



Using the IR Swift

John Popplestone describes the history of Soundfield and the development of the Connevens IR Swift system

Soundfield systems have been shown to improve the listening environment for all pupils in the classroom. The Soundfield concept was originally developed in the USA and introduced into the UK about ten years ago. Initially Soundfield systems were not particularly sophisticated. They usually consisted of four speakers, an amplifier plus a separate radio microphone transmitter and a receiver. As they developed, the radio receiver and amplifier were integrated into a wall-mounted unit which made them easier to install. The early systems were radio-based which worked well but, due to the limited number of radio channels available, restricted the number of systems that could be used in a particular area. This restriction led manufacturers to change to infra-red transmission, which stays within the confines of the room in which the system is fitted. Unlimited numbers of systems could now be installed in a school and a wider range of systems became available.

Our first infra-red classroom Soundfield was the IR Classmate, in a secure wall box, which was used with a belt pack transmitter and a collar-worn microphone. The multi-speaker IR Classmate is still an excellent system and now it can be used with the new SwiftTx microphone, which was developed for use with the IR Swift.



The IR Swift unit fits neatly into any classroom

The IR Swift is the most advanced yet simplest Soundfield system in the Connevens product range and consists of a single panel unit with the receiver, amplifier and infra-red sensors all built in. The IR Swift uses a flat panel NXT™ speaker which has very wide dispersion characteristics so that the sound is non-directional. Installation only consists of fixing the supplied bracket to the rear wall of the classroom and then mounting the IR Swift onto the bracket. It is as easy as hanging a picture and takes about ten minutes. All you then need to do is plug it into the mains and it is ready to use.

IR Swift installation – as easy as hanging a picture!

1 Fix bracket to wall classroom



2 Slot IR Swift onto bracket!



Concealed screws (supplied) can be used to 'lock' the IR Swift to the wall bracket

The original blue IR Classmate belt pack transmitter and collar microphone gave excellent performance but the feedback was that teachers did not always like using them and wanted something that was easier to wear. We therefore set about designing a pendant transmitter that was non-intrusive and very light, as well as pleasing to the eye. In essence, we designed our new transmitter from the point of view of the end user – the teacher! Several ideas and styles were tried with our colleagues and finally we developed the concept of the SwiftTx transmitter. We then went out and consulted a number of teachers to see what they thought of it. They gave the new design an enthusiastic seal of approval, as it was very comfortable to wear and made their voices sound natural. Teachers also really appreciated not having to wear a head or collar mic and having no trailing leads to get caught up in. A number of the female users commented that it was as simple as wearing a piece of jewellery.

Although very straightforward to use, the SwiftTx is highly sophisticated inside and has a specially



designed twin microphone system to ensure that as the user speaks and moves his or her head from side to side there is no change in the volume.



The frequency responses of the IR Swift and the SwiftTx transmitter have been specifically enhanced for speech clarity and therefore give exceptional sound quality in the classroom environment. The stylish design and low profile of the IR Swift make it very unobtrusive in the classroom, and architects certainly like it.

Is one speaker really enough? Yes! Although it is undeniable that a multi-speaker system, such as the four or six speaker Connevens IR Classmate, gives the best possible performance, the IR Swift provides a very effective Soundfield in the classroom and is far more affordable for most school budgets. There are in effect two speakers – one is the IR Swift at the back of the class and the other is the teacher.

In our experience, Soundfield systems are often set too loud and this defeats the object. Set at the correct

level, the person using it should only just be aware that it is turned on. This will ensure that everyone in the classroom will be able to hear clearly but the sound will not be intrusive. We quite often get comments that the class only notices that the system has been in operation when it is turned off! The latest version of the IR Swift now has remote volume control as standard. The teacher can adjust the output volume temporarily by using the plus and minus buttons on the SwiftTx, for example when he or she wants to attract attention after a period of class activity.

We are so confident in the reliability of all the Connevens IR Soundfield systems that we have increased the warranty period from one to three years.



In conclusion, the IR Swift lives up to its name – swift to install, simple to set up and easy to use.

The SwiftTx transmitter, with no trailing leads or head-worn microphone, leaves teachers free to get on with what they do best... teaching!



For more information visit the Connevens website www.connevens.com/soundfield and for product information visit www.connevens.co.uk and click on Soundfield.

John Popplestone is a director of Connevens Limited in Merstham, Surrey. Connevens has been manufacturing radio aids and Soundfield systems for many years and is proud to be celebrating its 50th anniversary this year.