Poster contribution to IAU Symposium 170, *CO: Twenty-five Years of Millimeter-wave Spectrocopy*, 29 May – 2 June 1995, Tucson, Arizona

The Y-Factor Derived from a Panel Discussion on the X-Factor

D. Gumby (Institute for Advanced Brain Surgery & Creative Flower Arranging)

We propose a method to estimate the total time needed for a panel discussion on the X-factor. Using only the time required for the presentation, and multiplying that by the Y-factor, we get reliable estimates for the time needed for both presentation and discussion. In this paper, we present the calibration of the Y-factor, using data collected at a panel discussion on the X-factor.

INTRODUCTION

Panel discussions on the X-factor are the most important tools in starting shouting matches, life-long loathing, and, possibly, fist fights. It is therefore essential that such gatherings are well timed, so that no valuable time is lost to issues other than the exchange of unpleasantries. To assist the planning of an X-factor panel discussion, it is useful to have an indication of the total time required for presentation and discussion. We have devised a method for estimating this total time, using only the time needed for the presentation itself. For this purpose, we introduce the so-called Y-factor, which is defined as:

$$Y \equiv \frac{t_{presentation+discussion}}{t_{presentation}}$$

Although $t_{presentation}$ is unknown until after the actual presentation, we have a fair estimate of it, namely $(t_{presentation})_{target}$, the target time given to the speakers.

OBSERVATIONS

We have measured the presentation and discussion times of 10 talks in the X-factor panel discussion which took place on May 30, 1995, between 21:09:20 and 22:21:50. The elapsed times were measured using a Seiko quartz wrist watch and written down onto a Loew's Ventana Canyon Resort (LVCR) notepad, using a LCVR pencil. The accuracy of the measurements is estimated to be $\pm 5^s$. The accuracy of this error estimate is believed to be perfect to within the limits of what people are usually willing to believe. The sample being taken from people discussing the X-factor, we have no doubts. The start of the presentation was defined as the moment

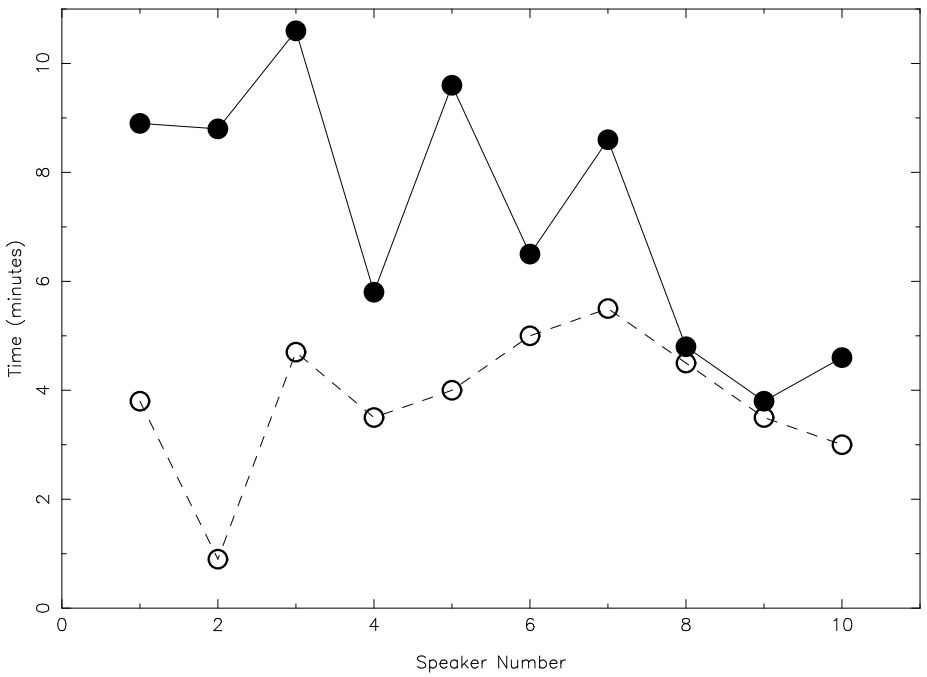

Figure 1: Measured time intervals used for the presentation (dashed line) and for the presentation plus discussion (solid line) in a 10-speaker panel discussion on the X-factor.

of the offering of the first words pertaining to the presentation, in most cases: "OK, eh". The presentation was assumed to be finished after the magic words: "That's it". The start of the discussion was defined to coincide with the end of the presentation part of the talk. Although this leads to the introduction of small errors, in most cases the discussion in the audience continued while both the previous and the next speaker were en route. We know of one case in which a schizophrenic member of the audience never terminated the discussion.

RESULTS

The data are plotted in Figure 1. The time required for a 3-minute presentation on the X-factor is plotted as circles, and is seen to be far from 3 minutes, and far from constant. The average value of $3^m\ 44^s$ is some 25% higher than the target value. Extreme values were 55^s (#2) and $5^m\ 20^s$ (#7). A linear increase in the length of the presentation is seen from #4 to #7. This appears to be caused by the so-called "What-you-can-do, I-can-do-better" (WYCDICDB) phenomenon, also known as "test-the-chairman".

At $5^m\ 20^s$ this trend is seen to break down (civil time 22:08:50), and reverse into a "let's-get-the-hell-out-of-here" (LGTHOOH) mode. The time for presentation and discussion is plotted as black dots. There appears to be a prolonged period of

alternating short and long discussion intervals. We have no explanation for this effect, other than the assumption that this is some sort of "Wiedergutmechung". The same LGTHOOH trend is seen in the high end of the p+d spectrum, although the last point is offset due to the "last-chance-to-raise-my-voice" (LCTRMV) effect.

The Y-factor calculated from these data indicate that there is a fairly good fit to presentations and discussion in the center of the spectrum. Here, we find the Y-factor to be about 2. In the later stages of the panel discussion, Y is seen to approach unity. We note the remarkable value of Y=8.6 for #2, but realize that this may be influenced by the content of presentation #2. We have at this moment insufficient data to prove whether there exists a correlation between the Y-factor and the speaker's opinion on the value of the X-factor.

CONCLUSIONS

For a 10-talk, 3-minute-per-talk panel discussion on the X-factor, the Y-factor was found to be approximately equal to 2. The first and last talks in such discussion tend to disrupt the general picture due to a number of external influences. Ideally, a panel discussion on the X-factor should contain at least an order of magnitude more presentations. To investigate the possible influence of the proposed value of X on the value of the Y-factor, many more data are required. We suggest introducing X-factor panel discussions in all future IAU Symposia, no matter what the subject of the actual conference. After enough data are accumulated, we may look forward to having panel discussions on the Y-factor and on the fractal nature of such recursively embedded mystery factors.