
BOOK REVIEWS

Video User's Handbook, 2nd ed. By Peter Utz. Published (1982) by Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07632. 487 pp. Index. Bibliography. 7 × 9 in. Softbound or hardcover. Price (softbound) \$14.95.

In this book we have a text (and to some degree a handbook) designed for newcomers to television production. The main emphasis is on learning the basics of video and audio equipment operation and of television production techniques. The author has been a teacher and instructional television producer/director at the Kingsborough Community College of City University of New York, and is a widely published writer of media articles in magazines and journals. He presently directs the media department at County College of Morris, Randolph, N.J.

The book succeeds in being usefully comprehensive. The author uses a cheerful, thoroughly pragmatic approach to the subjects at hand. The first chapter, for example, deals with the operation of television receivers — their proper adjustment and use. Little is left to chance in this discussion of what is one of the fundamental problems of television — improper receiver adjustment by uninformed viewers. The text continues with chapters devoted to video monitors and their interconnection with various sources, the differences between RF and video/audio interconnections, and television antennas. These chapters perform a real service in assisting users of all skill-levels to achieve an optimum display of television signals. And, as this summary may suggest, the book, as a whole, deals more with the proper plugging of connectors into sockets than with the underlying philosophy of television.

Next, the author turns to videotape players and recorders. He leads the reader through typical operation and setup adjustments and suggests solutions for common problems. He deals with the differences between the various tape formats and discusses the need for standardization. Hints on routine cleaning and maintenance are also offered.

We proceed, chapter by chapter, to cameras, lenses, switchers, special effects units, audio recording, lighting, graphics, editing, and studio production equipment. A special section on understanding written technical specifications for television equipment is included. This part should be very helpful to administrators and teachers charged with purchasing equipment for a video facility. Script writing, advanced audio techniques, and equipment maintenance are also dealt with in the latter chapters.

The book is concerned primarily with the craft, not the art, of television. The equipment and techniques described are those especially suited to industrial and educational TV production. The technical level of the book is such that newcomers to the field of television will not be intimidated; minimal use is made of technical jargon and when jargon is used it is carefully defined. But there is, at the same time, sufficient technical substance in the text to satisfy the reader who requires details. The book is copiously illustrated with charts, sketches, and photographs. Many of the photographs are taken from monitor screens to better illustrate actual production situations.

A few minor errors can be found. Some of the illustrations are of outmoded equipment (the type often found in many schools and colleges, however!) and some photographs are poorly reproduced. But the book is readable, informative, and eminently practical. It will certainly serve the needs of persons responsible for television facilities in the educational and industrial environments and of students just embarking on a study of video techniques. — *F. M. Remley*

Television Production, 2nd. ed. By Alan Wurtzel. Published (1983) by McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1221 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020. 632 pp. Illus., 7 × 9 in. Price \$26.95.

This book is the second edition of a well-known college-level textbook. It provides a comprehensive treatment of television production and is written for students planning to pursue a career as television professionals in broadcast and non-broadcast communications organizations. The first edition was adopted as a text by many colleges and universities. This second edition introduces descriptions of many new technological developments for the first time. For example, electronic news gathering (ENG) and digital special effects are now thoroughly examined, and the latest information on computer-controlled videotape editing systems is included. The book is very well illustrated, using color photographs when describing color television systems, and providing a profusion of black-and-white photographs of television facilities and equipment together with many tables, charts, and drawings. It also includes an excellent glossary of television terms and a bibliography. Each chapter has, in the best teaching style, a convenient summary of the major points made in the main text.

The book is up-to-date. It has interesting descriptions and photographs of contemporary television facilities and equipment. It is very attractive in its typography and is thus easy to read. It includes, in almost all topic areas, enough history of the subject to give the student a useful perspective on why television today is as it is. It is a book crafted to cover the three essential elements of the television professions: the kinds of people involved and their jobs as directors, camera persons, etc.; the equipment necessary to make a technological business such as television function properly; the techniques and esthetics of producing successful television productions. In short, then, it is a good textbook.

Having said this, I feel obliged to point out a few deficient areas. The chapter on video recording, a special topic of interest to me, contains an unnecessary number of errors of fact. Few engineers will be confused by the information given, and few production students will care about these details. But the record should show that the discussion of transverse video recording consistently uses the erroneous spelling *quadraplex*. The correct spelling is *quadruplex*, of course. The discussion of helical formats is in error in describing segmented helical recorders, specifically the SMPTE Type-B format machines. These machines are described as "alpha wrap"; they are not. They wrap the scanner somewhat more than 180 degrees in a variation of the "omega" wrap. Additionally, the description of the segmentation of video recordings produced by Type-B machines states that the *tracks* are segmented. In truth, the video signal is segmented in the time domain, not the tracks in the physical domain!

Minor quarrels can be had, as well, with some of the terms defined both in the text and the glossary. For example, the term "essential area" is used instead of the more common "safe title area." Double-system sound recording is not defined, while single-system recording is. The term "kinescope" is defined only in reference to the obsolete "kinescope recording" process, not in terms of the formal use of the term as applied to the television display tube. These minor problems do not detract from what is essentially a good textbook and a good glossary. They are of concern mostly to specialists but should be removed in the next edition.

In summary, this book should be considered for use by teachers of college-level television production courses. It has many virtues and only a few small faults.

— *F. M. Remley*