As the leading private television network in Sri Lanka, MTV Channel needed to find a more efficient way of producing its musical reality show, Sirasa SuperStar. Since launching two years ago, this has become one of the most popular programmes on the Sinhala language channel, which in turn enjoys the highest gross rating of any channel in Sri Lanka with its mix of entertainment, news and current affairs.

The broadcaster, which beams free-to-air signals in Sri Lanka’s three main languages on three separate channels - namely MTV, Sirasa TV and Shakthi TV - had already invested in state-of-the-art audio-visual receiving and transmitting equipment to reach some 85 per cent of the country’s TV sets. So the fact that it was still juggling a multitude of tapes during the production of the fast-moving SuperStar show was somewhat anachronistic, to say the least.

However making the transition to a tapeless environment presented prospective system vendors with a tall order. As well as the highest level of reliability, an easy fit with existing workflow, rapid content browsing and programme packaging capabilities and a readily-upgradeable path to the future, the company also needed a means of transferring final edits to third-party systems.

The crucial proviso was that these transfers should be completed substantially faster than real time - in other words take less time than the running length of the programme - but with absolutely no compromise on picture or sound quality.

The reason for this specific request was that, while some segments go straight to air, the experience among those working on the SuperStar production was that the running order - or even the edit sequence of individual segments - often had to be changed at very late notice.

"Right from the start we were seeking to put together nothing short of a true VTR replacement solution for our reality TV show. After a couple months spent researching the broadcast systems market, we soon discovered that EVS equipment had already been field-proven in large-scale, demanding events such as the Doha Asian Games, FIFA World Cup 2006, and NBA Finals. The system’s integration to Avid equipment was a real bonus, as it has further enhanced the efficiency of our workflow - all the way from ingest to the final edit in postproduction."

Mr. Tharaka Mohotty
Director of Engineering of MTV
MTV Channel needed a system that would:

- Provide a true VTR replacement solution for a reality TV show
- Perform to the highest level of reliability
- Fit easily within existing workflow with the minimum of disruption
- Give multiple operators rapid content browsing and programme packaging capabilities
- Organise rushes and associated information in a logical file structure that was easy to navigate
- Provide a faster than real time means of transferring final edits to third-party systems without compromising on picture or sound quality
- Offer a readily-upgradeable path to the future


By operating the multi-configurable server as a single input and output device, the broadcaster was able to capture the live programme stream continuously, with access via the IP Director application available right from the moment pictures were first ingested onto the system.

This arrangement allows the IP Director operator to assemble the most interesting segments either by browsing through the server content or searching by timecode, and then send the edited output to the company’s in-house Avid NewsCutter XP NLE (non-linear editing) suites for special effects mixing. The company reports that by engaging several members of the team in a flexible, shared environment such as this has resulted in the final output being ready to go to air in a matter of seconds.

An important objective was to achieve seamless interoperability between the EVS system and the Avid craft editing equipment, which has been made possible by recording the live material in an IMX MXF video format that is compatible with both. In fact the integration is so tight that content can pass between EVS, Avid NLE or the company’s Avid Unity MediaNetwork shared storage infrastructure with complete transparency to the user.

According to MTV Channel, the result is more efficient access to the Avid suites, which gives the production team more time to finesse and polish edits. Freed of the cumbersome operating restrictions inherently associated with tape, the editorial decision-making process is also more flexible, making a more effective level of collaboration possible within the production team.
“Our users work very well with the IP Director to do a quick edit of the full programme just by the drag-and-drop of captured clips,” says Mr. Tharaka Mohotty, Director of Engineering of MTV. “The edited output is then streamed directly to Avid Unity, so that editors can immediately start working on their timeline for more complex post-production.”

Other benefits include a capability to tackle large edit jobs following a substantial cut in turnaround time, a reduction in the amount of tape duplication and storage, a near-elimination of spooling through tapes to locate shots, and the preservation of native quality throughout the whole production with no time-consuming - and quality degrading - re-ingesting or transcoding stages.

An especially welcome consequence is an end to the frequent tape changes previously made throughout the production process, and thanks to the unique EVS Loop Record function, the chance of even a single frame of camera footage being missed has been eliminated.

Cumbersome man-handling has also been removed from the archiving process, where footage had previously been stored on a vast number of tapes containing materials for the SuperStar shows spanning several years. The time-consuming process of retrieving and editing the required content from tape cassettes has now been replaced with much faster and more compact electronic storage.

As to the future, MTV Channel now has the flexibility to upgrade its production server to support more video channels and record more hours of footage, as a single XT[2] unit can be expanded up to four or even six channels by the addition of extra internal boards and drives.

Many more channels and storage could be added in the longer term, as the design allows for some 29 XT[2] servers to be cascaded together. Interconnected servers use the EVS XNet[2], a 1.5Gbps SDTI (serial digital transport interface) media network that enables the instant access of shared real time media without any file copying. Each server already has a 1.5TB internal SCSI storage, but online access can be increased dramatically by connecting a SAN (storage area network).

**XT[2]:** The XT[2] delivers a full range of applications for live/studio production, post content management and playout. The XT[2] platform allows full HD/SD compatibility in order to make a seamless transition to HD.

**IP Director:** The IP Director is an integrated suite of video production management software with versatile control through the XT Series Server. Running on a Windows based workstation, IP Director allows the user to easily ingest, log, manage, search, track, edit, create clips and highlights, browse and ultimately playout any video or audio content instantly.

**XFile[2]:** XFile[2] is the removable hard drive disks storage server from EVS allowing SD and HD media along with its associated metadata to be preserved in an industry-standard MXF file format. XFile[2] delivers up to 1TB of media storage capacity.
Case Study

"Our users work very well with the IP Director to do a quick edit of the full programme just by the drag-and-drop of captured clips. The edited output is then streamed directly to Avid Unity, so that editors can immediately start working on their timeline for more complex post-production."

Mr. Tharaka Mohotty
Director of Engineering of MTV

Benefits

- Minimal disruption to established production methods
- Loop Record prevents even a single frame of footage being missed
- Preservation of native quality throughout the whole production
- A substantial cut in turnaround time
- Electronic storage that is both faster and more compact than tape
- Edited output streamed directly to Avid Unity for more complex post-production
- More effective collaboration within the production team
- Reduction in the amount of tape duplication and storage
- Flexibility to upgrade to more video channels and a larger recording capacity