Osg4 20120822 GIBBONS

TOF

How, exactly, does the human voice work. We use it without thinking, and yet it is a very complex mechanism. And Japanese researchers have been studying it with the help of an animal whose vocal techniques most closely resemble our own:



The answer after this from Charlie:

(((SPOT)))

OK, ready? This



Is a GIBBON. At the Fukuchiyama City Zoo, in northern Kyoto. Researchers at Kyoto’s primate research institute will tell you that the white-handedGibbon is the only primate that makes these kinds of sounds…

(VIDEO)

These sounds are a long distance broadcast system. They can be heard over two miles away, and it allows the Gibbons to communicate in thick jungles where you can’t see but a few feet.

To study similarities with human vocal production, they had the gibbons do what kids sometimes do. Inhale a little helium… and the result sounded like this:



The experiment demonstrated that Gibbons consciously manipulating their vocal cords to form a variety of low volume sounds the same way humans do.

In fact they’ve concluded that the vocal mechanism of the white handed gibbon is similar to the vocal mechanism of a human soprano. And that the reason we can speak and they can’t is not because our apparatus is more highly evolved, but because we’ve learned to use it in slightly different ways. Which tells me that potentially, a gibbon could one day be taught to speak… or perhaps sing opera?

Should we test that? Why not.

OK, first the singing gibbon:

(VIDEO)

That’s the singing gibbon… and now Maria Callas from her famous recording of La Traviata:

Callas:

Gibbon on helium:



Callas:



I dunno. With all due respect I think sopranos are safe.

TOF