

CASE STUDY: DP JOE GABRIEL

Teaming VariCam LT and AU-EVA1 Cameras Make for a Winning Combination

Challenge

When researching new production cameras for his wide-ranging assignments, New York City-based Director/Cinematographer Joe Gabriel had two top criteria: price/performance and exceptional low-light performance. "My work bridges the worlds of raw documentary filmmaking and studio beauty lighting. Moving between these different worlds gives me the experience to choose the right tools to tell the story, whether I'm directing crews on large film sets or working as a one-man documentary storyteller," said Gabriel.

Solution

After camera evaluations, Gabriel opted for the one-two combination of Panasonic's VariCam LT and AU-EVA1 cinema cameras. "I've always liked Panasonic's color science, and I was impressed by how well the cameras – especially the LT – perform in low light. Also I was really happy with how well the two cameras matched."

Customizing the Solution

Gabriel's first project with both cameras was a 90-second spot, "Eating Clean at the Holidays with the Rockettes," with the LT as main camera and EVA1 as B cam. "Going through the post process, I was really impressed how well the cameras matched in V-Log at ISO 800," he said.

Gabriel went on to team up the cameras to shoot extensive promotional work for NBC News' marketing department ("Meet the Press," "NBC Nightly News") and CBS, network commercials and branded corporate content for companies like Big Four accounting firm Ernst and Young. His most extensive Panasonic shoot to date was as the DP on "Brainchild," a critically-acclaimed, 13-episode science variety show, currently available on Netflix. "As a DP, it was a dream project to walk into as each episode had a different theme. And every episode had a cold open where you'd be in a different genre. It was like shooting 13 different movies in one job," said Gabriel.

Some of the inherent cinematographic challenges on "Brainchild" were handling the skin tones of a repertory company of racially-diverse young actors as well as

“I have always been a big fan of Panasonic color. We had a diverse cast with a variety of skin tones. With the VariCam LT, everyone always looked great.”

– Director/Cinematographer Joe Gabriel



DP Joe Gabriel on the set of “Brainchild”.

recreating divergent classic genres. Each episode opens with a cold open in the style of *Saturday Night Live*.

According to Gabriel, the VariCam LT was the key in creating the look for *Brainchild* because he was shooting a scripted show on an unscripted budget with limited resources and time. “VariCam LT’s versatility and the flexibility of its native ISOs made a huge difference,” he added.

Gabriel used three VariCam LTs, and brought in his EVA1 for pick-up shots, recording 4K ProRes out to an Atomos Shogun. He operated the A camera, with two ACs and a media manager on hand.

“Our A camera was built-up studio style, the second LT lived on our MoVi gimbal and the third was used as our B camera,” he explained. “We shot 4K internally, 4:2:2 AVC-Intra. We went for a lot of looks, requiring different lighting, and made significant use of the LT’s dual native ISOs.

“If I didn’t have the ability to change ISOs to create different looks, we won’t have been able to produce the authentic-feeling cold opens that bring you into the genre that strongly kicks off each show,” added Gabriel.

“In retrospect, I’d say I treated ISO 5000 like a film stock, for instance, dialing down from 5000 to 3200 for more grain, or dialing down from 5000 to 2000 while shooting 60p, which meant we didn’t have to light for slo-mo. We shot during the winter months, and pumping up the ISOs on some very short days would give us an extra 30-60 minutes of shooting. The dual ISOs really helped to maximize our lighting package.”

“Ultimately, we could do a lot more with the VariCam LT – it supported our mix of scripted/unscripted content and really let us do things on the fly,” Gabriel added. “Most importantly, it elevated our visuals to a whole new level.”

Using VariCam LT and EVA1 together

“The VariCam LT overall produces an incredible image; it’s dynamic range and its highlight roll-off are fantastic, and its low-light performance just sets it apart.”

“The EVA1 is a great tool to have as a smaller, more mobile option for promos or documentaries where I have to be more self-contained, more run-and-gun. It’s super flexible.”

The DP has used the 5.7K EVA1 as the A camera on several brand campaigns that require a low profile documentary approach. “This small, lightweight package is ideal for these run-and-gun scenarios or, alternatively, I’ll shoot handheld with the LT with the EVA1 on the MoVi.

“For other shoots, I’ve set up two-camera interviews where I get A camera performance out of both the LT and EVA1, achieving an exceptionally high quality level at a very desirable price point. Having both camera options assures me versatility as I move between high-end branded content and stripped-down documentary work.”



EVA1





The VariCam LT's versatility, flexibility and dual native ISOs proved invaluable to shooting "Brainchild".



"Brain Child" is a 13-episode science education series available on Netflix.

Summary

"We couldn't have done a show like Brainchild, that was as ambitious as it was with a limited budget and resources, with any other camera (VariCam LT)."

"There's not another camera that I could have bought that would have enabled me to do this show."

To view DP Joe Gabriel's VariCam LT and AU-EVA1 projects, see <https://vimeo.com/album/5664444>; for additional, visit www.thejoegabriel.com.

For more information about Panasonic professional video products, visit www.panasonic.com/broadcast or contact Panasonic at 877-803-8492.