

# RENTAL FACILITIES ON THE FRONT LINE

**For videographers looking to experiment with new equipment, rental companies usually have the answer.**

In the battle to stay ahead of new production and post technologies, rental facilities have found themselves on the front lines. Responding to their clients' needs for information and demonstration of Digital Betacam and High Definition equipment, they make the decisions on what technology to acquire, how to put systems together, and how to best solve production problems.

5 American Videographer spoke to a number of companies to get a glimpse into how rental facilities help their clients navigate the increasingly complex technology terrain.

For example, many rental houses have become educational centers for their clients, offering seminars, presentations and classes on new equipment and production technique.

10 For rental houses that offer video equipment, the magic words are « digital TV ». Fletcher Chicago is a sales and rental facility that operates a thriving sports division that specializes in supplying turnkey remote-control camera packages for approximately 5,000 sporting events around the country.

Vice-president Tom Fletcher - while admitting that his company's strongest rental item is currently Sony's Digital Betacam camera with a film-style setup - recently purchased the new Sony HDW - 700 high definition camera which, he says, he expects to be « the next biggest thing ».

15 « Renting this camera is a great way to try one out and find out what HDTV offers, » observes Fletcher, who says that Sony's Larry Thorpe will soon lead an HD seminar for camera people at his facility. »

Fletcher said that people will rent rather than buy because « they don't want to finance and capitalize it - a major issue. »

20 He also points out to maintenance. « When you go and rent a car at Hertz, you know it will work because they've maintained it » he says. « Cars and cameras have increased the amount of maintenance they need. As we look at it, we're like a car rental company where you get a new, pristine piece of equipment. If it doesn't work, we don't get our money.

There are all these different HD formats out there, » he concludes. « How do you know what to buy? We can shoulder that investment because we're renting it to everyone in the whole industry. »

25 At Broadcast Video rentals in New York, president Bob Zahn agrees. « The variety of new digital formats has not been standardized yet, » he says, pointing out that Sony's DVcam is currently a strong rental item because it serves as entree into digital recording for customers who can't afford to rent (or buy) Digital Betacam and HD equipment. « So there is a need to rent before people buy, because they don't know what they're going to need for the long term. »

30 « People are afraid to make a commitment to one format or another. Even the networks are not sure what direction they're going in. »

« The age of the big, dumb rental company is past, » notes Chris Thompson, vice president at Wexler Video. « The demand on us to make the right decision and do our homework has never been greater. »

35 As Thompson puts it, « it's not just about having the equipment that a production company may not be able to afford. Our job is also to offer people suggestions as to what might best work and provide some level of expertise that production people don't have the time to figure out. » This means that Thompson spends much of his days on manufacturers' websites and poring over dozens of trade publications. Digital TV has upped the ante for rental houses to be a knowledgeable source of information to their clients.

40 « Traditionally, production companies looked to the networks for guidance as to what formats to go to, » he says. « As it stands now, the four networks are split on the decisions they are making, so people are looking to us for that. And we are trying to offer them cradle-to-grave solutions that allow them to stay in the game but not kill them in terms of money, because new technology is expensive. »

Adapted from an article by Debra Kaufman  
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### ***TRAVAIL A EFFECTUER***

- 1** - Rédiger en français un compte-rendu de cet article en 200 mots (+ / - 10%). **8 points**
  
- 2** - « So there is a need to rent before people buy. »
  - a) How does this apply to the technical aspects of your profession? (50 mots)  
**4 points**
  - b) Say to what extent this can be considered as a general tendency. (50 mots)  
**4 points**Répondre aux questions **2-a** et **2-b** en anglais. Seules les formulations personnelles seront prises en compte.
  
- 3** - Traduire en français le dernier paragraphe, de « Traditionally, production companies ... » ligne 39, à la fin du texte, « technology is expensive. » **4 points**

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