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ADVANCED DECK CONTROL AND INGEST SOLUTION

CINEDECK RX ELIMINATES THE ANXIETY FROM ANGER MANAGEMENT WORKFLOW

"CINEDECK IS AN INDUSTRIAL-STRENGTH SOLUTION. WE NEEDED THE EFFICIENCY TO EDIT AS SOON AS WE SHOOT, AND CINEDECK GIVES US THAT."
~HOWARD BROCK, ASSOCIATE PRODUCER, ANGER MANAGEMENT





HOWARD BROCK

The Project: ***Anger anagement (FX Networks)***

American comedy-series Anger Management, starring Charlie Sheen, broke the ratings records with 5.74M viewers when it debuted on FX on June 28, 2012. That show continues to rank as the most-watched sitcom premiere in cable history. At the heart of the production are a trio of dual-channel Cinedeck RX recorders that streamline the workflow by eliminating physical tape and traditional processes, enabling the show's post team to review takes and commence editing within minutes of a scene being shot.

The Anger Management series is based on the 2003 movie of the same name, with Sheen in a role that loosely reprises the one performed by Jack Nicholson from the original film. Sheen plays Dr. Charlie Goodson, a former minor-league baseball player who becomes an anger management therapist. The series follows his humorous sessions with patients requiring treatment for their various irritable conditions.

FX picked up Anger Management with an initial ten-episode order on the condition that, if the series proved successful, it would then order an additional 90 episodes under a syndication model crafted by Debmar-Mercury, a subsidiary of Lionsgate. On August 29, 2012, it was announced that the show would be picked up for a further 90 episodes, and in January 2013, FX president John Landgraf said viewers could expect 45 new episodes per year.

Production and editorial on the series takes place at Tamarack Studios' 60,000sq/ft facility in Sun Valley, CA. Although episodes are blocked and shot without a studio audience, when shows near editorial completion, they are played back to an invited audience and their laughter is recorded and added to the final mix before the final deliverables are created.

For the production and post departments on the show, delivering this sheer volume of shows to tight deadlines, is quite an undertaking, as associate producer Howard Brock explains, "Most sitcoms shoot three episodes per month. We're doing double that – six shows per month. In terms of the workflow, cranking out this many shows means we need to do everything we can to make the process as efficient as possible, avoiding any unnecessary extra steps in the workflow. The whole plan is to deliver the best possible product in the most streamlined manner, and Cinedeck RX plays a big part of that."

Cinedeck User: ***Howard Brock, Associate Producer, Anger Management***

Brock has extensive post-production experience. After graduating from CalArts (California Institute of the Arts) he worked as an editor on documentaries, music videos and magazine-style tv shows, including the launch of Entertainment Tonight (CBS), and went on to win an Emmy for his editorial work on the TV series Fame (NBC) in 1984. He was post-production consultant and associate producer on the Twilight Zone (CBS) and supervising editor on Partners in Crime (NBC). For 18 years Brock was the managing partner and CEO of Burbank post-facility Matchframe Video. He was later president of non-linear rental company Runway in Culver City. Brock returned to episodic television editorial in 2012 at the invitation of John Fuller, one of the series editors on Anger Management. He has since become associate producer on the series, and was instrumental in creating a cost-effective, labor-saving workflow for the production.

The Challenge: ***Delivering 90 shows in 24 months***

Brock says that although Anger Management used a (non-Cinedeck) file-based recording system for the first ten episodes, the sheer pressure of having to shoot, edit and deliver 90 shows over a two-year period demanded much greater workflow efficiencies.

"The initial workflow worked ok, and laid down a file-based concept, but at the time the recorder only worked in 8-bit and could not playback any recorded media," he explains. "Also, on the first ten episodes we were creating offline and online versions of





STUDIO AUDIENCE AT *ANGER MANAGEMENT*

the material – luxuries we could not afford when we considered how best to deal with so many shows. We might shoot as much as 20-hours of material per episode, and then copy the media over to an avid unity, but having to repeat that 90 times was not appealing. So we investigated anything that would make the workflow more efficient. This is where the Cinedeck RXs came in. Cinedeck is an industrial-strength solution. We needed the efficiency to edit as soon as we shoot, and Cinedeck gives us that."

The Solution: ***Multiple Cinedeck RX systems***

Brock got his first hands-on experience with Cinedeck RX at NAB 2012. "I was already aware of the Cinedeck EX on-board recorder, and was looking for file-based recorders that could handle multiple channels and connect directly to Avid shared storage," he explains.

