

# HOLLYOAKS

## EditShare in the Limelight

Despite being one of the UK's longest running soap opera's, "Hollyoaks" is anything but old fashioned. In fact, it's without a doubt one of the most progressive soaps in the UK – both in the issues it covers as well as in the technology the show uses to make its intersecting storylines come to life on screen.

In its 20th year of production, "Hollyoaks" is produced by Lime Pictures and airs each weekday on Channel 4 and E4, with an omnibus – the entire week's worth of episodes edited into one long feature – airing on the weekend.

### HD File-Based Workflow Enters the Scene

Lime Pictures has been in the business of producing some of the UK's most dramatic television since the 1980s – before it was even Lime Pictures. Whether the drama is real or scripted, it's safe to say they've perhaps found several formulas to success on the telly. In addition to producing groundbreaking programs that have changed the landscape of television in the UK, Lime Pictures has pioneered cutting edge technology, and was even one of the first drama production companies to go completely tapeless in 2001. In 2008, under Lime Pictures leadership, "Hollyoaks" became the first soap to transition over to an HD environment.

*"We use ES Connect, GeeVS & Flow to help integrate our material in our production workflow"* states Alistair McMath, Media Manager at Lime Pictures. Alistair

describes the "Hollyoaks" workflow: *"We have four key areas in our workflow, starting with acquisition. We then have the management side of preparing & making media available to view and edit, as well as creating back up, followed by the craft phase and finally archive."*

With up to 1TB of content ingested on a daily basis, Lime Pictures needed a solution that would not only store its media, but also help them keep it organised in a way that they could easily retrieve it.

*"To manage this heavy-duty acquisition, we have four galleries equipped with Geevs Studio MC,"* he says. The Geevs video servers capture all this content from a number of permanent sets into the 224TB EditShare XStream shared storage. For added security the Geevs records directly to its internal drives and to the EditShare in parallel, so that in the event of a network outage, production does not have to stop on set. Once the recording is finished, a copy is moved to the EditShare Ark Disk storage for nearline backup.

Providing multi-channel synchronized ingest of up to sixteen cameras, Studio MC also manages automatic incremental metadata, including episode, scene, shot and take information – a feature that has proved invaluable for Lime Pictures. *"An important factor for us is the ability to make each recording with the metadata already entered at the front end. It's then there for the duration of the media lifecycle, which is roughly eight weeks."*

Studio MC allows productions to stay organised, regardless of the volume and complexity of on set acquisition. Project set up is crucial; designating folder structure and naming conventions, with clips stored by episode number. Production personnel can see what they're shooting, when they're shooting, as well as see everything that's already been shot. It's particularly helpful to the talent, enabling them to review shots for continuity and pickups for dialogue, meaning they can play back 10 seconds or so of a scene's clip so the actors can better understand the scene they are walking into.

## "Hollyoaks" Media Goes With the Flow, From On Location to Final Edit

Location capture is on Sony SxS media, which is logged and ingested using EditShare's Flow Ingest to the shared storage by a team of operators in a central ingest area. The operators add metadata to each clip, and then the file is ingested and rewrapped. Flow makes an H.264 proxy for every file as part of the ingest process.

*"With Flow Browse, we are able to track, from our desktop systems, every clip from the moment it is captured on set through to post production, nearline storage and finally onto the LTO archive," says Alistair. "Production staff also use Flow Browse to check recordings against the scripts and to ensure continuity, as the actors can be in scenes from different episodes in a single day."*

To produce the five episodes and an omnibus each week, Lime Pictures has a floor of Avid edit suites all running Media Composer. These are connected to the EditShare via 10Gb Ethernet for media access. Flow Browse is used by the Media Assistants to link the Ingested material to an Avid environment.

Great images and flawlessly assembled scenes are a crucial part of producing the type of soap opera that can rule the airwaves for 20 years (and counting) – but all this would be nothing without the sound. Which means the next step in the "Hollyoaks" workflow is audio dubbing. Lime Pictures uses Pyramix workstations connected directly to the EditShare shared storage, where they receive the AAF from the Avid suites in a folder on the storage space. And because the best visual shots don't necessarily

mean the best sound, the dubbing suites have access to every clip on the EditShare. And just like that, great TV is made.

## Long Live the Soap Opera – With the Help of Secure Backups

After final viewing, the program is rendered out of the Avid then goes through onsite QC, where any necessary file corrections are made, and is then delivered via digital file transfer to Channel 4. Once episodes have been transmitted, they are stored on the 500TB EditShare Ark Disk nearline storage for up to a month so that they can be quickly and easily restored to the main XStream storage to edit in flashbacks and other major events. Finally, the finished programs are archived using EditShare's Ark Tape to a LTO6 data tapes for long-term storage and security.

*"EditShare provides us with a single point of contact, with ingest, storage & archive being managed by an EditShare solution," comments Alistair. "This infrastructure also enables scalability at an affordable price, plus flexibility when it comes to choosing our NLE and the workflow we want to follow."*

With ingest, storage & archive for the "Hollyoaks" media workflow being managed by various EditShare solutions, from acquisition and media management to backup and archive.

