



UNCOVERING THE SECRET LIVES OF FOUR, FIVE AND SIX YEAR OLDS

25 PANASONIC REMOTE CAMERAS CAPTURE KEY CHILDHOOD
MOMENTS FOR CHANNEL 4 DOCUMENTARY



The Secret Life series is a Channel 4 observational documentary that follows a group of 4, 5 and 6 year olds to see how they react to different situations, make and break friendships, learn how to share, and stand up for themselves.

The series proved extremely popular and received a positive reception, attracting a wide audience with a range of people from different backgrounds and ages.

Finding the right solution

With programs such as The Secret Life series creating the right environment, that encourages genuine interactions is crucial.

For example, handheld cameras create an environment in which people are aware that they are being filmed, leading to unnatural and staged reactions. In order to capture the true interactions and relationships between the children, RDF Television had the challenge of finding high quality but subtle cameras.

The pilot of The Secret Life of 4 Year Olds was filmed on five handheld cameras, before successfully being aired and gaining popularity. After this, RDF selected The Complete Camera Company to investigate how the program could be filmed with fixed rig cameras to create a fly on the wall type documentary.

The Complete Camera Company provide fixed rig technology alongside professional, experienced and qualified freelancers for dozens of UK productions every year. For The Secret Life series The Complete Camera Company chose to install Panasonic's AW-HE60S remote cameras.

The HE60S is a PTZ camera with infrared shooting capabilities. The camera has all the essentials for self-operated studios and fixed installation video. This includes an optical 18x zoom lens and 10x digital zoom.

To ensure subtlety, the cameras feature hybrid noise reduction (Hybrid DNR) that allows clear shooting with minimal noise, even in dimly lit situations. They are also designed with a form and series of interchangeable covers that match surrounding spaces and a cable cover that prevents clutter.

When asked about the choice to use Panasonic remote cameras Paul O'Connor, Company Director at The Complete Camera Company, said, "Productions like The Family and One Born Every Minute were ground breaking and created a whole new genre of documentary making. In our experience the Panasonic HE60's are a great tool for the job. They are small, quiet and produce good quality pictures. Vital for us the operational interface allows for rapid operation so that we have a fighting chance of following real life action as it happens."

Implementation

A total of 25 HE60S cameras were used for the production, 15 inside the nursery and 10 outside. Such a large number of cameras ensured that every moment was captured, providing a unique insight into the lives of the children.

Whilst the action all took place under the supervision of two teachers, the children's parents were able to watch on monitors close by. The children were also observed, from a separate room, by two leading scientists, Educational Neuroscientist Dr Paul Howard-Jones and Developmental Psychologist Dr Sam Wass.

"I have never had the opportunity to listen to the conversations of a group of children of this age group in such an intimate way. It actually has been a fantastic revelation," says Dr Paul Howard-Jones.

"The Panasonic cameras captured the real reactions of people in real situations."

One of the priorities and the highlights of the documentary was the capturing of intimate moments that cannot be recreated. The HE60S were able to do this and ensure that, when the program aired, it showed authentic experiences.

Paul O'Connor explained the significance of the fixed rig application of remote cameras in this production, "The Panasonic cameras captured the real reactions of people in a real situations. Given time, with a fixed rig, people forget they are being filmed and behave very naturally which is the real beauty of this style of shooting."

Oliver Newland, UK Regional Marketing Manager at Panasonic said, "It's great to see our products being used to help create such brilliant programs. The HE60S is an unobtrusive camera meant exactly for this kind of application so it's really positive to hear the feedback from Paul and the guys at The Complete Camera Company."



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