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PRODUCER ERIN BROCK PULLS BACK THE CURTAIN ON THE NEW SEASON, BEING A PRODUCER AND THE CHANCES OF AN ALL-STAR OR USA VS CANADA SEASON

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By John Powell – GlobalTV.com

As an executive producer and supervising producer at Insight Productions, Erin Brock has been one of the guiding forces behind Big Brother Canada since its very first episode and its very first season. Taking time out of her busy schedule in preparing the new season for its premiere March 8th on Global, she sat down to with us to talk all things Big Brother as a producer and perhaps Big Brother Canada's biggest fan.

John Powell: I know you are in full production mode so thanks for taking the time to speak to us today.

Erin Brock: I love talking about the show! I was literally just meeting with all the houseguests for the last two days. I meet with all of them before they enter and talk to them about a bunch of stuff. I literally have the greatest job in the world! I want to keep making the show forever because it's so fun and creative. I love talking about it! I could talk about it all day!

John Powell: I just wanted to say congratulations on the new season. You must be really excited going forward and heading into the premiere next week.

Erin Brock: I'm very, very excited about what we're doing with our eleventh season. I feel like it's a new decade and I think the theme is awesome! There's a lot of changes in the house this year. There's some pretty major structural changes that I think are gonna throw people off. It is really wildly different this year! I can't wait to unveil all of that and the houseguests are amazing! I'm excited to be entertained by them and to see what they're gonna do. It's like the night before Christmas for me.

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John Powell: How has it been to see the series evolve from its humble beginnings to the show that it is today?

Erin Brock: This is what I will say about Big Brother. It's produced all over the world and at its very core it's a show about strangers living in a house together. I think what's magic about the format and why audiences around the world love it is every territory does it a bit differently. We're incredibly proud of how we do it in this territory and how it has evolved over the years.



For me, the greatest gift as a producer is how it evolves because you get to change things in real time due to feedback from houseguests, from audiences, when you're making a show. You're basically in pre-production, production, post-production and airing all at once, all the time. You get to shift and you get to adjust based on what audiences are liking. The show has changed and grown as the world has changed. A former houseguest once told me that this show is like a microcosm of society. That's exactly what it is. That's why I really think Big Brother is the greatest show in the world to produce.

John Powell: You've seen a lot of houseguests go in and out of those famous doors. They have been from every corner of Canada, all different backgrounds, etc. What have you learned about people in general and Canada from producing the show?

Erin Brock: That's a very good question. People from all different parts of this country have exposure to all different things and so it's interesting to see what someone's history is and then get to experience them becoming exposed to different things and how that changes them and how it changes how they think. That has been fascinating.

What you learn is how immensely diverse our country is and how culturally diverse our country is; how incredible Canadians are. We're amazing! We're passionate! We're outspoken! We're hilarious! I love discovering that about Canadians from all over the country. I would say that the thing that remains true from season one to today is people's hunger to participate in the social experiment. It surprises me how little fear there is and how I think bold and excited people are to be a part of this! I always think if it was me I think I'd be so afraid (laughs) but they want to play the game, they want to meet new people.

And the other thing that has always stayed the same is every houseguest is a good person who actually cares. They fight. They can hate each other. They can think someone's the worst in the world. They cannot understand someone. They cannot understand where someone's from. They can get furious and we watch it. They have a lot of highs and lows. This is not a chill experience. They are going to hate being there some days and love being there other days. It's going to be the greatest thing they ever did some days and they're gonna say...Why did I agree to this?... on other days. What I have noticed in people is no matter how bad things are, no matter how hurt somebody gets, no matter how back-stabbed somebody feels, when they come out of that house and the game has kind of fallen away as well as the pressure and the paranoia that goes along with the game, they find their way back to each other. They understand each other in a way that they might not have been able to understand each other before because they were fighting for their lives to win a prize. They are connected in a way that only people who have played Big Brother can be connected. I feel like I've learned about the goodness in people. What I see at the end of each season is kind of the heart and soul of this country and how good people are.



John Powell: Now, I've spoken to Allison Grodner, the American Big Brother producer, in the past about this and I would like to ask you the same question. Her answer was she would like to have a separate challenge arena instead of using the backyard of the house for challenges. I ask you the same question. What have you wanted to do but have never been able to do as a producer? What is at the top of your wish list?

