EditShare helps Emmerdale lead the way in UK's new digital programme delivery format

One of the UK's most successful and longest-running soap operas, Emmerdale, has made the switch to a complete range of EditShare's ingest and storage solutions as part of the production's move to a new studio complex. Not only did it improve the workflow, the move and subsequent infrastructure upgrade resulted in Emmerdale becoming the first production to comply with the UK's new delivery file format and blaze a trail for others to follow.

Produced by ITV Yorkshire Television and celebrating its 40th anniversary this year, the popular character-based series depicts rural life in the Yorkshire Dales and, production-wise, combines both exterior scenes shot on location and at a dedicated studio complex in Leeds.

As the show's popularity grew, so did the demand for more episodes. This culminated in the broadcasting of six episodes every week for the UK market and two episodes shown internationally. The increase in production schedule highlighted serious flaws with the show's production facilities, so in 2010 Emmerdale moved to its new home at ITV Yorkshire in Leeds.

THE PROBLEM

Emmerdale's supervising editor, Gary Westmorland, explained the reasons for the move and the resulting move to EditShare storage and ingest solutions: "The show was being produced using a tape-based HD digi-beta system with Avid Unity, and in a building which had become very tired and was beginning to show its age.

"This arrangement was, and had been, very successful but the whole set-up was designed for fewer episodes each week, and the increase in production to six episodes per week meant our current storage system was full most of the time. We ended up constantly bouncing off the headroom of the storage and it became very clear we needed to make some changes."

This initially resulted in the utilisation of a previous Final Cut Pro setup which took the high-level data storage away from the Avid Meridian-based offline storage, but involved a lot of conversion of files between formats and then back into tape. "We did this for two years until both a new facility and storage system became a necessity," said Westmorland

ITV Yorkshire had a large studio space constructed in 1969 which was currently unused due to a shift in programming at the UK's third-largest broadcaster. In 2010 the Emmerdale team identified this facility as the perfect place for the show's new home and undertook an extensive refurbishment of both the building and its main infrastructure.

Gary Westmorland was tasked with identifying a post-production solution to cope with the demands of the increased schedule, and to also facilitate a major transfer from tape-based SD to file-based HD in one move.

> " **EditShare was the only system that could meet our entire criteria, as well as being the best option in terms of price point.** "
>
> Gary Westmorland

THE SOLUTION

"We were very keen not to have a multi-vendor solution, for various reasons," said Westmorland.

"We didn't want a mix of devices and tools to complicate matters and cause us headaches should there ever be any issues with the equipment. Our main requirement was that we wanted our directors and editors to be comfortable using a system they knew well, and to have a single, effective 'behind-the-scenes' system to meet our specific needs."

The result was the selection of Avid Media Composer systems for the edit suites and a full EditShare system for their media management needs, including Flow, XStream, Geevs and ArkDisk.

"We looked at various systems available on the market by visiting trade shows and talking to people within the industry and EditShare was the only system that could meet our entire criteria, as well as being the best option in terms of price point," said Westmorland.

"For us it was vital for the system to be able to play-back and sync a number of different streams and meet our precise technical specifications, but also be simple to use and flexible. EditShare certainly had these points covered but the decision to go with the system was also down to the agility of the company to deliver exactly what we need and develop solutions for us."

ADAPTING TO A PRESCRIBED WORKFLOW

Emmerdale has a production method consisting of three cameras per gallery in the studio, and traditionally the production team will record the three un-cut feeds from the three iso-cameras with the addition of a fourth vision mix feed. EditShare was the only system identified which could offer the team the ability to record the three camera streams and pick up a sequence from the vision mixer, which means there is no need to record the fourth channel.

EditShare®

"It's a great asset of the EditShare system," said Westmorland, "as we are able to pick up the cuts from the back of the tally on the vision mixer, which the software then turns into a sequence made up from the iso angles. This instantly saves us 25 per cent of our storage space, and in theory it saves 25 per cent bandwidth.

"When the sequence is made and we drop it into the Media Composer environment, we simply press a button which can bring up a quad-split of the angles, which is something we'd never seen before with any other supplier - certainly not one which gave us that ability at both the front-end and in the edit suites."

> **EditShare were flexible enough to ensure it worked exactly as we needed it... it was this level of flexibility, along with being within our budget, which was behind the decision to go for an EditShare system.**
>
> Gary Westmorland

Further to this requirement Emmerdale needed some additional functionality which EditShare were able to work into the system. This included the ability to record in parallel to the XStream storage solution and the ArkDisk situated in a different building, and then perform a data check between the two files.

"This was a requirement in our workflow and EditShare were flexible enough to ensure it worked exactly as we needed it, as well as performing modifications to the Studio MC software and to the graphical user interface. It was this level of flexibility, along with being within our budget, which was behind the decision to go for an EditShare system."

TRAILBLAZERS IN NEW DELIVERY FILE FORMAT

The move to a new facility and the introduction of a new workflow allowed Emmerdale to be the first British television production to adopt The Digital Production

Partnership's (DPP) new Technical and Metadata Standards for file-based programme delivery.

Through the DPP, seven major broadcasters (BBC, ITV, Channel 4, Sky, Channel 5, S4C and UKTV) agreed the UK's first common file format, structure and wrapper to enable TV programme delivery by digital file in guidelines launched in early 2012.

"The new internationally-agreed format is AVCi100 AS-11 for HD files," said Westmorland, "and we're proud of being the first, and so far only, UK programme, to conform to the new standard and offer this compatibility end-to-end.

"The way our workflow is set up and the equipment and software we're using means we're able to massively reduce the time we would previously spend converting one format to another. We film on location in a native AVC-Intra format, ingest and back-up the file, edit and package the clips without having to change the codec at all.

EditShare®

> **The EditShare system's flexibility of handling almost any file format without codec changes is a huge plus.**
>
> Gary Westmorland

"Not only does this save time but it avoids any degradation of the footage and limits the compression normally associated with converting files multiple times. The EditShare system's flexibility of handling almost any file format without codec changes is a huge plus."

The move to fully-HD file-based has been a success for Emmerdale, and with EditShare's help with their storage and workflow solutions, the production has become a pioneer within both ITV and the UK television industry.

THE WORKFLOW

Location:

Ikegami cameras

P2 media storage (AV-Intra native format)

Flow Ingest (AVC-Intra 100 into Media Management Suite)

Studio:

Ikegami cameras via Geevs and Studio MC

XStream Storage (96 TB) and Geevs Storage

Flow Browse alongside P2 rushes (AV-Intra native format)

Clips moved across to Avid environment (no codec changes required)

Clips sent to four Avid Media Composer (v6) edit suites

Complete edits sent to one of two online suites (Avid Symphony)

Sound synced in dubbing suite with Pro Tools (synced in seconds from EditShare storage)

Quality control and transmission packaging – still all in AVC-Intra 100

EditShare®