

● NETWORK SECURITY CAMERA

Axis 230 MPEG-2 Camera

PRICE £1,418 (exc VAT)

BASIC WARRANTY 1yr RTB

INTERNET www.axis.com

SUPPLIER Axis 0870 162 0047

VERDICT A superbly built network camera that works with any light level, delivers the best image quality we've yet seen and looks an ideal choice for 24/7 surveillance operations.

Axis Communications has been making quite a habit of delivering the latest advances in network surveillance technology. It claimed the 205 Network Camera (see issue 112, p80) was the world's smallest device of its type. Now, the company proudly announces the 230 MPEG-2 as the market's most advanced.

The 230 certainly delivers a fine array of features, with MPEG-2 encoding and decoding at the top of the list. But that's just the start of an impressive set of features as it also offers an 18x motorised zoom lens, an internal microphone and an infrared sensor,

The 230's use of MPEG-2 keeps frame rates and image quality high, while network utilisation is minimal.

allowing it to switch to a mono image in low light levels. We first saw the latter in Panasonic's WV-NP472 (see issue 116, p166), but the 230 can operate in even lower light levels in both colour and

mono modes. Axis also offers optional infrared illuminators so areas can be discreetly monitored in pitch darkness.

Build quality is superb. The aluminium body looks and feels extremely well engineered and it only takes

a few seconds to get the camera up and running and accessible from a browser. One criticism we levelled at the 205 was the lack of support for browsers other than IE, and unfortunately this also holds true with the 230.

Nevertheless, the live view screen delivers the best image quality



we've seen so far; although there's a lag of around one second, overall motion is very smooth with no jerkiness. The camera worked very well in a range of lighting scenarios and held a colour image at lower light levels than the Panasonic version.

Zoom and focus slider bars above the image offer manual control. Below are options for controlling the video feed and volume levels for the internal or externally connected microphone and for taking instant snapshots. Zoom and focus instructions are carried out swiftly and you can even control the zoom by moving the cursor over the image and using the mouse wheel.

A standard test we now conduct is network analysis, as excessive bandwidth usage is a common fear for network administrators with security cameras. Using Network Associates Sniffer analysis software and with all test systems connected to a shared Fast Ethernet segment, we saw one client drawing 8 per cent utilisation at maximum resolution and with the highest image quality selected. Adding a second client increased this to 15 per cent, and with image resolution and quality reduced to the lowest settings this dropped to only 1 per cent.

A connector block at the rear allows input devices, such as door sensors, to be connected to the camera for event-triggered actions, such as automatic FTP uploads. The

microphone can also be used for audio-based triggers should the volume exceed a given level. Pan-and-tilt functions are also available as the RS-232 serial port supports a range of Axis' head units that can also be controlled from the same browser interface.

There's no denying Axis' network cameras just keep getting better, and the company now offers one of the most comprehensive ranges. Motion detection would have nicely rounded off the 230 package, but nevertheless, this is a very sophisticated surveillance device that delivers excellent image quality under a wide range of lighting conditions.

DAVE MITCHELL

PC PRO RATINGS	
PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES & DESIGN	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★
OVERALL	★★★★★

SPECIFICATIONS Digital/analog network camera; Sony ExView 0.25in RGB CCD sensor; motorised zoom lens – 18x optical zoom; 12x digital zoom; maximum resolution 720 x 576 pixels; 30fps frame rate; Axis ETRAX 100LX RISC processor; MPEG-2 image compression chip; 32MB RAM; 4MB Flash ROM; minimum illumination at F1.4, 0.005 lux for mono, 0.3 lux for colour; 10/100BaseTX Ethernet port; BNC video output; I/O connector block; internal microphone, 9-pin serial port. Supports: TCP/IP, HTTP, SMTP, FTP, DHCP, DNS. External 12V power supply; web browser management; one MPEG-2 encoding and three decoding licences included.