Equipment Donated

Active members can rent two rigs, accessories, and backup gear

Additional equipment solicited

Backups! Backups! -- or perhaps that little magic widget you need just once in your entire career.

A large amount of Steadicam gear and accessories was recently donated to the Association by Garrett Brown and now is available for rent to active members of the Association.

The rentals are being handled by Videosmith Rentals of Philadelphia. We split the proceeds, and we are committed to expanding our offerings.

Because most of our members have a good deal of their own gear, we’ve made it possible to rent almost all items individually, as well as in packages.

Videosmith of Philadelphia will handle the rentals; (215) CALL CAM is still the only number you need to know.

Kathy Bowles, who now answers our database calls, will arrange the rentals for you. No stranger to the film and video world, Kathy is quickly catching on to the needs of our members, and she has even tried on the Association’s EFP for a short spin around the block. Videosmith also rents other film and video equipment, making it possible to do “one stop shopping” for many shoots. They have a lot of video gear (including two BVP 70's and a 300) as well as a clean BL III with Super Speeds and a Cooke 20 x 100 zoom.

Both Videosmith and the SOA will be moving to new, expanded quarters at the end of May.

Our new address will be 100 Spring Garden Street, Philadelphia, PA 19123. Our (215) CALL CAM number will remain the same, but probably the fax number will change once again. It is currently, by the way, (215) 563-4342.

Here’s what we can rent

MODEL III and accessories:
Steadicam Model III Sled, with Seitz fore/aft plate, CP side-to-side plate, 2 sets Allen wrenches, CP docking bracket, stud adaptor, and spare fuses.
Model III Vest
Model III Adj. Arm (35 - 55 lbs)
4 CP batteries

EFP STEADICAM:
Sled, lightweight arm, vest, 1 brick battery, docking mount

SOME HOT ACCESSORIES:
Lightweight Adj. Arm (24-38 lbs)
Kenyon gyro and post bracket
CP fastcharger (38 lbs)
Two long-throat ARRI magazines
2 blimped/geared lens housings for ARRI BL II (Zeiss Std.’s & Supers)
Steadicam dovetail to tripod adaptor
Model II Vest (soft velcro modified)
ARRI BL dovetail
CP video adaptor plate
JAR ARRI BL III low-mode adaptor
JAR ARRI III low mode bracket
Garfield adaptor (Mitchell tripod to Steadicam arm)
Quay Buddycam handlebars
JAR ARRI eyepiece tap
Videosender (UHF)

TWO WIRELESS FOCUS SYSTEMS:
Seitz wireless remote focus system (72.630 Khz) with transmitter, receiver, 2 batteries, slow charger
Remote focus box with trims

Gear, continued on page 12

Where To Get the Money to Pay for It

And Janice didn’t need to rob a bank, either

I was thinking of buying some new equipment. Since I had secured a loan before, I thought this time around would be easy. I discovered that financing in the 90s is a different story. Lenders now want borrowers to have a track record (at least three years), more upfront money, and flawless credit. Lending institutions are also requiring lots more paperwork, such as tax returns for several years and business plans. All this paperwork also means more time for processing and more accounting and legal expenses for each application.

These restrictions are a result of worry about the economic outlook by banks and the Federal Reserve, growing bad debt from the 80s, and pressure from regulators as a result of the savings and loan bailout. The inflation of the 70s and 80s also created an illusion that things would always increase in value.

If this information scares you, consider these options. One of the most common ways to buy is to borrow from a parent with or without interest on the loan. The second most common way to finance is to have someone co-sign a loan with you. Liz Ziegler, a west coast operator, had her “very adorable” father Harry Ziegler back her loan with bonds. Liz admits that her father took considerable risk to his financial security.

If you want to reap the tax advantages of a loan from a parent or friend you should consider that 1) the lender must pay tax on the interest, 2) you must include money from the loan as income, and 3) an accountant or lawyer should review the agreement for all tax and legal requirements.

Finance, continued on page 11
Lightweight
Legoflex®
A Reality

Ted Churchill interviews Lego® artist David Emmerichs

Note to readers: The plural of Lego® is “Lego®.” Presumably, the art form of Lego® is also referred to as “Lego®.”

TC: I’m certain anyone who has seen your work has been duly impressed as I was. Clearly you are a master in a field that has neither a vast number of proponents nor the kind of world recognition it deserves. So to start from the beginning, at what age did you become interested in Lego®?

