ball' BY JAKE COYLE, AP Entertainment Writer, NEW YORK (AP))<sup>13</sup>*

**There was much anger and upset amongst staff about the content of the event and how it reflected on Amnesty, and their work, and has proven to be a very divisive project. It has led many staff to further dissociate from the Ball and decide that the Secret Policeman's Ball is not part the Amnesty brand.**

This mismatch between what Amnesty stands for and the content of the Ball placed employees in a difficult decision. Partner organisations such as End Violence Against Women (EVAW) made formal their views that the some of the content of the Ball had conflicted messages around women's rights that each campaigned on. Some employees felt that they had to either choose to defend the organisation's decisions or find the words to explain or rationalise the approach to the event, creating some difficult situations for Amnesty staff to manage.

*"It really called into question my professional credibility. I had to explain what AIUK was doing and didn't know how." (Employee)*

There seems to be an expectation amongst staff and other organisations that Amnesty will conduct their activities with the appropriate degree of respect for gender equality. It is important that Amnesty understand how its activities fit with the expectations of organisations that it has close relationships with.

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<sup>13</sup> Secret Policeman's Ball – Media Summary: Minassian Media

## 6 Recommendations: Taking the Evaluation Forward

**This report makes up part of a series of activities that are evaluating the Ball and the communications, Brand and event activities being undertaken by Amnesty. Therefore it is important to note that a series of high quality and insightful reports on brand awareness and campaign measurement have been produced by Amnesty. A key learning from this evaluation is to ensure that the insights and recommendations made within them are not lost and taken forward to inform similar events in future.**

Several recommendations can be made that fall into the following categories:

- Raising Brand Awareness and Values
- The role and future of comedy and events
- event Management and resourcing

### 6.1 Raising Brand Awareness and Values

**The Ball has been a source of division and controversy within the organisation, and it is clear that any return on investment from the 2012 Ball, and success of any future event, will require the support of teams and a commitment to learn from the 2012 event.**

- **Rearticulate Amnesty's Values and commitment to Gender Equality:** There is an opportunity to use learnings from the evaluation to reflect on what Amnesty as an organisation values, and how its activities should feed into this. Culturally there is an acceptance, commitment and progress being made in areas such as Gender messaging; however, the evaluation indicates that there has been an under-estimation of how important these values are to Amnesty's partners and supporters. Therefore, there is some evidence to suggest that Amnesty's values reside in its people and its supporters, as well as in its brand and its mission statements.
- **Address inappropriate behaviours:** Amnesty needs to address the cultural problem of negative, harsh and personal criticism levelled at project teams. Amnesty's people have a strong emotional attachment to the work of the organisation, and the ability to express opinion and give criticism should not be discouraged. However, in the case of the Ball, rather than being a positive force, the nature and manner of criticism created a tense, difficult and upsetting environment in which teams had to work. This kind of environment will never be conducive to delivering successful projects and ways need to be found to express views and contribute in positive ways, and to address inappropriate behaviours.
- **Provide clarity on Amnesty's branding/values and how to engage with a mainstream audience:** not just for internal project teams but also external partners. External partners should be fully bought in to key aspects of Amnesty's values and the importance of these to the brand. They should be articulated to external partners as

core to the brief and the objectives, and monitored as part of the project management process.

- **Join up marketing and PR strategies:** Implement a joined-up, consistent Marketing and PR strategy, reflecting Amnesty’s equality and gender values. This could include a segmentation solution which the whole organisation buys into, and works with, so the target audience is fully defined and approached in consistent ways.

## 6.2 The role and future of comedy and events

**Although everyone agrees that comedy is a big part of popular culture, there are mixed views on whether it is an appropriate vehicle for sharing Human Rights issues. Amnesty need to be mindful of the direct link the public make between the values of the people on stage and the Amnesty brand.**

