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How to Be an Expert

MEDIA INTERVIEWERS USUALLY ASK questions whose answers are already obvious. (“How did you feel when you came home to find your house had burned down?” “What do you have to do to win the big game?”) Media interviews are not for eliciting actual information—their function is a kind of reassuring verbal massage for the audience. So it’s not even necessary to know anything about the subject you’re being interviewed on.

A splendid proof of this is provided by a famous British TV interview. Guy Goma, a recent immigrant to Britain from the Congo, was waiting to be interviewed for a job in the computer department of the BBC. He was nervous, and his English was a bit uncertain, so when someone came into the waiting room and said, “Guy Kewney?” Guy Goma raised his hand, and was ushered into a live TV interview about the outcome of a legal dispute between Apple Computer and the Beatles’ record company Apple Corps:

Karen Bowerman: Guy Kewney is editor of the technology website Newswireless.

Face of horror

KB: Hello, good morning to you.

Mr Goma: Good morning.

KB: Were you surprised by this verdict today.

Mr Goma: I am very surprised to see ... this verdict to come on me because I was not expecting that. When I came they told me something else and I am coming. So a big surprise anyway.

KB: A big surprise, yeah, yes.

Mr Goma: Exactly.

KB: With regards to the costs involved do you think now more people will be downloading online?

Mr Goma: Actually if you can walk everywhere you are going to see a lot of people downloading the internet and the website and everything they want. But I think ... eh ... it is much better for development and ... eh ... to inform people what they want and to get the easy way and so faster if they are looking for.

KB: It does really seem the way the music industry’s progressing now that people want to go onto the website and download music.

Mr Goma: Exactly you can go everywhere on the cyber café and you can take, you can go easy. It is going to be an easy way for everyone to get something to the internet.

KB: Thank you. Thanks very much indeed.¹

¹ The story of the Goma interview and this transcript are on the website of the UK's *Daily Mail* Newspaper: <<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-386136/Revealed-The-identity-BBCs-latest-star.html>>. YouTube has videos of the interview.