DE: I was three. My parents took me to Denmark at the place where they actually manufacture the Lego® bricks. I got my first sets there. In fact, I had several pieces that were not available in the United States until quite recently.

TC: Did your parents take you to Denmark just to see Lego®?

DE: Yes, as a matter of fact – just to see the little Lego® village, walk among the little Lego® people, look at the Lego® cars driving down the Lego® streets of the little Lego® city. When I saw it, I knew this was something I wanted to do for the rest of my life. I sat in my room surrounded by Lego® bricks, building Lego® everything. My parents assumed that I would give it up when I was ten, but as you can see, that’s not quite what happened.

TC: When did you become interested in making movie equipment?

DE: Actually, the first recognizable thing that I built with Lego® was a little eight-millimeter Lego® movie camera.

TC: When was that?

DE: I guess that would probably have been about age five. My initial goal was to grow up to become one of the Danish designers, a “Lego® Master,” someone who sits around playing with Lego® and gets paid lots of money.

TC: But instead you’ve now become a Steadicam® operator. Do you find this unrequited dream to be a Lego® Master somehow disappointing?

DE: Well, I’ve tried to combine the two so I can’t really say it’s had to be one or the other.

TC: What was the first piece in your most recent series – that is, after your interest in Steadicam®?

DE: The Steadicam® operator. I was so obsessed with Steadicam® and the desire to have one that any representation thereof was absolutely thrilling. I could sit there, look at it, and say “Gosh, I wish that were me!”

TC: Is there any significance to the fact that in this piece the operator is smoking a pipe?

DE: No.

TC: I find that a bit disappointing but nevertheless, let’s continue. So what was the next piece after that?

DE: The Panavision® camera on the tripod. Then the Steadicam® arm.

TC: Was the arm difficult to make?

DE: It went through a lot of R&D. In fact, it was actually a demo to show my parents how the damned thing worked because I couldn’t explain it to anyone.

TC: Does it actually work?

“The Steadicam® arm was actually a demo to show my parents how the damned thing worked!”

Legoflex® cameras. Body doors and matteboxes open to reveal lens and movement. Eyepiece pivots and camera weighs three ounces and runs to 128 FPS at ≤32 db.
DE: Certainly. I tied a shoe to it and ran around the house and said, "See, the shoe isn't moving!" and then my parents understood why I was so interested in Steadicam®.

TC: Interesting... do you feel there might be some legal repercussions now that the Steadicam JR® is on the market?

DE: I only made this one; it isn't as if I've asked John Seitz to manufacture it. That's OK, isn't it?

TC: I don't think you should have a problem there. After all, you're not Jack Imes. Tell me about the Legoflex® cameras.

DE: They went through about a two-year development period because I didn't take my Lego® to college. But when I went home for the summers and between semesters, I'd work on them little by little. Also, I didn't know what the camera looked like the first time I tried to make one and had to do them from pictures in magazines.

TC: It's always a problem not having a lot of experience in the industry. What was the most difficult piece to make?

DE: The tripod. It breaks all the rules and boundaries of Lego® construction. Lego® works in twos and fours; building in threes is almost impossible.

TC: That certainly seems to be true of American families. Have you tried writing to Lego® asking if they could fabricate particular pieces like Panavision® magazines or the Steadicam® vest socket block?

DE: I did and was a bit disappointed. They were not cooperative. I almost dropped everything right there. They had a service where they would give you any piece you wanted but it was dropped. Very unfortunate.

TC: Do you feel it might be worthwhile to have the Steadicam® Operators Association write them a letter?

DE: If it will get Panavision® to make more Lightweights, perhaps it will get Lego® to make more pieces.

TC: Apparently it hasn't, so frankly, it probably won't.

DE: Oh.

TC: Moving right along here – artistically and practically, what are the differences between working with Lego® pieces and Steadicam® operating?

DE: The Lego® pieces are a lot lighter, which is a big plus. They weigh only a few ounces apiece and putting them together certainly doesn't cause much stress on your lower back. Like Steadicam®, however, it requires a great deal of manual dexterity.

TC: What about the artistic satisfaction, the challenge?

DE: That's hard to answer. I've been doing Lego® for over twenty years and Steadicam® for only two.

