



The brains behind... The Specials

After filmmaker Katy Lock and web developer Daniel May put their docu-soap about five friends with learning disabilities online (the-specials.com), it went on to win a Webby



.net: What's The Specials about?

KL: It's a documentary web series following the lives of Sam, Hilly, Lucy, Megan and Lewis, five friends with learning disabilities who share a house in Brighton. They're all in their twenties but have been friends since childhood, and each episode charts what happens in their lives, from first love and heartbreak to leaving college and finding a job, as well as the day-to-day stuff such as arguing over the remote.

DM: One of the most important things was that the housemates would provide their own voiceovers. That way, they would be sharing their world on their own terms.

.net: How did you come up with the idea for the series?

KL: Back in 2008, I was hired to make the show as a pilot for one of the UK broadcasters. So I met the five housemates and spent a wonderful week filming everything they got up to. In the end, they decided against commissioning a series, but by that time, I was hooked. I could see that the lives of the friends would make such an entertaining and unique show; a real breath of fresh air compared to the programmes we usually see on mainstream TV. **DM:** When Katy found out the show wasn't going to be picked up, she was so gutted that we had to go to the pub to drown our sorrows! After a consoling pint or two, I came up with the obvious solution: make it ourselves and put it on the web. So we bought a camera, set up some

editing equipment in the spare room and away we went.

.net: How was the website made?

DM: We did it in collaboration with the housemates. We all agreed that we wanted the site to capture the fact that they're a cool, close-knit gang, almost like a pop group. That was one of the reasons we chose The Specials as the title for the series, other than the obvious play on words. So we spent some time looking at the group's favourite websites. We then did a bunch of paper prototypes and eventually came to a design we all agreed on.

.net: Did the housemates enjoy going to New York to pick up their Webby Award?

KL: They absolutely loved it! It was an extremely glamorous experience. They got to walk the red carpet, accept their trophy in front of a star-studded audience and rub shoulders with other award winners, including Buzz Aldrin and Lisa Kudrow. It was a wonderfully surreal night.

The rather unsubtle bump in displayed usage when Facebook fixed figures relating to Twitter app usage. 400,000 suddenly became over 6.7million. Oops.

>> 190million

The number of visitors Twitter receives every month, offering a mindboggling 65million daily tweets between them. So much for predictions that the site would be a passing fad, then.

>> 250million

The number of smartphones Adobe claims will have Flash on them by the end of 2012. Good news for the 40 per cent of US ad impressions that, according to comScore, are currently still Flash-based.

>> 14.6billion

The number of YouTube videos viewed in the US during May 2010 – an all-time record, say comScore. Second-placed site Hulu managed 'only' 1.2billion hits.



Gang of five Online show The Specials has won over the web community

.net: How did you finance the show?

DM: With our house deposit! And we've just put out a DVD of series one.

.net: Will there be another series?

KL: We'd love to make a second series, but it's very much dependent on funding. ●

WWW: To read the full interview, head to www.netmag.co.uk