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## ■ STATION TO STATION – Mike Clark

# A SeaChange at MTV

**M**TV Italia is the fastest growing music television operation in Europe, with more than 12 million weekly viewers. A 24-hour music channel dedicated to programmes, videos and live music events, it is the second most watched MTV Network in Europe and the leading generator of international advertising revenue for the network. The programme schedule includes *Total Request Live*, *MTV Supersonic*, *Videoclash*, *Select*, *Loveline* and *Brand New*.

At just over four years from its foundation, the broadcaster recently switched from London-based playout to fully independent operation from its main full-digital Milan studio complex, set up with Cine Video Studio. The facility includes three control rooms, five studios, an OB truck, an Editbox, two Avid Media Composer 1000 and two Symphony suites, plus a Discreet edit room.

Now it also boasts a cutting-edge TX

ensures a funky, dynamic and fast-moving environment — just right for MTV.

"Our playlists are very complicated, with a large number of very short clips with bumpers or short stings slotted between them, so we needed an extremely reliable system which ensured great flexibility, enabled us to change events at the last minute and was able to guarantee hitch-free playout of even the shortest events," he continues. "After we checked out what the market had to offer, we opted for SeaChange video servers, as they play absolutely

cast authority regulations, etc. Another requirement was the ability to interface with the other systems already in use, such as the ad set-up, which runs on an IP-based system set-up, and the Selector music programming set-up. MTV Italia chose Italian firm Etere as it could meet all these needs, and playing on home ground also helped.

"Etere is installed in its main/clone option with two parallel independent outputs with automatic rollover in case the main one fails. All RS422 controls are embedded in a fault tolerant/fault resilient Ethernet infrastructure," notes Etere's Fabio Gattari.

MTV's main router is also controlled by Etere, enabling operators to cache in the server from any device to any input of any workstation. The flexibility provided by the software's distributed architecture has resulted in a configurable system without a single point of failure but with natural fault resilience. MTV Italia has three offices in Milan and one in London, and all have facilitated remote access, even with a slow 128k line.

"MTV chose Pinnacle Write Deko 2000 to create titles on the fly, and we supplied a dynamic connection between the archive and the Deko. A great deal of time has been saved when preparing graphics for the beginning and end of clips thanks to the software's automatic features, which avoids re-typing text," Gattari says.

Etere's traffic system is connected with the on-air and caching and enables scheduling according to local ad traffic regulations. It also has integrated billing features and web-based access for customers/agencies.

"I'm very pleased with the results achieved," adds Aprico. "They're even





set-up featuring a SeaChange five-node Broadcast MediaCluster 1235, with four inputs (two for low quality and two for high quality) and six outputs (two for preview, two main and two back-up for playout), configured with 72GB disk drives and able to store 544 hours of content encoded at 12Mbps. Etere automation controls the entire set-up. The new playout system and master control room was designed by MTV Italia's technical team and system integrator/installer Professional Show.

"When we decided to handle playout in-house, we began working on a project which I wanted to be even better than what I'd seen while I was at MTV in London," explains Enrico Aprico, vice president, production management. "In just a few years, we've grown in terms of audience and programming, working up from one programme a day to a total of 36. We've expanded a 10-strong team to the present 200-strong, very young workforce, which

everything and have built-in redundancy, an all-important factor for MTV."

The broadcaster now produces five shows live from the Cine Video Studio complex, featuring the most popular musical acts from Italy and around the world. As well as the impressive array of hardware, the new TX control room is also very stylish, thanks to studio furniture by Italy's SDI International.

"At MTV Italia, SeaChange's Broadcast MediaCluster is interconnected with an asset archive, programmes are stored and played out of the BMC, and our operators have easy access to our huge music video library," says MTV Italia's Head of Transmission and Operations Giuseppe Rolla. "The fundamental reasons for choosing SeaChange BMC's was their great reliability, even with three second events."

The broadcaster also required a very flexible automation system that would be easy to customise and update with broad-

better than anybody here expected, myself included. The systems are running without any hitches, the customising opportunities are there and should any further requirements arise, it's good to know that they can be catered for without the slightest problem to go on-air immediately."

As far as reliability is concerned, neither SeaChange's server technology nor Etere's SQL database has a single point of failure. Intel network switches are fully redundant, and all key PCs have two NIC connected to both switches, for a full fault-tolerant, fault-resilient architecture. Further reliability comes from Etere's Disaster Recovery function, which keeps the Sync as a second site with another server, even if the latter is of a different size and is connected via Ethernet.

As for the future, Aprico concludes, "We're working on the second stage of the project, a digital library, continuing our ongoing collaboration with SeaChange and Etere."