TC: What about the social aspects of your dual interests? As rewarding as it is, certainly Lego® is a pretty solitary preoccupation.

DE: Actually, I like working alone but there's certainly something to be said for being the center of attention. The biggest problem is that no one really wants to talk about Lego® anymore. It's something people played with when they were little, but they either pushed it into the back of the closet or gave it away to the poor people for Christmas®.

TC: Would you ever consider Lego® as a viable career alternative to Steadicam®?

DE: I've actually had a lot of healthy offers for my pieces. People who work in the industry look and say "God, I've got to have one of these things!" The problem is that Lego® is very expensive; there are about sixty dollars worth of Lego® in each of these little guys. It really becomes economically prohibitive.

TC: Most unfortunate. Do you think that "proportionally" the parts are more or less expensive than those in the real thing?

DE: It's probably about the same. Of course, with the Panaflex®, you can only lease or rent it.

TC: The Lego® piece?

DE: The camera.

TC: Oh. One other thing – at some point in what certainly must be considered a major artistic career, you broke off and became interested in computer graphics. What was that all about?

DE: Well, that was my first encounter with the Macintosh® computer. I discovered that you could do incredibly detailed drawings, and I...
Rotating Inertial Two Axis Stabilizer for Steadicam

The Association rental inventory now includes a Kenyon KS-6 Gyro Stabilizer fitted with a special bracket for attachment to the Steadicam centerpost. It is available for $100 per day to active Association members. Call Kathy Bowles for details at (215) CALL CAM.

Used on “Jedi”

This gyro was purchased in 1973 and originally mounted on several of Garrett Brown’s early “crane” prototypes. Its high-pitched whine, weight, and power consumption are discouraging, and the gyro resists rapid angular movement which restricts the speed of panning. This is why there isn’t a gyro hidden in the Steadicam, persistent beliefs to the contrary notwithstanding!

This unit was subsequently used (as one of two aboard) to stabilize the special Vistavision Steadicam rig on “Return of the Jedi.” Since that time it has helped shoot a number of similar shots in the US and was recently rented by John Mahaffie in New Zealand. We haven’t heard from...
John as to the results, but it is clear that the Kenyon gyro can be useful for adding extra "inertia" to the Steadicam for a particular kind of shooting.

The Kenyon gyro contains two inertial rotors turning at about 20,000 rpm in opposite directions inside a helium-filled can. Although the unit can be rotated freely around the same axis as the rotors, any attempt to rotate the unit around any other axis causes both gyros to precess in opposite directions, and the net effect is resistance to this rotation.

If you attempt to turn the can too rapidly, the gyros bang against internal stops, and jump to a new position (with disastrous effects to your shot). In effect, the Kenyon gives you stability in two out of three angular axes - you can get tilt and roll, for example, or pan and roll, but not all three.

It is suggested therefore that you select the mounting angle of the gyro according to the nature of your shot: Mount it vertically if you have to pan as you move along; otherwise mount it horizontally aimed side-to-side. This slows down roll (which is always helpful) and pan. Tilt generally seems to need less help.

Use of this device is only recommended for special-purpose shots, such as title sequences, which need maximum stability. It is too noisy and time-consuming for general shooting.

The gyro requires about ten minutes to get up to speed, and the same to slow down. Avoid violent moves and rapid rotations as it can easily be damaged. It is not suitable for stabilizing roller coasters, etc.

The Kenyon comes with a small 400-cycle ac power converter that runs on 12 volts dc. It mounts on the Steadicam gyro bracket and has a male canon plug to receive power from your junction box, as well as a "Y" junction and a female canon jack to allow you to plug in other accessories.

Garret plays with the "Jay-Arr"

New model is great fun and may inspire directors and DP's to design better Steadicam shots

The three-year project with Cinema Products to develop a Steadicam for camcorders has now been completed, and the first units are at last being shipped. I am pleased to report that the "JR" is a delightful gadget and works astonishingly well considering that it weighs just two pounds!

Although it could be a handful for the average consumer, Steadicam operators will find the JR to be quite friendly. It is nearly as smooth as the big one, but has a much greater boom range. You can operate with lens heights ranging continuously from below your knees to two feet above your head! The JR accepts compact camcorders weighing between two and four pounds and costs $579.

The Steadicam JR comes with a little "obie" light and a monitor that you can see in full sun. Instead of a suit and arm, you support the bottom of its handle (the grip) with one hand, and you pan and tilt with the other hand barely touching the top (the guide).

