EditShare Tames Multi-Camera Madness at Big Brother Africa

Big Brother AfricaReality TV production goes at a lightning-fast pace, requiring post-production personnel to be highly efficient. Just ask Kim Smith, Head of Engineering at ZSE TV/SASANI STUDIOS, which produces the hit reality TV series Big Brother Africa at its Highlands North, Johannesburg, installation. ZSE TV/SASANI STUDIOS offers a full spectrum of pre-production, production, and post services and, with Big Brother Africa, is facing the enormous challenge of having to edit footage almost as fast as it rolls off the camera feeds.

THE CHALLENGE

Big Brother Africa is now about to start its sixth season, with participants spanning the whole of Africa, including Nigeria, Angola, Botswana, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. These enthusiastic contestants co-inhabit an isolated house and compete to avoid being evicted by viewers. The last person standing wins a large cash prise at the end of the show.

While all this action is going on in front of the cameras, behind the scenes ZSE TV/SASANI STUDIOS is racing to keep up with the video feeds from the multiple cameras set up around the Big Brother Africa house. For each season, the cameras record footage 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for about 120 days, and staff members have to create edit logs, EDLs, and edit footage as it comes in.

The old ZSE TV/SASANI STUDIOS workflow was non-integrated, tedious, and time consuming, and started with continuous recording to videotape. Selections were then made on paper, using a proprietary logging system, and the content was ingested onto an Avid Unity. EDLs for the clips were created using Avid workstations. Clips were then edited and subtitled where necessary, the sound mixed, and finally printed to tape for delivery to the broadcaster at 4 pm. Smith recalls, "The record to tape and paper selects took an enormous amount of time, and the added pressure of a daily 4 pm deadline meant that the team worked round the clock to establish a compelling storyline and pull the show together."

THE SOLUTION

To accelerate production, ZSE TV/SASANI STUDIOS developed a post workflow for Big Brother Africa based on EditShare's XStream shared storage system, along with the EditShare Flow production asset management solution including ingest, browsing, and logging capabilities. Two XStream servers with a total of 96TB of storage are at the core of the setup, with six connected Avid editors simultaneously working on the Avid clips ingested by Flow from the live feeds coming from the production. The new

integrated workflow results in tremendous time savings and increased efficiency.

EditShare XStream is ideal for productions like those of ZSE TV/ SASANI STUDIOS where many simultaneous users require real-time edit-in-place and collaborative access to high-resolution video files. Editors and compositors connected to the XStream network can seamlessly access and share in real time from a common pool of media files, regardless of the application, platform, or source material.

Flow Browse provides the production a powerful database that allows users to access and track all media assets on the entire EditShare network throughout the production process, from ingest to edit and through playout and archiving. The Flow Ingest server provides multiple channels of HD/SD-SDI ingest, in up to three codecs on each channel,

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including low-resolution proxies. The Flow Logger tool allows reality productions to add metadata to both live feeds and existing media in the fastest way possible—with a single mouse click and using pre-defined customised fields.

THE NEW AND IMPROVED WORKFLOW

The Big Brother Africa production consists of six Avid editors working on the footage, along with one person in the audio suite, two logging stations, two spotting stations, and one admin station. Under the new workflow, the production team uses EditShare Flow to manage the live recording

and logging of six channels directly onto the 96TB EditShare XStream system. Flow Browse and Logger let staff view the logged footage, select media, and begin creating storyboards while ingest is in process, thus allowing ZSE TV/SASANI STUDIOS to establish a timeline for the developing story well before post-production.

Edwin Tlhalatsi, Systems Engineer, comments, "The new workflow is much faster than tape and we have the advantage that most of the material is online for the duration of the project. Because EditShare catalogues the media very efficiently, we are able to browse the database and assemble the best BB moments quickly. It is much easier to take a step back and assemble the storyline from the top down."

Eight Avid Media Composer NLE systems and an Avid Pro Tools audio suite are connected to the EditShare XStream network. Also part of the setup are a proprietary nearline and archive system, two live logging stations, and several browsing and admin workstations. Clips and sequences created with Flow Browse are dragged directly into the bins of

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the Avids for immediate editing. EditShare's advanced project-sharing capabilities allow the team to share projects and work collaboratively to build the show.

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THE BENEFITS

EditShare's XStream and Flow are critical to ZSE TV/SASANI STUDIOS keeping up with the frenetic pace of Big Brother Africa's production cycle. The EditShare XStream gives it the efficiency of allowing six editors to work on the footage at the same time, while Flow Ingest, Logger, and Browse enable those editors to quickly ingest the footage, collaboratively view it, and create selects or sequences, ensuring fans get to see whatever antics the participants are up to in every episode.

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SPECIFICATIONS

EditShare System Details

EditShare model/size:

2 x XStream Workflow Director 16TB,

2 x XStream Expansion Chassis 16TB,

1 x XStream Expansion Chassis 32TB

(96TB in total)

Flow Browse and Ingest:

Flow Ingest 4 Channel Server SD,

Flow 2 Channel Ingest Server SD,

Flow Database Server 8TB

Options/extras:

HP 2900-24G Switch 24 x 1Gbe and 2 x 10GbE CX4 with 5m CX4 cables

Network connections: 1 & 10 Gb, both copper and fibre.

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