



VARICAM IN PLAY ON LITTLE ROY

BEHIND THE SCENES ON LITTLE ROY, A JAM MEDIA PRODUCTION
FOR THE BBC, SHOT ON THE PANASONIC VARICAM 35.



JAMMedia
motion innovation



With tight schedules and limited budgets, the world of children's television requires inventive production and a close eye on the economics.

Such considerations were front of mind when the production team began determining the right camera for Little Roy, a brand new live action/animation hybrid series building on the success of the BAFTA award-winning pre-school series Roy.

Little Roy stars Roy O'Brien, an animated 5-year-old boy, on a journey of self-discovery through imaginative play. Little Roy embraces all the winning elements of the existing 11-year-old Roy brand, featuring laugh out loud comedy, physical hijinks and emotional learning with a touch of madcap humour and craziness.

The production team carried out standard tests, looking at exposure, colour, colour rendering and data size, to determine which camera could deliver the best picture in the smallest data size.

"Basically the main goal was to shoot at UHD and maintain the whole production and post production to UHD levels," said Nik Panteris, Colourist at Egg Post Production. "The problem with that was the data size and the data wrangling and the post production times were exponentially greater. So we wanted to find a golden rule, of how to maintain that quality and still have some reasonable data size. It came down to a shoot out, we did a very extensive test with many cameras, and the Panasonic VariCam 35 ticked all the boxes."

Little Roy, is a Jam Media production for the BBC and is filmed in an old bakery in Tallaght, Dublin. The series was jointly commissioned by Kay Benbow, controller of CBeebies and Cheryl Taylor, controller of CBBC. The series is produced by Mark Cumberton.

Jam Media created three terrace houses with gardens allowing for both internal and external scenes. 52 episodes were shot over a 22 week period.

The Director of Photography for Little Roy is Fionn Comerford, who has previously worked on Penny Dreadful and Harry Potter. "I was particularly interested in the VariCam's dual native ISO (800 ISO and 5000 ISO). If you tried to push any of the other cameras to 5000 ISO you would get a serious amount of grain. It was really, really fabulous to see how crisp the 5000 ISO is on the VariCam.

"I really like this camera, I can't think of a bad word to say."

The VariCam 35 has 14+ sensitivity stops of latitude and a base ISO rating of 800. However, unlike other cameras, it has a second native base of 5000 ISO. The native 800 ISO can be pushed to 4000 ISO, which produces an image with relatively high noise levels, because of the artificial gain applied.

However, at 5000 ISO, the second native ISO kicks in and produces an image which is crystal clear.

This second base makes it possible to shoot up to 12,800 ISO and opens up a range of shooting options and locations that previously would have been off limits.

"There was a scene, an exterior day we were shooting out in the park and the light started to die quite seriously towards the end of the day," added Fionn Comerford. "Usually if you only had an 800 ASA camera you would have had to call a halt at maybe five o'clock. But with this camera, being able to put it to 5000 ISO, gave us an extra half an hour of shooting ability.

"If you look at the footage it's incredible how crisp it is, you cannot tell it wasn't normal daylight. In fact, the only thing that gives it away is the moon up in the sky! Apart from that it looks absolutely perfectly day time."

"It's a great result, straight out of the box"

The camera's superb image handling in multiple formats (including 4K, UHD, 2K and HD) make it an unparalleled tool for high-end filmmaking, commercials and episodic production, as well as live 4K events.

"It's a great result, straight out of the box; it provides a very good starting point for post production. I would be happy to work on any production with the VariCam," added Nik Panteris.

"I found the camera to be very reliable camera to have on set, an extremely useful tool with the ability to push the ISO. The VariCam has always been renowned for its colour reproduction, and this is no different, the green structure is great and you get really good skin tones. I really like this camera, I can't think of a bad word to say," concluded Fionn Comerford.



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