Between the grip and the guide is a miniature three-axis gimbal. You can also operate with only one hand by keeping three fingers on the lower part and just the thumb and first finger lightly touching the upper section. The camera platform is vernier-trimmable in all three axes so that its balance feels just like what we are used to.

I really like camcorders (could it be the weight?), particularly now that I can move them around in the Steadicam manner. (Manor?) The best of them have excellent auto-focus, auto-iris, and auto-color-balance. They are unbelievably light-sensitive and with Hi-8 or Super VHS-C, the resolution is excellent.

Sadly, a number of expensive camcorders, including some Hi-8 models, still have poor auto-focus and iris. So far the JVC S VHS-C models are the most impressive. I have the JVC GR-S55U model, and it seems to recognize when a bright area in frame is intense enough to be a window and therefore it doesn't stop down and darken the rest of the room. Its auto-focus is also amazingly quick and accurate.

I think you will find the JR to be useful professionally for everything from scouting to blocking to rehearsals. It's my hope that directors and DP's will get into it and design shots that ultimately require expert Steadicam operating. Meanwhile the JR is a lot of fun to use, and the monitor could even function as a quite serviceable backup for your green screen.

Garrett Brown

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Psalms from Samoa

How Rusty Geller came to owe someone from Cinema Products a beer and other amazing feats

I was standing in the driveway of the Governor’s mansion in Pago Pago, American Samoa, when the Producer-Director walks up to me with an annoyed look on his face. “Can you put the Teleprompter on this thing?”

I toyed with the idea of giving the “it doesn’t do that” response that Ted taught us. But the PD pathetically explained, “The Governor didn’t do his homework, he doesn’t know his lines, and this is the opening of the show. And we really need it. Can you do it?”

Like a doomed man, I opened the Teleprompter case. I had to laugh: it was a Cinema Products Camera-prompter. It was light enough, and the Sony M7 we were using was also very light. It might work. I owe a beer to whomever at CP designed this thing, because it comes with a long flat base to mount a camera on, and a 3/8 - 16 screw hole not far from the old center of gravity. I balanced it all up, put it on, and lo and behold, it worked! And as long as the wind didn’t blow I figured I’d be able to operate this contraption.

We rigged the scan control cable off my shoulder with the video cable, and we zoomed in a bit to keep the image from vignetting through the Camera-prompter. The whole thing weighed about the same as an Arri III, so it was no big deal to heft around. It did exhibit the weird forces that Betacams throw at us (the mass being very spread out on top) and it was so long that if I tried a side change I’d probably break my nose. However, it worked well enough for an easy walking backwards shot on the garden path.

This documentary was more of a commercial, selling the virtues and economic advantages of doing business in American Samoa, which is an American protectorate that we dump 50 million bucks into yearly for no other reason than once we needed the harbor, and after 90 years of being taken care of, they’re dependent on us. This film was supposed to help drum up business for them so we could wean them off the American taxpayer.

The Gov, as his friends called him, lives in the old Naval Commandant’s mansion. Built high on a hill in 1900, the white, wooden, tropical-colonial structure looks across the harbor to Rainmaker Mountain. The mountain is perfectly framed by two huge palms planted by some poor Navy grunt 90 years ago. It was a great background for the shot. The Gov would be walking up the path between the trees, under the mountains, reading off the Camera-prompter, and making us all look wonderful. Then we would have lunch. I was getting real hungry.

As we got into position for rehearsal, I noted that the air was dead calm. I figured I might pull it off yet, but then Sound went down. While waiting for the sound guys to sort out their mikes, I started chatting with the Gov. I told him the last celebrity I had in front of my rig was Andy Griffith, and it turned out that the Gov was a big fan of Andy’s. Then the Gov told me that he’d seen me operating the Steadicam from a distance at a parade earlier. Not realizing that the arm was suspending
And he came back and bought a Model 3A.

"Alas, it didn’t matter: between the Gov’s waddle and the wind shifting, we both looked like drunken sailors."

the sled, he had remarked to his wife that I must be the strongest man in Samoa. I showed him how the rig works and was running out of things to say when the sound guys finally said they were ready.

