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News: Fred Quillen

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BUF Hits The Spot At CBS

LOS ANGELES

I am a freelance videotape/digital disk recorder operator. I typically use a GVG Profile digital disk recorder to playback elements for award shows and specials.

Normally, I use Procue, a proprietary controller for the Profile. It can control eight channels simultaneously, as well as digitize to two or more separate Profiles in perfect sync.

On "Survivor, the Australian Outback Reunion Show," a Procue controlled two Profiles, playing back two synchronized channel loops (fill and matte) and other clips as needed. There were also close to fifty B-roll clips to be played back based on the conversation of the talent on the set.

I needed a way to instantly recall these clips and that's where BUF Technology's Spot came to the rescue. It's a DDR shot box that uses LCD keys to display the clip name assigned to the key so you don't need tape logs and other papers cluttering your workspace.

I had 32 clips available to playback at the touch of a button. I tapped a scroll key and another 32 clips instantly appeared for immediate playback.

Spot is very intuitive. The first time I sat down before this attention-getting piece of equipment, it took only minutes to become very fast at operating the Profile through Spot's multi-colored LCD keys.

When people walk by and see this colorful device, comments like "Wow! What's that?" are typical. There's a minimum of set-up menus and the keys change to whatever is needed most at the time.

For instance, when you want to label a clip, the keys change to a QWERTY keyboard; to recall a time code number, it changes to a numeric keypad. Spot is very fast and actually fun to use.

DEMANDING INTERVIEWS

During "Survivor, the Australian Outback Reunion Show," the interview segment was the most demanding. I listened carefully to the interview and anticipated which clip would be relevant to the conversation. If it took more than a couple of seconds to locate and cue the right clip, it was probably too late.

At one point in the show, the associate director called for a clip, which was already cued, due to my anticipation and Spot's speed. The clip rolled with B-roll of exactly what the "survivor" was talking about at the right time. I heard a producer in the booth scream with glee as the video in the screen played as if scripted or edited, neither of which was the case.

Spot performed flawlessly! It's always a good thing when you have the right tools for the job and Spot was the right tool for this job.

I have used BUF Technology controllers for years – mostly the VTC-4000 – and they have been powerful tools that I can count on to make me look good. The company has always been there for me if I have any special needs or problems, is willing to write software to accommodate any situation I get myself into.

As a freelance operator, I need to be prepared to accomplish the most difficult tasks. BUF Technology has given me the tools to do this successfully once again.

Fred Quillen is a freelance video tape/DDR operator, often working at CBS Television City in Los Angeles. He can be reached at fquillen@mediaone.net.

For more information, contact BUF Technology (858-451-1350, www.buftek.com)

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