



Big Brother

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Allison Grodner, Co-Executive Producer of Big Brother.

By John Powell – [GlobalTV.com](#)

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When *Big Brother* USA took to the air in 2000 there was no Twitter. There was no Facebook. In fact, the internet as we know it today didn't exist. Most had access to the live feeds through such services as America Online, CompuServe, Prodigy or if they were tech savvy, their local, independent ISP.

"It is frightening to think we were doing this when many people couldn't even access the internet. Now, you can access it on your phone, your iPad; stream it to your television," said *Big Brother* USA's co-executive producer, Allison Grodner.

Big Brother USA Season One didn't resemble the game show we see today, either. It followed the traditional, world-wide model, the format still broadcast by England, Italy, Israel, India, Portugal and other countries around the world. There was no Head of Household. There was no Power of Veto. There were weekly food competitions, usually every player nominates two of their fellow houseguests for eviction each week and the viewers decide who is evicted and eventually who wins. As a producer on *Big Brother* USA series since the second season, Grodner is still elated by the experience of putting together the series and is excited to celebrate *Big Brother's* 20th anniversary this season.



"It is crazy! Every year I think...Can we do this again? That first year was so amazing and also exhausting, emotionally and physically draining season with everything we dealt with. I remember thinking...This cannot happen again. And, it did. It kept happening and happening, and here we are 20 seasons later!" she said.

What keeps bringing Grodner back each year is not only the excitement and drama of producing a live eviction show every week along with supervising the houseguests 24/7 and cutting together the weekly episodes but it is the assortment of new houseguests, personalities every year and finding ways to keep the players and the viewers guessing.

"Every single season is different. It sounds silly to say but it truly is. That is all part of the fun. For us, we have our motto: Expect the Unexpected. That goes for the houseguests but it goes for us as well! That is what we find so fun about this. It is also the challenge of coming up with something new every year. What is our new theme? What is our new twist? What are we going to do with the cast to keep them on their toes? By now, pretty much everyone has seen the show. Even after 20 seasons, every year feels fresh," said Grodner as she explained how they keep finding new ways to test the players.

John Powell: With 19 seasons in the can, the game is very familiar now. How do you keep challenging the houseguests?

Allison Grodner: “It is interesting. I still think after all these seasons we see new paths taken. Paul is a great example. He came in Season 18 without any knowledge of the show. He actually refused to watch it. He told us he did but...apparently he didn’t. He came in with a fresh take on the game. Obviously there are the classic strategies like Dr. Will in the very beginning. He started it all. He was the first to name alliances with ChillTown. Then, there is Derrick and his very undercover cop way of handling the house. There was Dan and his crazy mind games, the famous funeral. Even for someone like Vanessa, she didn’t win but her emotional manipulation was brilliant. I think every person who has made it to the end has found a new way of doing it. That is what is really exciting. It shows that there are infinite possibilities in the game of *Big Brother*.”

John Powell: After watching 170 houseguests throughout 19 seasons of *Big Brother* USA, what have you learned about people and their behaviour?

Allison Grodner: “That is one of the things that is the most fun, interesting and in some cases inspiring about the show. We strive for people from all walks of life, diverse personalities, diverse points of view. What we find is that no matter what, people uncover their similarities more than their differences. Certainly there are some fights and conflicts that happen in the course of the game but I do think that we have people in the house every single year, especially if you look at the climate in the United States, they come in with very distinct and different points of view on politics, on religion, on social issues, all of that, and yet they are able to coexist in the house and in many cases form long-lasting friendships or even in some cases even marriages. We have had all of that happen. I would sum it up that our nature is to ultimately to find our commonalities and all strive in the end to get along.”



John Powell: Looking back, what are some of your favourite moments?

Allison Grodner: “I have so many! To just name a few looking back over 20 years, the way that Dr. Will played the game lying to everyone’s face and ultimately winning. He, Boogie and ChillTown were certainly a highlight of that season. Then, there is Marcellas and the Golden Veto and Danielle NOT winning which really stood out in Season Three. The first big twist for the first time on any reality show was Season Four with the X Factor. The twin twist was a highlight for me. It was so much fun to do! There is the gameplay. Dan’s funeral. Last season, Paul getting people to throw competitions which included throwing a competition to a woman with a broken foot. It is amazing and unexpected. That is what we love about *Big Brother*.”

John Powell: Are there any plans to celebrate the 20th anniversary this season and how?

Allison Grodner: “Season 20 will be fresh and different. We are really excited by the new cast! The house is one of my favourites. It is interactive and fun and also very contemporary. We are looking at acknowledging our 20th season with moments throughout the season such as

some classic competitions, legends of the game. So there will be, especially on premiere night, some surprise nods to our 20th season.”

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John Powell: Being from Canada, I have to ask this. Has there been any thought to having a USA versus Canada season?

Allison Grodner: “I wouldn’t say no to it. I think that would be interesting. I love to watch and read about seasons around the world. I think it is fascinating to see how other countries and cultures take on this crazy format. It would be fun to see some international players in the U.S. house. I don’t know if it will ever happen but it certainly would be intriguing.”

John Powell: With the success of [Celebrity Big Brother](#) earlier this year, can you give us an update on *Big Brother: Over The Top*?

Allison Grodner: “*Celebrity Big Brother* was such a huge success and it is officially coming back next year. We are very excited about that. I think it would be very hard to have *Big Brother*, the summer staple, with a BBOTT and a Celebrity Edition. That would be a disservice to the show. I think one of the things we have done really well is that we are a big summer event. Right now, we leave enough time between for people to want to see us again. The thing with *Celebrity* is that even though it is the *Big Brother* game it feels so different. It is a sprint as opposed to a marathon. That sets it apart.”

John Powell: Over the years has there been anything that you have wanted to do that you just haven’t because of budgetary reasons or just circumstances that are beyond your control?

Allison Grodner: “What is fun about *Big Brother* is we really get the opportunity to experiment and try almost anything. Because we have to turn around the episodes so quickly we are bound by our studio set. Certainly, there are things we would like to do if we had room to expand our house, like have a competition stadium, things like that. I have always wanted to add features to the house which physically are probably not possible but wait until you see the house this year. It is incredibly creative!”

John Powell: The live feeds from the house provide a lot of spoilers every year. Has there ever been any talk of getting rid of them? It must be tempting at times.

Allison Grodner: “From the very beginning, we embraced technology and have always been ahead of the curve in that way. *Big Brother* is a multi-platform, interactive experience. We even have multiple shows. There is a show online, there is a show that is broadcast on television and there is an [After Dark](#) show. That is what makes *Big Brother* so special. Creating a show and producing a show as difficult as this show is, with hundreds of thousands of armchair producers, it can be tough. It is also part of the fun. We love that our fans are as passionate as they are. They have strong opinions. It is therefore hard to imagine not having the feeds. That live event nature of the show makes it unique. Certainly, I curse the internet at times, I would be lying if I said I didn’t, but I also think it is an important part of what we do.”

[Big Brother 20](#) debuts with a three-hour, two-night premiere event Wednesday, June 27 (8:00-10:00 PM, ET/PT) and Thursday, June 28 (9:00-10:00 PM, ET/PT) on Global.

Following the two-night premiere, *Big Brother 20* will air Sundays (8:00-9:00 PM, ET/PT), beginning July 1; Wednesdays (9:00-10:00 PM, ET/PT), beginning July 4; and Thursdays (9:00-10:00 PM, live ET/delayed PT), beginning July 5, featuring the live eviction show hosted by [Julie Chen](#).

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