We got into position for the shot, and, of course, the breeze began to blow. It had been a still day, but now that I was trying to hold a level frame with two big trees and a mountain in the background, the wind turned me into a Steadi-sail. The grip came up with a round, instant reflector for a wind block, and after some effort to keep it from bouncing light into the wrong places, we did the shot. Alas, it didn’t matter: between the Gov’s waddle and the wind shifting, we both looked like drunken sailors. Then we had lunch. The next day we did two more Steadi-prompter shots, one an interior and the other in a wind sheltered fuel yard. They both looked great.

My advice to anyone who gets a Teleprompter shot: 1) get the biggest windbreaks you can, 2) make the text large enough for the talent to read without squinting, 3) don’t try any fancy side-changes unless you take out your dentures first, and 4) try not to laugh in the face of the guy asking you to try putting a Teleprompter on the Steadicam in the first place. He might have read this article.

Rusty Geller

**Classifieds**

**Situation available:** Expert Steadicam operator needed to fill technical adviser post of Universal’s remake of Hitchcock’s “Rear Window.” Script update requires coaching star in role of over-articulate, voyeuristic Steadicam op. Must have sharp eye for details of hip, Greenwich Village lifestyle. May also be required to assist co-star in researching role of kinky bedmate. **Only qualified ops need apply.** Universal Pixels (818) 355-1000.

**For sale:** Steadicam II with 39lb non-adjustable arm, vest, 2 batteries, chargers and cases, $18,000. With 51 lb adjustable arm, $21,500. Free CP quickcharger with above package. CP video assist system for viewfinder mount on CP-16R, GSMO, and NPR cameras, $2,500. Philips LDH-25 video assist modified by CP with rear controls, “C” mount, $950. **Call Derrick at Whitehouse A.V. (805) 498-4177, Fax (805) 499-7947.**

**For sale:** Model III adjustable arm, fully articulated, 35-54 lbs., $8000. **Model II vest, velcro breakaway, rebuilt with removable pads, $1,500. Rusty Geller (805) 498-8844.**

**For sale:** Steadicam Model II, Russel gimbal handle, forward center post, sliding side-to-side plate, refurbished vest, vertical battery, four batteries, and chargers. **Other accessories available. Asking $19,500. Call (415) 821-9757, leave message.**

Robin Buerki, (215) 896-0239

**For sale:** New Frezzi 4 & 5 amp/hour Steadicam batteries, PAG fastchargers, Sony XC-77 CCD camera, new Precision 16/35 eyepiece tap with adjustable centering. **Call us for a quote on all your Steadicam needs. We are dealers for CP, Seitz, Coherent video transmitters, Frezzi/PAG, Russel, DeRose, etc. Call Derrick at Whitehouse A.V. (805) 498-4177, Fax (805) 499-7947.**

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**Deadlines, Schmeadlines**

The Letter has been experiencing a bit of difficulty in getting articles from our members. Our thanks to all who have contributed. Admittedly, a few articles have been submitted that haven’t been printed or included yet (translations and other considerations are slowing things down at this end, too).

Nonetheless, we’d still like to hear more from all of you and publish lots of pictures. We have a couple of amazing articles and pictures for the next issue, but we are hungry for more. The European SOA is getting organized, and we may have a report on the new “12 volt Lightweight.”

There’s a chance that the next issue will be out faster than you can build a LegoFlex®.

**Wanted:** Sled Numbers

If you haven’t done so yet, please submit the serial number of your Steadicam sled to the database. As we said in the last issue of the Letter, this may help in many ways. It will help in getting notices of factory upgrades, making it harder to fence stolen machines, and even returning “lost” machines to their rightful owners. It may also be useful in tracking the history of used rigs.

Paul Taylor
first assistant camera
Steadicam
213-459-0411 213-340-1666
One of my interests in life, besides Steadicam, is the Civil War. So it was with real enthusiasm that I reported to a shoot in Franklin, Tennessee in early December to shoot battle reenactments for a production company called Classic Images, under the direction of Jack Foley. Jack’s company specializes in producing video programs about the significant battles of the Civil War.

All sorts of people who are really interested in the war show up at these reenactments, dressed in period costumes, using the language of the day, and, as I was to find out, determined to relive the events of the day to the Nth degree.