Erin Brock: I agree with her, by the way. They have an amazing show. They put on an incredible show. These challenges are oftentimes big things. Some of these challenges take two days to construct. In Canada, we have this great opportunity to bring lighting and special effects into our challenges. They do in the states but they're outside in a backyard. It takes time to do all of that and it means you're shutting off part of the house and you really want the house open all the time because people need places to go and it is harder for them to game. The other thing that I would want is a second diary room. The diary room is the beating heart of the show. It is a big part of the stories, the content but it is also kind of a production/houseguest portal in which the houseguests can ask for grocery items, medicine, get medical advice or just to talk to someone.

John Powell: Speaking about the new season what do fans have to look forward to?

Erin Brock: Well, I will tell you that we have some new and never-seen-before twists that we're going to try on the show this year. Nothing major as far as they are not going to take the season over. You were talking about how the show has evolved and we've learned as we've produced the show. I think it's a real balance. You have to let the houseguests play the game but you also want to sprinkle in new things to knock them off their feet a bit. People who watch Big Brother have a real idea of how they're going to play and as a producer you have to throw in things so that they have to think differently.

We have some new ways to shake up how the houseguests think and how they play that I'm excited about. I can say maybe an old favorite or two are coming back, which I think is always good. I'm really excited about the house this year. I think it's kind of the most house like house we've had. It's different and more like a traditional house. I think it's gonna be fun! There is also going to be a lot of mystery this year. I think that we always in our rendition of the show leaned pretty heavily into a theme for entertainment but not to the extent that it really changes the game or really changes what the houseguests are doing. I'm excited about that and I am really excited about this cast!

John Powell: As an aside, for people who want to apply to be on the show what is your advice for them?

Erin Brock: Number one, you have to pop off the screen. Do I want to watch you? Do I want to spend 70 days and 30 hours of prime time television with that person? Are they captivating? There's no absolute recipe for what makes a good houseguest. Honestly, it's instinct. Is this person going to be fun to watch? Do they pop off the screen? Do I find them authentic? That's very, very important. Whether you are funny, sensitive or whatever, it has to be real because to me storytelling is the most important part of any television show. You actually have to care about the people you're watching, especially on reality TV. If someone is one note or playing a gag character, not being their true selves, that's not good. We are really looking for those authentic characters.



John Powell: You have brought up an interesting point. You are not just a producer. You are a human being who watches, observes these houseguests before, during and after they leave the series and rejoin their outside lives. As a human being you cannot help but to be invested in these people. How do you deal with being a producer and a human being while working on the show or do you, or can you?

Erin Brock: You've brought up an interesting point. We are with these people through the entire process, every minute of their lives for months. I think people have these ideas that people who produce reality shows recklessly use people. In my opinion, the best producers of reality TV have the biggest hearts, care the most, are empathetic to what it must feel like. I know it's hard for them at times. I know they are going to hate us. It's gonna be disappointing for them. I know some of what happens in the house just sucks. Someone's going to go home first. For me, I always feel terrible. I hate to see someone go first. I hate not getting to fully develop who they are and let Canada, the viewers, see what we saw during casting.

I do feel a bit like their mother. I feel like I have these 16 kids even though some of them are my age. (laughs) I want good for all of them and it's hard to see people leave early and it's hard to see people be disappointed and it's hard to see people heartbroken. I feel when they're crying or they're lost or they don't feel like they have any friends in the game. It makes me feel horrible. When you're a producer on the show or anyone working on the show, we ride the waves with these people. We feel for these people. To me, one of the most important things about this show is also seeing the heart of these people and taking their feelings and our feelings and try to kind of channel that into the episodes making that experience authentic for the viewer. I'm not gonna lie. Sometimes it is hard to watch. I actually care about them. I want them to have a good experience and not end up feeling terrible about themselves. They're all wonderful people. I know people have their opinions about the individual houseguests but the truth is these are all wonderful people. They all have families. They all have jobs. They all love this show.

John Powell: I am going to switch to my fan boy hat here. Before we go, I would like to know has any thought or serious discussion been given to having a USA versus Canada edition or an All-Star season?

Erin Brock: I think they're 100 per cent viable. I would love that dichotomy of the two different groups like we did with season five when we had new and returning houseguests. I thought that was super cool to see how that played out. I had no idea how it was going to play out and if people were going to work together or not. I think anything is on the horizon. It is definitely something we've talked about. We've talked about both of those things. I think it would be amazing to see a Canada vs USA season or All-Stars. I don't know if they will ever happen but I think those seasons would be awesome!



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