

## COMPANY

**Zee Entertainment Enterprises**

## LOCATION

**Mumbai, India**

## SOFTWARE

**Autodesk® Flame® Premium**

# In touch with reality

## Zee Entertainment uses Autodesk Flame Premium to carry out a reality check to its dance and cookery shows

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**– Vipul Bhalala**

Head - Broadcast Design,  
Zee Entertainment Enterprises



Image courtesy of Broadcast Design, Zee Entertainment Enterprises.

Did you know that the impressive set created for Dance India Dance show opener was entirely contrived out of an editing tool? Did you know popular Japanese arcade games of 1980s have dictated the fortunes of a health show in India? When you do reality shows, it's hard to have secrets. But the hardest part is to convince new viewers to watch the show.

Reality show montages have always stood the risk of being ignored because they become a mere blip in the radar of these show. All the hype and the neurasthenic frenzy tend to belittle the very reason for creating the promo. But the broadcast design team of Zee Television adopted a very interesting approach to reality promos that not only brought in laurels for the network but also saved a lot of production cost.

**Dance till you drop**

Dance India Dance is a dance-based reality show aired on Zee Television. The show features a unique format where dancers from a variety of styles enter open auditions held in multiple cities to showcase their style and talents to qualify for the mega-audition round.

At the end of the mega-audition, the top 18 dancers are chosen. These finalists perform solo, duet and group dance numbers and get rated by television viewers whose votes, combined with votes from a panel of judges, determine the winner week after week.

The show features a variety of Indian cultural and international dance styles ranging across a broad spectrum of classical, contemporary, Bollywood, Hip-Hop, Jazz, Kalaripayattu, Salsa, Samba and musical theatre styles, amongst others, with many sub-genres within these categories.

Dance India Dance is also India's largest dance-based reality show, and cutting an opening montage for such a dynamic property is never a cakewalk. The biggest challenge for this montage emerged literally at its first step: creation of a set for the show opener.

The prevalent market rates for hiring a set of a large scale are to the tune of Rs. 18,00,000 a day with an additional Rs. 1,00,000 a day for hiring a Jimmy Jib camera crane and an operator. Since the montage involved shooting 15 different dance styles, the project would have required a



Image courtesy of Broadcast Design, Zee Entertainment Enterprises.

minimum three to four days of shoot. The final sum was astronomical, and the broadcast design team led by Vipul Bhalala decided to work around the huge cost.

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Since there was no need for camera movements, the time required to set up the camera grip and rigs was considerably cut down. Each dance style was shot in about 15 minutes and he finished the entire production in a day. Bhalala also kept the camera at knee level so that he could plan a grand 3D magnification at the top half of the frame.

According to Bhalala, Flame Premium offers an end-to-end stereoscopic finishing workflow with tools for conforming, compositing, real-time colour grading and multi-format delivery of S3D content. The 3D tracking workflow within Action allows artists to analyse and more accurately place elements within S3D footage.

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The next challenge for Bhalala was that they could not use real contestants as they were busy practising for the show. As a result, the production team hired junior artists and refrained from highlighting their faces. So the focus of the montage was only on the style of the dance form and the ambience of the milieu. The high-energy nature of the show also meant that a spectacular spread of lights had to be introduced.

“The 3D lighting feature of Autodesk Flame Premium is superb because the virtually created set had everything from mood lighting to disco lighting. The advantage with digital lighting is that you have a complete control over the range,” says Bhalala while adding that he could not only place lights along the Z-buffer but also have all-rounded view of the light sources. Once the lighting was fixed, Bhalala had to place the characters in a way that he could properly light the set, after which he only had to focus on camera movements.

### Cooking to perfection

While Dance India Dance show opener was a textbook case of building a live studio completely using 3D compositing, the promo of Bacha Party, a cooking show on Zee Entertainment’s food channel Khana Khazana, was well received a ready reckoner for artists wanting to toy with 16-bit era of gaming consoles using Autodesk Flame Premium.

According to Bhalala, the 16-bit era had unique visuals: simple, yet bright and colourful. Taking parts of these memorable games and mixing them with a real life environment would have sounded odd, but he knew if done right the results would be beautiful. He conceived a game on the lines of Super Mario, Super Contra and Pac-Man where a little boy has to choose between junk food and healthy food on his run to the next level.

The problem with such an output was it could only be executed on Flash animation. Moreover, the montage also required a wide range of characters from a walking hamburger to a bucket of French Fries that appeared like a helicopter to gun-toting finger chips.

“The challenge really was to bring 8-bit Flash output in Autodesk Flame Premium, which meant developing Flash animation and 2D animation in the same project. We cracked the puzzle by using one of the most powerful features called Action or Batch,” says Bhalala.

The initial thought that came up during discussions was to use Flash to execute the project so that he could get the 6-bit animation look, but an in-depth research proved that the multiple-layering system in Batch could develop frame-by-frame movements of characters as found in Flash animation. While one cannot exactly emulate the frame-by-frame animation of Flash, a close semblance could be achieved. The hard work and determination paid off with the promo achieving the desired 8-bit look.

The Paint Tool also came to the rescue because it allowed Bhalala to generate the initial visualisation of the storyboards, mood boards and lighting sources, especially in scenes which

require pre visualisation of a french fries helicopter and a menacing hamburger on the prowl.

For Audio, he took a simple track, picked a lot of effects, and edited the audio on Flame Premium in 10-15 layers. This included adding a slight delay after the video so that it could create the old world charm of the '70s and '80s. The music for this piece was edited by audio engineer Vinay Yadav.

The Bacha Party show opener was well received as the show was targeted at parents and kids. While the millennial kids have grown on 3D gaming consoles, most parents have seen second

and third generation gaming consoles from the '70s and the '80s—so they could easily connect with the promo.

The promo also depicted the boy growing after having healthy food, and shrinking after eating junk food, conveying a crucial social message in a simple yet endearing manner. It only goes to show that you don't require a promo to entertain viewers all the time. Once in a while promos can leave a socially relevant message for the viewers to ponder. For everything else, there is Autodesk Flame Premium. Bacha Party won a Silver medal in the 'Best Children's Program Promo' category at Promax India 2013 last May.



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