At this particular battle, which was the next-to-last of the war, several thousand troops got themselves shot to pieces, along with their horses and much of the town of Franklin. For the purposes of this particular shoot, about four thousand folks from all over the country showed up, dressed as both Federal and Confederate troops, complete with horses, wagons, cavalry, and artillery. As we were in Tennessee, the grays were preferred over the blue, and I didn’t mind at all being dressed in the uniform of the Confederacy, even though my family fought with the North.

The shoot required three camera-persons, each with a Sony BVP-7. Each crew was required to dress as soldiers to blend in with the troops. My task was to shoot the soldiers, gun caissons, and cavalry as they marched and advanced during the battle. This was the first time that Jack Foley had employed the Steadicam, and it was with some degree of shock that on the first day I learned that my AC and I would be working on a battlefield area of almost a square mile. At age 44 this looked like the end of life itself a couple of times.

Battle reenactments are somewhat scripted, but with so much going on, controlling several thousand reenactors is virtually impossible. Once the troops start the battle, the technique is to cover all you can, try to know what’s going to happen next, and then haul ass to get there in time. When someone radioed that we needed to be a quarter mile away for the next shot, immediately, the solution was to have the AC carry the Betacam on a dead run. It goes on like this for a couple of hours at a time. With bright sunshine and cool enough weather that the ground was hard, what evolved was a series of walking shots along the columns as they transversed the fields and woods to attack defending Yankee troops.

To add to the confusion of 4,000 reenactors and dozens of horses, there were 45,000 spectators. But the real confusion came from all the weapons being fired in volley, with yours truly being down-range as little as 30 feet. Intent on a shot, I walked in front of howitzers twice. My alert AC saved my bacon, but not my eardrums!

I wore track shoes to aid with the...
uncertain footing in the fields, and wore black socks over them to make them less noticeable to the other cameramen. A friend in the Green Berets told me that softened an otherwise noisy walk, and it worked.

In the middle of a big battle scene on the third day, I realized that an ATV (such as the one the Association can provide) was the key to future shoots of this kind. When the director mentions, with compassion, that I was only going to have to walk a mile that day, I also realized how important it is to educate people about the physical limitations and constraints of operating.

Later, I was tracking along a trench full of fallen bodies, with rebs coming over the top and smoke everywhere. Out of the confusion emerged a Confederate soldier, carrying in his arms the limp body of a drummer boy who had been killed in the fighting.

The event really happened, and history has it that men on both sides of the battle, in spite of all the shooting, gave pause to let him pass, lay the child down on the soft green grass, and cradle his blond head. It was very emotional, and thankfully, the child stayed in character. All this took place unrehearsed in front of the camera.

For those who like action, spontaneity, and a physical challenge, I recommend spending a few days in the past. I can’t wait for the Battle of Bensonville next March.

Mike Gallagher

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General Lee surrenders to video.

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**CCD Camera Missing**

A critical Steadicam accessory is missing from the list of our rentable items. A Seitz CCD camera (alas, no serial numbers are on these units) was loaned out to someone in the last six months and not returned. If you happen to have it or know where it is, please contact Kathy Bowles at (215) CALL CAM.

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**Axioms for Steadicam Ops**

A modest compendium you can count on

- When your friends finally realize that you are a true artist, committed to making sensitive and meaningful images, they will ask you to shoot their weddings.
- The lightweight Panaflex does not really exist.
- Owning a II C assures that you will always need to rent a III with a variable shutter.
- Mounting a Steadicam is a misdemeanor in Arkansas.
- Owning more than two long-throat magazines assures that you will never have the correct emulsion at dusk.
- You will never need to use the quick release when charged by a rhino.
- Falling servo motors are attracted to rocks.
- Safety straps aren’t, available light won’t be, and Larry Bags are.
- Scratches are attracted to one-take scenes.
- Beware of producers who claim to be close personal friends of Oscar-winning inventors.
- Steadicam operators still have the best moves.

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**OMNIA LUMEN DECEM PARTES DIVISA EST**

John A. Corso
For over a year, I've been threatening to write about my docking stand if space permitted in the newsletter. Here's my chance.

When this contraption first appeared at the 1986 Workshops, I took a bit of abuse from the non-believers. But I also got advice on how to improve it, notably from Garrett and Tass Michos. Tass's last remark to me was to give the damned thing wheels and it might be all right. Since I snuck the device into the Grand Survey, I thought I ought to explain more fully what it is.

