



## Multi-Camera Soap Opera Finds Huge Efficiencies with EditShare's End-to-End Workflow

New Zealand's prime-time soap moves to tapeless HD production platform

South Pacific Pictures (SPP) is a full-service production facility that produces New Zealand's most popular soap opera - Shortland Street, a hospital - based medical yarn. The Shortland Street team of more than 150 professionals-actors, directors, camera operators, sound mixers, video editors, assistants and loggers, set designers, carpenters, wardrobe, props, electricians, dialog coaches, continuity people, and legal staff-churns out more than 250 original episodes each year. South Pacific Pictures (SPP) is a full-service production facility that produces New Zealand's most popular soap opera - Shortland Street, a hospital-based medical yarn. The Shortland Street team of more than 150 professionals - actors, directors, camera operators, sound mixers, video editors, assistants and loggers, set designers, carpenters,

wardrobe, props, electricians, dialog coaches, continuity people, and legal staff - churns out more than 250 original episodes each year.

### THE CHALLENGE

Approaching the soap opera's 19th production season, the SPP team planned to transition to high definition (HD). At the same time, SPP saw an opportunity to leverage new technology advances to streamline the workflow and improve efficiencies.

The old SD workflow was proven and reliable, but cumbersome. Three studio cameras were switched onto a digital betacam VTR. A second digital betacam recorded an ISO of one of the cameras. After shooting, a large number of tapes had to be digitised in real time onto an

Avid workstation. It would take up to a week for footage from a scene to be available for editing. The wardrobe, makeup, and art departments each took reference stills, as they could not easily view video recordings.

The company was prepared to make an appropriate investment to "go HD," but questioned the value of purchasing multiple HD decks at a cost of US\$80,000 each for studio and edit suites. There would also be ongoing tape costs and maintenance issues as well as increased costs for out-of-house, tape-based HD finishing. SPP was ready to re-think its infrastructure.

### THE SOLUTION

The company envisioned a file-based, tapeless workflow with centralised storage that would seamlessly connect systems and media - making content readily

available to any department at any point in the production chain. In addition to providing a robust, reliable, extremely secure system with redundancy protections, the new solution would also have to meet many production-oriented needs:

- Record directly to digital files; eliminate VTRs from the capture process
- Record directly to shared central storage with user-level security
- Eliminate tapes and DVDs for reviewing media
- Record in Avid's DNxHD format for direct use in editing
- Offer full-quality Instant Replay to review and critique takes in the studio
- Have media accessible to post immediately, without additional copy and transcoding
- Create low-resolution proxies in real time that everybody can view on his or her desktop computer over the local Ethernet network
- Provide a seamless solution for local and off-site backup and archive, both for protecting media and retrieval of shots from past episodes.

After an in-depth evaluation, South Pacific Pictures selected EditShare, the only vendor that could deliver SPP's entire wish list. The EditShare solution includes the Geevs server for multi-camera ingest and QC playout, EditShare Flow for asset management and proxy file viewing, EditShare XStream for highly scalable, centralised storage, and a combination of EditShare Ark Disk and a dual-drive Ark Tape LTO5 library for backup and archiving.

#### THE WORKFLOW

EditShare Business Partner Doug Braddock of AV Intelligence worked closely with South Pacific on the transition. "Designing the new workflow required extensive consultation as many people in different departments were affected. We needed to understand how every production unit would be impacted."

With the new workflow, Shortland Street is shot in the studio with three HDC 1500 Sony cameras that are ingested through the Geevs server. During recording, video and audio are stored on the EditShare XStream server in full-resolution, and on the EditShare Flow server in proxy resolution. Both sets of media are immediately available to anyone who may need to view it. Location footage, recorded on P2 with the DVCPProHD 100 codec, is transferred to the XStream and scanned into Flow, where proxy files and database entries are generated. "Of course, HD has improved our production values, but so has our EditShare. Flow Browse is a great tool with all

departments able to reference shots instantly, which leads to better decisions being made," says Chris Bailey, Managing Director of SPP. "Footage and information are available to the edit suites faster. We can now finish in-house and grade more extensively, which all helps our look on - screen."

During studio shooting, the switcher operator no longer needs to fill out tape logs and timecode notes as all clips are organised automatically by block, episode, scene, and take. Key action points can be marked on the fly as they occur and can be cued instantly during playback. The production can record multiple ISO cameras, whereas previously only the switched feed and a single ISO could be recorded. Editing is done on Avid editing systems.

