

# The Making of Heidies: 5 Days of Live Webcasting

Posted At : February 22, 2007 2:38 PM | Posted By : Stefan Richter

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I really wanted to follow up **on this** and I am happy to now present you with an email interview with an official spokesperson from Diesel.

As you may remember, Diesel instigated the Heidies campaign in which two girls **hijack Diesel.com**, holding their underwear salesman and his unreleased intimate collection hostage, and broadcast live for five days, courtesy of **Flash Media Server**.

So without any further delay, here's the lowdown on how the Heidies campaign came to life and was finally delivered.

## 1. Could you provide some background info on the Heidies project?

The project was developed by Diesel in collaboration with **FARFAR**, starting from an idea which was presented by the Swedish agency about 6 months ago. Having originally thought of a web TV experience, with 2 girls locked in a room through a web stream, the combined team built around it a whole script, including the hostage situation and the fully interactive experience with the camera angles, the chat, and the girls' requests. To Diesel, it was very important to have the user feeling always in control of the situation and to keep interacting with the site. In particular, FARFAR was extremely active in the creativity of the script - integrating the crazy wacky situations that happened in the room.

## 2. What made you choose Flash Video over another solution? Was there another technology that 'lost out'?

In this project it was very important to maintain the user on the same screen, whilst at the same time changing camera angles - much in the same way that real security cameras work. That's why we chose Flash, even though technically it was a more challenging project. We needed to have an interface which was not limiting when customising the interface.

## 3. Did you feel that you were entering uncharted territory? After all not many high profile sites have used live Flash streaming before.

Most definitely, not just because of the clearly bold step of changing logo, look & feel, etc, but the fact that we chose 5 simultaneous feeds was because we truly did want to give the user the control of their own experience. Even though a "Directors cut" was available at 256Kbs (we were glad you appreciated the quality!) the other 4 angles were all streaming simultaneously at 128 kbs, which meant that anyone that chose his own camera angle. For us it was very important not to force the user into a specific experience, but we wanted each individual to build their own personal interactive experience with the 3 models - That was the major breakthrough of this project.

## 4. It was live wasn't it? :-)

YES!

## 5. What does the setup on site look like? Could you provide some technical details on that? Is there a certain encoder that you are using? Is the encoding done via

## **Flash Player (using the Spark codec) or Flix 8 Live maybe (using VP6)?**

Wow! the setup for us was amazing. Briefly, we used the following System. We had a total of 7 cameras, 5 fixed and 2 mobile, out of which we chose which were the ones that were streamed at one time were. The 5 cameras went to a splitter that divided the signal in two, to send one part to the video mixing table. This is where the directors cut was edited, which was simultaneously streamed. The system was made up of 6 computers, each one was coding a specific camera, together with the sound, which had followed a parallel route up to this point. It was sent to the internet AND to the back up system (yep, its ALL on tape!) **Irontec**, based in Bilbao, thought up the whole system, very complex but very effective, especially when you take into account that we gave them 5 days to do everything! The encoding was done using **Flix 8 Live** - VP6 codec

## **6. Which content delivery network did you use and why?**

We delivered the video through **Vitalstream**. We knew about their experience delivering Flash Video and that gave us confidence. But a great point in their favour was the constructive and supportive team that they had working with on this project, which made everything a lot smoother for us.

## **7. Any lessons learnt along the way? Any hiccups that others could learn from? Any challenges that you couldn't overcome? Any major setbacks?**

The major lesson - which we had kind of foreseen anyway - is that if you do a TV production, and then add the fact that is a 24h non stop TV production, and on top of that add that its a web streaming, fully Interactive 24h non stop TV production, and on top of that add that the 3 human beings inside that room were the craziest, nicest people, then you just have to be prepared not to sleep for about 15 days - I think the average was a 4 hour nap a day that the whole team had. It was very challenging, very hectic, and extremely rewarding experience.

## **8. The livestreams are now offline. What's the verdict, was the project successful?**

We feel that it was successful, not in just quantitative terms - tripled site traffic, innumerable chat messages (including many emotional pleas to Diesel not to close down the site), over 1,000 blog postings, etc - but specifically in a qualitative sense. The people interacting during those 5 days were simply hooked on the concept. Real relationships arose - for 24h people would sit up and interact with the room, to the point of going off sick to stay at home and carry on with this unique experience. For us it was a very rewarding project.

## **9. Can you provide some figures around bandwidth used, sessions served, current users and the like?**

Our site tripled traffic at around the third day - from 29,000 average to almost 100,000 visits. We were expecting massive bandwidth issues from day one, which is why we "over" engineered the system. I don't think the system went down once. Whenever there was a "supposed" bandwidth issue, it was in fact Hair&Make up which insisted in going inside the room to give the models a make over... :-)

Thank you. Send our best wishes to the Heidies! I know they can be hard work at times, I have one **at home**.