My "no-drop, paranoid relief docking stand and guffaw generator" is the result of 1) my total distrust of CP's old docking bracket, and 2) my sense that constantly subjecting the gimbal to the stress of docking would tend to reduce its smoothness. I figured if I could provide a stable, portable platform and some sort of safety hook to keep it from falling over, the Steadicam would stand very nicely on its own four rubber feet.

I salvaged a lightweight still camera tripod and attached a piece of 3/16" thick aluminum plate to it on which the Steadicam stands. The plate is attached so that the centerpost (the approximate c.g.) of the Steadicam is over the apex of the tripod legs. An adjustable riser, stolen from an old light stand, positions a failsafe safety hook either just above or below the gimbal. Many times I've put my full weight (175 lbs) on the platform just to reassure myself that the contraption is still quite strong.

The spring-loaded safety catch is designed so that it cannot be released by any action of the Steadicam rubbing or twisting against it. The only way to release the safety is to push the spring-loaded button up. Unlike CP's old unit, it is also possible to see from a distance if the safety catch is indeed engaged.

One beauty of the design is that I can undo the safety without fear of the rig suddenly slipping away. When I dock and bow out of the rig without having the safety engaged, the Steadicam continues to stand on its feet (or its head in low mode).

The riser terminates in a 5/8" diameter tube about an inch above the safety catch. To balance the rig, I don't have to remove the CP docker from the C stand and then try to shove the gimbal over a battered 5/8" stud while the assistant (or worse yet, me) huffs and puffs holding the rig.

The smooth fitting 5/8" stud is always available, as is the platform and safety catch after balancing. I've always had this fear of an old light stand jamming in the gimbal and being forced to operate in the "buddy cam mode" with three or four grips gainly trying to maneuver a C stand about the set. Sweet dreams now.

Perhaps most importantly, a new AC doesn't automatically develop a phobia about helping me out. After a couple of chuckles, he appreciates that the rig stands still while he changes lenses and maga-

Paranoid Relief
aka The J Bracket

Secrets revealed

Unit under scrutiny in field

having the safety engaged, the Steadicam continues to stand on its feet (or its head in low mode).

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Another way to pay for equipment is to have a production company agree to run the loan through a financial institution with you as the buyer. In return for the privilege, you get the Steadicam and the company puts you and the Steadicam in its stable of equipment.

Under this arrangement you agree to supply the production company with an experienced operator and equipment for a reduced day rate that will at least cover your payment to the lending institution. In this way you get a Steadicam, practical experience, and a client base. The company, in return, can sell you and the equipment to clients for a marked-up rate and can boast of a much desired technology on-hand.

The drawbacks of this financing method are that the company may want an exclusive arrangement, the day rate may be low, and the length of the agreement may be long.

What all these methods have in common is that they are unsecured loans based on faith in the individual. If you are able to choose financing methods, consider these pros and cons.

The advantages of a loan include an interest deduction on your taxes (which reduces the real cost of your capital investment) and complete ownership at the end of payback. The downside of loans includes the cost of the interest, strain on cash flow (especially in a start-up), and repayment which must be made in a relatively short time. Lastly, depreciation on your books is now only five years; any longer payback may be unsound from an accounting point of view.

If you are willing to acquire a partner in ownership, consider the following pros and cons. The positive aspects of a partnership are that the money does not have to be repaid and the business does not need cash flow to exist. Equity financing is also attractive because it depends on the future value of the company and its potential to make a profit.

The negatives of equity ownership are that it dilutes your ownership and control and ultimately can cost more than loans. And because the risk is higher, investors may want a sizeable percentage return on investment.

This can make turning a profit to you a tough formula to work out. Finally, dividends are not tax deductible in the US.

One very creative operator who made this system work put together a group of investors (family members) to form a company to buy a Steadicam. He was guaranteed a salary and ownership of the equipment, and they would receive dividends only when the company made a profit. He couldn’t lose.

Still another option to explore is leasing. Leasing companies buy the equipment for you, and you pay them back with interest. The payback amount, rate of interest, length of the payback, and buyout of the lease at the end are negotiable. One important consideration for leasing companies is that they are accustomed to financing business equipment. Some traditional lending institutions, like banks, are unwilling to risk money on anything except cars and houses.

Many of the same pros and cons of a loan apply to a lease. One important difference is that the lessor maintains ownership at the end of payback unless there is a clause which allows you to purchase it. Typically, the buyout is $1.