Every department is now on the same page, and can efficiently manage its own responsibilities. "Flow Browse has a multitude of uses, from matching continuity between takes as we are shooting to viewing an eyeline shot a week ago by another unit," notes Kathe Calis, Head of Continuity. "Accessing information is fast, using the scene and episode number as a key, we can search hours of footage in seconds. It is also useful that clips can be viewed from the control room or from the office."

#### THE BENEFITS

With EditShare, South Pacific has built a solid HD production platform that promotes collaboration and saves time and money. The new workflow has eliminated at least 15 hours

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of digitisation each week. Anna Marshall-Iman, head of editing, loves the immediacy of access. "On Tuesday morning, the studio recorded 16 scenes needed to finish an episode I was already editing. I cut each scene as soon as they'd shot it; when the director joined me, we could watch the whole thing down straight away," she explains. "Previously, we'd have received the tape at lunch, spent two

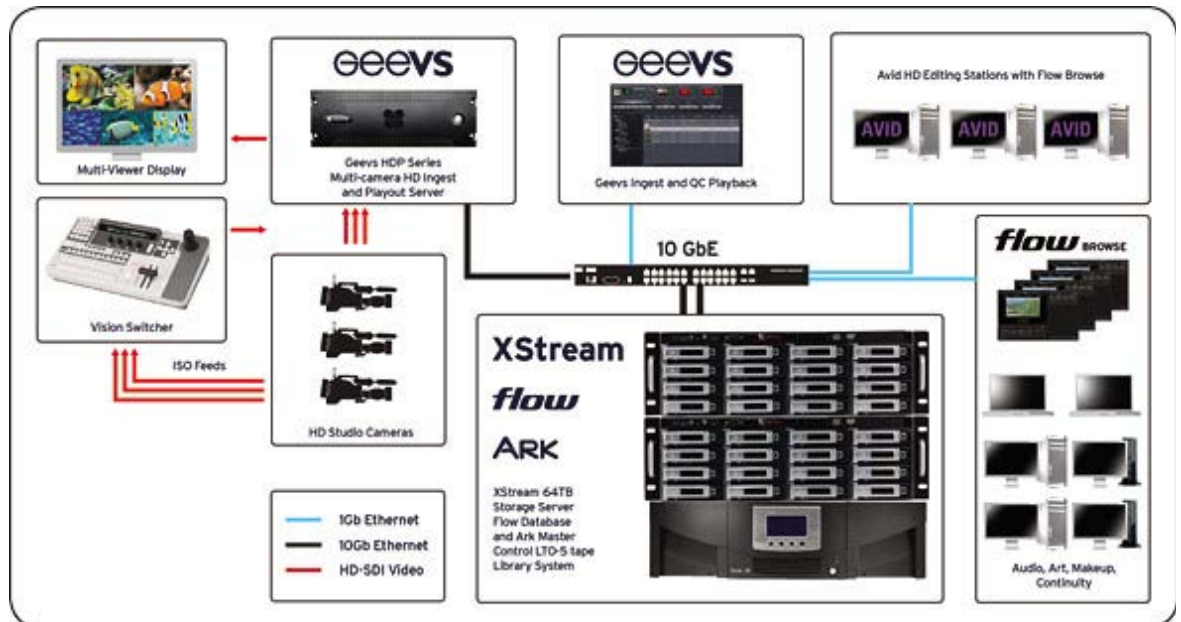
hours digitising, then an hour sub-clipping and organising, and only then could we start editing. The director wouldn't have been able to work with me until the next day."

It is extremely important to protect the footage and edit decisions from acquisition through archive and retrieval. In addition to EditShare's RAID 5 architecture, SPP has the added security of Ark Disk and two Ark Tape LTO5 backups—allowing both on-site and off-site protection, which has resulted in a reduction in SPP's insurance premium. And with the combined power of Flow and Ark, SPP can browse proxy clips of everything in the archive and bring back high-resolution versions with

minimal effort. Finally, the easy scalability of the EditShare system provides a future-proof platform, ready for expansion.

"EditShare has given South Pacific an ingest to archive workflow with metadata management, instant access, and comprehensive administration capabilities for controlling and tracking assets," observes Braddock. "And with a single vendor, there are no complex integrations; there's also a clear line of accountability for system reliability and performance."

The fully integrated, tapeless workflow allows the team to create a better-quality drama show—without all the drama.



Workflow Diagram: GEEVS for SDI Ingest in DnxHD 185, w/ real-time MPEG4 proxy creation; Highly scalable EditShare XStream for centralized shared storage with Avid; Gigabit and Ten Gigabit Ethernet; EditShare Flow for production asset management - browse, log, pre-edit; Ark Disk and Ark Tape manage three forms of backup and archiving

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