- **Nurture suitable talent:** Amnesty events need to be highly engaging, but reflective of the values that people, supporters and partners expect from them. Therefore, Amnesty needs to be mindful of its relationship with comedy events, given that such platforms can be divisive. A core of talent should be nurtured, based on evidence of their fit with and willingness to share Amnesty’s values. Better still to have genuine brand advocates.
- **Capitalise on relationships with artists:** If Amnesty are to continue to strive to reach a wider audience with a finite marketing budget it will need to work in partnership with others, such as artists, experienced contractors, artists and venues. The basis for such relationships needs to be addressed to give clear structure to what is and isn’t acceptable. However, this may require elements of compromise, such as sharing platforms with certain artists, or firm basis for standing fast, such as control of broadcast content. Amnesty needs to understand what it needs to create affect partnerships, what aspects of its relationships and activities it is willing to compromise on, and what needs to be entrenched. Most importantly these need to be agreed, communicated and embedded across the organisation.
- **Make future events grass roots involving activists and local groups:** Comedy can be successful when small-scale, with a real cap on budget. This will make it more engaging for staff and actively involve internal teams, to secure support networks and tie-in with campaign messages where appropriate.

## 6.3 Project Management and resourcing

**Delivering the Ball placed immense pressure and stress on the project team, and required late involvement from other teams. Realistic project management scoping, due diligence and scrutiny will enable better control and stronger position for Amnesty when dealing with external partners.**

- **Ambitious projects need adequate resource.** The resource and personnel required on events and projects needs to be established in advance, with mitigation and risk should additional resource be required. This will enable other teams to prepare for the need to release resource or invest time in projects in advance, and minimise impact on other work.
- **A formal and agreed due diligence process needs to be established:** AIUK needs a due diligence and governance process for future events, which ensures the organisation's values and objectives aren't compromised. This will likely be a long-term process requiring internal consultation, but it should provide a mechanism by which relationships and event content aligns and feeds into the organisation's values.
- **Due diligence around gender equality and diversity needs to evolve.** Steps are being taken to evolve Amnesty's approach to due diligence in this area, but the evaluation adds support to the need for processes that go beyond 'counting' and ensuring representation of equality groups, and needs to foster timely debate around how an event could impact on Amnesty's commitments to equality and diversity.
- **Accountability and responsibility:** event management structures need to develop methods for identifying/establishing full accountability and transparency to the SMT. Such structures also need to identify where accountability lies in relation to external partners.
- **Prioritise control of creative output and direction:** event management processes should evaluate the risk of losing control of content and creative output, both as part of due diligence procedures and to ensure that Amnesty retains a strong position with external partners. In future, AIUK should also ensure that broadcast contracts give AIUK content approval within agreed parameters, and expectations should be clearly set that Amnesty will work directly with Broadcaster and Production partner
- **Contractor management.** Contractors should report directly into AIUK project managers, and be provided with clear lines of communication and authority. Amnesty should consider contractual obligations, ensuring that actions potentially compromising the project are not taken without appropriate authority.

## 7 Appendix I: Information sources made available by Amnesty

1. *PR Measurement, Amnesty International Jan-March 2012*: **Gorkana Group**
2. *PR Measurement, Secret Policeman's Ball 2012, Amnesty International Dec-May 2012*: **Gorkana Group**
3. *A Guide To The Amnesty International Brand*: **Amnesty International**
4. *Secret Policeman's Ball – Media Summary*: **Minassian Media**
5. *Secret Policeman's Ball 2012 Pre/Post Research*: **Flamingo & Brainjuicer**
6. Media Analysis Brief: **Metrica**
7. Secret Policeman's Ball PR Campaign Analysis: **Splendid**
8. Major Donor Blog post reaching 4 million people: <http://www.virgin.com/richard-branson/blog/civilians-suffer-in-syria>
9. EAWW SPB letter to Kate Allen: **Amnesty internal documentation**
  
10. Secret Policeman's Ball 2012 Risk Analysis and Mitigation: **Amnesty internal documentation**
11. *Amnesty International Secret Policeman's Ball Media Coverage Summary and Brief Analysis Final Report- January 24, 2012 - April 9, 2012*: **Amnesty internal documentation**
12. Consultant Biographies: **Amnesty internal documentation**
13. Secret Policeman's Ball Update, SMT Paper: **Amnesty internal documentation**
14. Gender Messaging at AIUK: **Amnesty internal documentation**
15. Details of email and SMS engagement: **Amnesty internal documentation**
16. SPB Top line Stats: **Amnesty internal documentation**

Additional material and extracts provided on an ad-hoc basis via email.

## 8 Appendix II: Full Reports



Gorkana Secret  
Policeman's Ball repor



Flamingo Brainjuicer  
Amnesty SPB 2012 Pr



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