Cinema Products has a leasing company, Eagle Leasing, that is familiar with the product line and type of buyer and can resell the equipment if a borrower defaults. Typically the company, CP in this case, receives a finder’s fee from the leasing company for customers they refer.

My final suggestion about financing concerns credit cards. While it worked for Spike Lee in a very risky way, it is important to keep a handle on the amounts you charge, and set a self-imposed time limit on payback.

I hope this has helped answer some questions about financing. If you’re wondering how I paid for my new stuff, I saved the money and bought the equipment with cash.

Janice Arthur
The Inventor of Velcro, Georges de Mestral

from Letter wire services

Commungy, Switzerland

Georges de Mestral, 82, the Swiss inventor of Velcro, passed away in February of this year.

His wife, Helen de Mestral, said he died from complications of bronchitis and other lung problems.

Velcro was conceived in 1941, when de Mestral came home from hunting and found burrs stuck to his pants. He examined the burrs under a microscope and found their surface to consist of little hooks. He developed a fastener using two fabrics strips—one covered with tiny hooks, the other a fuzzy web.

By the mid 1950s he had sold the license around the world, and for 30 years lived on the royalties and profits, his wife said.

Velcro helped U.S. astronaut Neil Armstrong, the first man on the moon, defy weightlessness in his spacecraft and attach his toothbrush to his spacecraft wall. Similar use has been made of Velcro by a class of earth-bound cameramen trying to defy gravity.

Velcro also has been used to join parts of an artificial heart given to patients awaiting a transplant.

Velcro was not Mr. de Mestral’s only invention. At 15 he designed an aircraft, and he followed it with a tractor and a commercially successful hygrometer, an instrument used for measuring humidity.

“And there was one stupid little thing that sold very well,” Helene de Mestral said. “An asparagus peeler.”

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Gear, continued from page 1

2 Seitz 2 channel motor amps
West box (breakout box)
1 short 1/2” rod
2 Heden motors
1 64 pitch idler gear adaptor (for Panavision iris gear)
1 M5 pitch idler gear adaptor (for Canon zoom lens focus gear)

Cables:
4 2x2 Lemo (Steadicam to Seitz amp)
3 5x5 Lemo (Seitz amp to motor)
1 remote box to transmitter
1 West box to Model II Steadicam
1 on/off cable for Arriflex cameras
(11 pin Fisher connector)

Brackets:
2 Arri to 1/2” rods
5 misc. brackets and extenders

CP WRC-4 system
with transmitter, receiver, batteries, charger, motor, 3-channel amp, brackets.

STEADICAM TO 24 VDC PANAVISION KIT
with 4 12/24 volt batteries, 2 two-hour chargers, and 24 volt power cable (battery to 3 pin Canon connector)

And with your help, there’s more coming. Please go over your equipment and consider donating it to the Association. We are a non-profit corporation, and you may be able to take a tax deduction. We’d be happy to rent the equipment to the other members.

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How To Rent Gear

All you have to do to rent equipment is to call the database number, (215) CALL CAM, and tell Kathy what you need. She will handle all the details, including shipping and billing. The Association owns the gear, but you will be contracting with Videomsmith for the rentals, using their regular rental procedures.

Lego® continued from page 3

decided to draw a Steadicam III® because, once again, I didn’t have one and I could sit there and look at it and dream.

TC: Yes, I understand your passion. But pixel by pixel? That’s a lot of work. How many hours did you spend on the drawing?

BE: It’s hard to tell. I’d say about twenty.

TC: Only twenty? That’s nothing.

DE: It might have been a little more. I realize now that pixel by pixel is not the way to go.

TC: No, it isn’t. So, in the future will you continue to work in the medium of computer graphics or go back to Lego®?

DE: I’ll probably go back to Lego® because the computer belongs to my girlfriend, and she moved down to TriBeCa and I’m in midtown. Plus the subway fares went up.

TC: It’s amazing how fate can play such a pivotal role in creativity, isn’t it? So finally, you are one of the great “Living Masters” of Lego® as an artistic form — perhaps even the only one. Have you ever considered the idea of teaching a “Lego® Master’s Workshop?”

DE: No, I really hadn’t.

TC: Check it out. Perhaps you could hold it in TriBeCa. Call Chuck Jackson at CP and see if they’ll sponsor it. Say you’re David Lyman.

Ted Churchill