

CASE STUDY: ABC's *CASTAWAYS*

New Series *Castaways* Shot with VariCam LT 4K Cinema Camcorders

Challenge

ABC's *Castaways* is a revolutionary series testing the human need for companionship under extreme circumstances as each individual learns there are other castaways out there but are unaware of how many, their locations or when they will be rescued. This visually stunning new reality series follows 12 diverse individuals as they're dropped alone throughout various islets in Indonesia and challenged to survive among washed-up luggage, scattered resources and abandoned structures.

The only way to leave the remote islands is to persevere long enough to be rescued or to quit. As dramatic situations unfold on an expanse of islands in the South Pacific, the series flashes back to the real lives of each participant in documentary fashion, demonstrating haunting parallels to the lives they left behind. Grant Kahler serves as showrunner. The series is produced by Nomad Entertainment.

Solution

Director of Photography Neil Moore supervised multiple teams of camera operators equipped with VariCam LT 4K cinema camcorders who shot the mini-documentaries in parallel, with up to 12 operators then assigned to the Indonesian location work.

The contemporary action in the series was shot in a remote part of Indonesia, with the "home recall" documentary segments shot in New York, Nashville, Alabama, North Carolina, Los Angeles, Colorado, Idaho, Oregon, Washington State, Las Vegas, Honduras and the Dominican Republic.

DP Neil Moore had previously shot with the VariCam 35, and showrunner Kahler had used the VariCam LT. "The first two weeks of production we worked with larger cameras and bigger lenses, which just wasn't conducive to our fast, cinema vérité style," the DP recounted. "The LT was a very appealing alternative, especially because of its dual 800/5000 ISOs. We had no time for lighting, and we were working with predominantly natural light with plenty of dark interiors and exteriors. The camera's ISO 5000 setting is so clean, and you can switch easily without having to ride gain."

Moore said he routinely used ISO800 for daytime work in Indonesia, but with a significant number of "easy clicks over" to ISO5000, for instance, for a nighttime scene lit only by firelight.

The series was shot in AVC-Intra 4:4:4 1080p. "We gathered an incredible amount of footage, with 12 cameras simultaneously shooting eight hours a day," Moore said.

The VariCam LTs were outfitted with Fujinon Cabrio 85-300mm and Canon 17-120mm ENG-style lenses, with Sigma Primes used for some night work.

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– Neil Moore,
Director of Photography



Camera operator Dylan Conrad capturing beautiful light on top of a volcano.
Photo by: Laura Lester



Filming totally during the Solar Eclipse on the Snake River in Oregon/Idaho.
Photo by: Neil Moore

For more information about Panasonic VariCam cinema and high-speed cameras, visit us.panasonic.com/varicam or contact Panasonic at **877-803-8492**.

Email us at:
VideoProductionSolutions@us.panasonic.com

Summary

“The tropical humidity was pretty insane, but we experienced no overheating or stopped files with the LTs,” the DP added. “Beyond ruggedness and ease of use, other stand-out features of the cameras were the unique Focus Squares tool — a must, especially with the long lens work — and the on-camera control panel that can double as a monitor. The LT is, overall, a simple, intuitive camera.”

Castaways premieres **TUESDAY, AUG. 7** (10:00 -11:00 p.m. EDT), on The ABC Television Network, streaming and on demand.



Camera operator Jon Tucker deep in the Colorado landscape.
Photo by: Sarah Pierpont