"I looked at other file-based solutions, but most of them were recording QuickTime movies that would require additional steps to bring the media into the Avid. Seeing the dual-channel Cinedeck RX, with its multi-codec capabilities and connectivity options, I realized it was exactly what we needed. It could record native MXF media directly to an Avid ISIS, as well as record a second stream to an on-board SSD drive. Working with our post-production rental vendor, J/KAM Digital, we tested the Cinedeck RX during the summer of 2012, to ensure it would hold up to the demands we were going to place upon it. It did, and here we are."

Brock adds, "It's vitally important to have your post-production vendor involved in any workflow that bridges production and post production, as it does on our show. J/KAM Digital has extensive experience in providing efficient, reliable solutions to other shows and we could not have done this without their expertise and involvement. Other Avid vendors proposed solutions that would have not held up under our circumstances and that would have been disastrous."

Anger Management utliizes three dual-channel Cinedeck RXs, rented through J/KAM Digital, as part of a tapeless, file-based workflow that streamlines the editorial process, and allows the editorial team to work on material within minutes of a take. The production uses four Sony 1500 cameras on pedestals, shooting 1080p, 23.98, to a pair of Cinedeck RXs. Each camera channel is captured as Avid-compliant, 10-bit, DNxHD175X MXF OP-Atom on the removable SSD sleds in the RXs. A third Cinedeck RX is on hand to record a quad-split of the four cameras, recording DNxHD175X to one channel and H.264 to the second channel. In turn, a Light Iron server delivers the H.264 quad-split for the on-set production team to be able to review all takes on iPads. Each recorder is operated remotely via Cinedeck's MCC multi-machine desktop controller. Crucially, the Cinedecks are also directly connected via Gigabit Ethernet, to ISIS, Avid's shared storage system, which is configured to record four channels of DNxHD175X from the Cinedecks. Metadata (file names including show, scene and take numbers) set-up in advance of each shoot on the Cinedeck RXs, is all available, allowing the show's editorial team to get to work immediately.

"As storage and editing equipment has gotten fast enough, we now record to DNxHD175X only, and cut with the final product – there is no offline," says Brock. "J/KAM Digital provided the ISIS and two Avid Media Composer systems, as well as an Avid Symphony, that are all running four streams of multi-cam in DNxHD175X, and we've never dropped a frame. We've also got a Blackmagic Resolve in-house for color correction, so we only go out of house for audio mixing. Having once owned a post house, I'm happy to be on this side of the fence."

The efficiencies of the workflow give the post team more time to deal with VFX and errant items that show up in frame – such as tape marks on the floor, or mic shadows on set walls. When a set of shows near completion in editorial, the laugh tracks are recorded. In this instance, QuickTime files of each episode are loaded onto the ISIS and played by a Cinedeck RX feeding multiple plasma screens to a 150-strong audience on the stage. Another Cinedeck RX records eight audio channels of the live audience laughs from the production mixer. These tracks are ready for the editor within minutes of being recorded.





JANE ALLISON FLECK, RECORDIST AT *ANGER MANAGEMENT*; RX'S SMALL FOOTPRINT

"The speed of Cinedeck RXs' processing and their seamless integration with the ISIS, is a huge advantage," says Brock.

"There's no time wasted copying or importing files anymore – or going through any other extra steps. That's a massive time saver. The editorial team works problem-free, with unprecedented efficiency and, if we need to, we can get a show out the door very quickly."

Regarding the audio recording, he says: "The great thing with the Cinedeck RX is it can record eight channels of audio, so we're not limited to two channels, and therefore don't have to split the audio recording over multiple devices."

Estimating the time-savings by deploying Cinedeck RX, Brock says, "Our camera package came with five HDCAM tapedecks, but we've never really needed them. The practical reality is that if you are shooting on tape, then two-hours per-camera per-day, results in eight hours of material everyday. If you ingest from tape that's eight hours of ingest time per day. We just literally drag-and-drop files, let Avid index them, and it takes no time at all. The days of realtime ingest are history. We're probably saving one day every shooting day on ingest alone. Other file-based solutions usually require either copying and/or transcoding and that takes time as well. We don't have to do any of that either."

For the playback of episodes to the audience to record our laugh-track the post team can output a full show to the Cinedeck RX in a matter of minutes, with significant time-savings there too.

Brock notes, "You know the old saying, 'faster, better, cheaper' – with Cinedeck we get all three. It's much cheaper than tape - two channels of Cinedeck RX give you the equivalent of two SR decks, but at a fraction of the cost, and with no stock charges. Plus, as we don't need additional editorial assistants to digitize the media overnight, we run a small post team consisting of an editor, assistant editor, post coordinator and me.

Brock concludes, "We like the Cinedeck team. They're smart, responsive and they take care of you. They are very good partners and above all they make very good products. We're satisfied."

