



LUMIX PRO Case Study

How Panasonic LUMIX cameras were integral to making the Manchester City feature film 'Together'



One of the defining features of modern sports brands is their desire to bring the fans closer to the game than ever before. From social media to their own dedicated TV channels, the leading global sporting leagues, clubs, and federations are producing an increasing amount of high quality content to bolster fan engagement. And with 'Together', a 1h 49m feature film delving in-depth into the closing months of leading English Premier League club Manchester City's 2020/21 season, the bar has been raised to an impressive degree.

Produced by the club itself and with over 5 million views on YouTube and counting, 'Together' was shot on Panasonic LUMIX equipment by a small, embedded camera crew that was permitted inside the player's Covid bubble. It captures up close, behind-the-scenes moments of the players and staff during some of the biggest moments of the season, and is a stunning example of both what cutting edge fan engagement means in the modern game, and an excellent illustration of what can be achieved in the video space with the right equipment.

"The LUMIX equipment and the LUMIX cameras helped us be able to deliver something that was very high end without needing to have too many people in the crew," says John De Caux, Creative Video Lead at Manchester City Football Club. "Covid restrictions wouldn't have allowed that for a start, plus you can't have too many people around an elite group of athletes without disrupting their concentration."

Meeting MCFC's requirements

The LUMIX equipment has been an integral part of the Manchester City media setup since early 2020, replacing and upgrading an ad hoc mix of equipment with the LUMIX S1H, S5, and S1 cameras, as well as supporting lenses. Indeed, so successful has its use been there that LUMIX has gone on to become the current Official Video Camera Supplier to the club.



"By the nature of our industry, we require anyone shooting video to be able to travel relatively lightly, maintaining a subtle footprint when operating cameras when filming in sensitive situations as well as looking for versatility across cameras," says De Caux. "The ability to elevate our content using 4K and slo-motion, whilst maintaining the ability to be light and nimble and still capture broadcast quality audio, is the reason why we looked for a lightweight DSLR-style form factor."

De Caux lists the non-negotiable requirements for the club's imaging solution as reliability, durability, ergonomics, quality, audio integration, battery life, full frame, and the need for a reliable stable video feed out of the camera. The LUMIX equipment ticks all these boxes and was already in daily use at the club when the idea for 'Together' was born.

"With LUMIX we could be very nimble, lightweight, and creative and we found ourselves realising that we could tell what turned out to be a fantastic story."

A two-person shoot

'Together' was shot by just two people, De Caux and fellow producer/director Alex Cuschieri. Each operated a LUMIX S1H camera as the main body mounting either LUMIX S PRO 50mm F1.4, LUMIX S PRO 24-70mm F2.8, or LUMIX S PRO 70-200mm F2.8 O.I.S. lenses. A SIGMA 14-24mm F2.8 DG DN wide-angle lens was also used. The two also shot with two LUMIX S5 cameras which were used for any gimbal work, as b-cameras, and so on.



"We recorded the film in full 4K ProRes format onto SSD using Ninja V external monitor-recorders," explains De Caux. "We recorded back-up 4K to SD card internally whilst simultaneously recording to the Ninja — both for piece of mind but also to use the ProRes capability. The Ninja was linked via HDMI to the camera and triggered automatically on both internal card and Ninja V."

De Caux is a fan not only of the LUMIX equipment but the way in which it works with other elements in a production workflow. On the audio side, also deployed were 2 x RØDE VideoMic Pro top mics while RØDE Wireless GO mics were used regularly throughout ("The RØDE 3.5mm splitter allowed us to have both a lapel mic and a top mic in a very light rig," he says). A LUMIX XLR Microphone Adapter DMW-XLR1 was used when required for more powerful mics and challenging interview settings

Additional accessories included pole-mounted 360-degree cameras for dressing room situations, action cameras, and a DJI Ronin RS2 was used with the S5s for motion timelapses and gimbal shots.

"For events such as the Champions' League Final it would be myself in a dressing room with the players doing sound, doing lighting, filming in 4K with a 360-degree camera on a pole, giving myself as many angles as humanly possible to be able to tell the story."

Achieving a cinematic look

One of the main aims with 'Together' was for the film to look as cinematic as possible. As De Caux relates, normally football matches are seen through broadcast cameras which provide a very set look. In trying to tell the story from a cinematic point of view, the team wanted the shallow depth of field associated with the film genre, so used the LUMIX S PRO 50mm F1.4 lens with a variable ND filter for a wide range of scenes. Obviously, given the fact that the shoots were very much a single person job, that made it harder to focus, which is where the S1H's powerful autofocus came in.



"That was an absolute lifesaver," says De Caux. "Subject tracking on autofocus let us do that and provided the high-end look that we were after. It would have been easier to whack it all on f.22, make sure everything was in focus, and just run and gun. But we wanted to do something more."

The post production process for 'Together' was also minimal, edited in-house (literally at the editor's home) on Adobe Premiere before being sent to The Farm for a final polish, cinema grade, and audio dub.

"As well as a small crew for the filming, it was also a tiny crew in terms of the edit," says De Caux. "But the fact that we were able to film it with ProRes, albeit with an external recorder, made the whole post process so much easier. Even though we were dealing with 200GB clips, it was running really well through Adobe Premiere and that was another real help."

Creating great content with LUMIX

Following the success of 'Together', the Manchester City team is looking to carrying on creating great content at high-end quality. Football fans always want more, and all the feature content that is created throughout the course of a season will be filmed on LUMIX cameras following an agreement to make Panasonic LUMIX the Official Video Camera Supplier for the club.

New lenses and new accessories are constantly in the mix, De Caux saying that the small team needs to have as many tools at their disposal to get the shot they need out of any given situation. But they are confident that LUMIX will be the core on which they can build any workflow. 'Together' has proved that to them several times over.

"The entire crew was just the two of us filming the whole thing as there were only two of us allowed to be that close to the team," concludes De Caux. "We had to do it all ourselves, and the LUMIX equipment was what made it possible to do that and still create in 4K. Even just five years ago it would have been impossible to create anything to that standard without large crews, which means, last year, it would never have happened."

