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ARISA COX ON BIG BROTHER CANADA'S RETURN

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By John Powell – GlobalTV.com

Big Brother Canada is back tonight and with it comes all of the trials and tribulations that fans love. Knowing that last season was cut short by COVID concerns, the 14 new houseguests are more than ready to compete for the grand prize that awaits the winner on finale night. Hosting and now overseeing their journey as an executive producer, Arisa Cox gave us her thoughts on the upcoming season and what surprises are in store for fans.

John Powell: Congratulations on the new role as executive producer of the show. How much will it change your day-to-day at Big Brother Canada and what effect does it have on your hosting duties? Most people don't realize how modest in size the Big Brother Canada team is based on the polished product that is put out three times a week.

Arisa Cox: "I tell our American fans all the time our population is a tenth of yours but we have to make sure as Canadians that the quality of what we put out is top notch. We want to be world class always. We're always innovating. So, I think that's one thing that I'm really excited about. And you're right; I have been here since day one. I think being a really good host, really knowing how to interact with the community and understanding the show as a viewer really helps me be a better executive producer. And then being involved more deeply in things like casting and editorial decisions is really helping me be a better host as well. I'm just really excited to elevate things because that's what we do at Big Brother Canada."

John Powell: Speaking of hosting duties, we saw Big Brother Australia host Sonia Kruger stay outside of the house until the finale months later. In USA, the houseguests masked up before speaking with host Julie Chen. How have the health protocols and production changed for Big Brother Canada in 2021?

Arisa Cox: “We didn’t get to play out our whole season last year due to the provincial shutdown and so the fact that we are back is really, really precious to us so we are taking no chances. The protocols are extremely strict. Our entire casting tour this year was virtual which in a way made things easier when it comes to things like regional diversity. People were sending in their videos instead of attending a live casting event so that evened out the playing field. Things have definitely changed for us like the amount of time houseguests have to be sequestered and isolated before they go into the house.”

“I think things are going to be really weird for a lot of the houseguests. I mean, we’ve been through a year now of quarantining and so for a show that is really about human connection, it’s going to be amazing to watch these people who have had to really distance themselves from everyone else take their masks off with strangers, see them smile, get a hug, things that once upon a time we took for granted. I’m really excited to see how they handle the transition between the COVID reality in the outside world and the very safe bubble that they’re going to be in. We’ve spared no expense in terms of their safety and the safety of the crew.”



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John Powell: Was there any thought about bringing houseguests back from last season as they didn’t get to have their stories play out?

Arisa Cox: “We think about everything and we think about every scenario. What I can hope for is there are many more seasons because I feel like those houseguests definitely have some unfinished business but it was definitely a thought to bring them back. The way we sort of approached things this year was that last year was one story and yes, it didn’t conclude but this year is the sequel and a new story. We love the idea of a brand new crop of houseguests going in on equal footing. I think it would have been really hard to do a bit of a season and then come back to continue things because the whole point of the show is that the players are isolated and now, for those houseguests, outside influences have crept in. I am definitely eager to see more of those houseguests though.”

John Powell: This year we’re starting out with two teams like Survivor does with its tribes. In the modern Big Brother game in North America we have been seeing big alliances form and streamroll through various seasons. Did that figure into the creation of this twist?

Arisa Cox: “Well, I think it is exactly what you said. Once a show starts to become formulaic or there’s very obviously one way to win the game, that’s when it’s time to innovate. We’re always trying to stay one step ahead of the game and in the last few seasons, especially when it comes to North American Big Brother, that’s been the thing. You get a big alliance forming on the first day exactly and as you said. They just roll through to the end and one of them wins. I want new gameplay. I want to see new players adapt to new realities.”

“We love twists at Brother Canada and we love to incorporate Canadians when it comes to voting or having a say in the series. So having Canada vote in the two captains was brilliant because it gives people ownership and then you split up that natural tendency of you know, birds of a feather flocking together. You want to be able to mix everything up and some people are going to love the twist and some people are going to hate the fact that we’re starting this way. The twist certainly works well for Survivor. I think everyone’s excited for something new and the show still has all the hallmarks of what fans have come to expect from a Big Brother season.”

John Powell: Of the new crop of houseguests who really stands out to you?

Arisa Cox: “How dare you. (Laughs) You know that I love all of the houseguests for completely different reasons. I just like that we have a great mash-up of the country. This cast is slightly older in Big Brother terms. Of course, I’m the same age as the oldest houseguests, which is hilarious but I feel like the slightly older aspect of it makes me

excited because I think people at that age really know themselves. They're a lot less willing to just go along with groupthink, for example, which is something I don't like watching. I love watching unique people find new ways to play the game in ways that I've never thought of and that goes for people who know the game well and people who are just learning the game. There is not one person that I'm not excited to see play. You know, it's so important for our team to get it right. It's so important for Robin (Kass) and her casting team to get it right and I'm thrilled with who we ended up with."

John Powell: What do fans have to look forward to this season?

Aria Cox: "I think one is this new twist and seeing how that plays out but I'm also just excited that we can have fun again. There has been no Survivor to watch and we weren't able to complete our season last year. I'm just really excited for some good old fashioned fun like Big Brother. We need it. It's three times a week. The feeds are on 24/7 and there is all this other content. As a fan, you can "play along" on social media. People watch it with friends. People watch it as families. So many parents watch it with their teenagers and it gives them an opportunity to talk about all kinds of things that they wouldn't talk about otherwise. This is really a show for everyone and I'm really excited about even more people coming on board this year."

Big Brother Canada premieres Wednesday, March 3 at 7 p.m. ET/PT followed by the first eviction Thursday, March 4 at 8 p.m. ET/PT. New episodes air Mondays (9 p.m. ET/PT), Wednesdays (7 p.m. ET/PT), and Thursdays (8 p.m. ET/PT).

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