

# Book Reviews

Diane P. Janes, Editor

***Modern Video Production: Tools, Techniques, Applications*** by Carl Hausman with Philip J. Palombo. New York: HarperCollins College Publishers, 1993. ISBN 0-06-500045-5 (CDN \$40.00)

*Reviewed by Brian Cahill*

The advent of a new generation of camcorders has brought an increasing number of the general public into the sphere of video production, which was formerly the domain of a relatively few television professionals.

*Modern Video Production* is a book which can greatly enhance any user's knowledge of and facility in video production. This book is best suited as a course textbook (a supplementary instructor's manual is available) targeted at students or practitioners of professional video production; that is not to say, the book has nothing to offer the novice or home video user. The authors state, in the preface, "Our aim is to communicate a technical subject in a simple and lively style." While they are largely successful in this endeavour, the book deals with a very technical area. However, a novice video producer could at times be inundated with the amount of material and the technical nature of the material this book encapsulates. This is not a content area that lends itself to print description alone.

The book is divided into four parts which include twenty-two chapters. At the beginning of each chapter basic objectives are laid out for that particular section. Each chapter concludes with a summary that encompasses technical terms and exercises designed to incorporate the knowledge acquired in the chapter. Still pictures are used effectively on many occasions to simulate the television screen.

*Part One—The Tools* provides an overview of video as a medium and deals with the hardware commonly used in video production.

*Part Two—The Techniques* deals with the nuts and bolts of television production (camera operation, lighting techniques, etc.). Some valuable tips

gained only through actual production are provided.

*Part Three—The Applications* deals with different show formats, directing, editing and remote shooting.

*Part Four—Specialized Operations* looks at the technical aspects of video. The technical aspect is confined to knowledge which overlaps into the production area rather than electronic maintenance. The other major focus in *Specialized Operations* is an attempt to define where video is headed. It looks at current trends and the latest in technology (high-definition television, digital video and desktop video).

My initial response to the book was very positive. First, the book is well written and includes a thorough treatment of video production in basic and reader-friendly language, given the difficulty of the subject matter. It is well designed and progresses step-by-step through a complex, many-faceted subject area. Second, as a teacher of video skills in various settings I have seen very little that is as current and complete. This book fills a much needed void. One of the problems in describing video production in print is not what should be covered (that is relatively easy to ascertain) but to what depth should any individual subject be covered. I feel this is one of the key strengths of this book. The reader is told not all, but enough of the various production elements described in the book, and that demonstrates good organization on the part of the authors.

With relatively minor omissions in content area, the book has few shortcomings. As stated earlier the book contains a tremendous volume of information and its effectiveness would be greatly decreased if it were not used in connection with practical applications.

This book would be a welcome companion for any individual, regardless of experience, contemplating video production.

## REVIEWER

Brian Cahill is a television producer and director with the Division of Educational Technology at Memorial University of Newfoundland. He has extensive experience in video production and editing, and teaches video skills in a variety of settings.