

The Shared Histories Of TexPrompt And The Modern Teleprompter...

by Bill Satterwhite

There are two important names to know when discussing the history of the teleprompter...

- Jesse Oppenheimer. Producer of *I Love Lucy* and inventor of the in-lens, mechanical (paper scroll) teleprompter in the early 1950s.
- Courtney M. Goodin. Creator of Compu-Prompt, the first electronic, personal computer-based teleprompter. Courtney was well ahead of his time. His design, which used the Atari 800 Personal Computer (remember those?), first appeared in 1982, but it would take several years to catch on. The original, mechanical prompter with the paper scroll was still in use on *The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson* as late as 1992!

Let's add a third name to that short list....

- TexPrompt. With co-owners Mitch and Bethal Bird at the helm, TexPrompt has been connected to the evolution of electronic teleprompting from the very earliest days of the industry. Together, Mitch and Bethal's partnership combines their traditional theatre and music backgrounds with a long history in personal computing, giving them a rare level of expertise in their field.

In 1985, Mitch and Bethal connected with Courtney Goodin, an audio engineer who was operating his company in Los Angeles. Using Goodin's Atari-based prompter and promoting the groundbreaking invention from their home-base in North Texas, Mitch and Bethal became the first leasing agents to represent the Compu-Prompt systems.

Mitch and Bethal spent several years convincing producers of the merits of computer-based teleprompting as offered by the Compu-Prompt system. They would eventually make their own modifications, migrating to a PC-based, MS-DOS system. They went out on their own to form TexPrompt, and a new chapter in "The History of Teleprompting" had begun.

Today, TexPrompt is a well-known, highly-trusted name in the world of corporate shows, entertainment and film/video production. Having been part of the modern age of electronic teleprompting from the very beginning, their client list goes way back to the mid-1980s... including trend-setting, ground-breaking events--some of the very first corporate theatre with multi-million dollar budgets.

The company has been part of many legendary shows throughout the years; their early memories and experiences do feel like the "wild, wild west" of old-school corporate teleprompting. TexPrompt was there at the start, before corporate theatre could even be called "an industry", and continues to evolve and grow with it. *(For a look at how things were "back in the old days," check out www.showstories.net.)*

The Shared Histories Of TexPrompt And The Modern Teleprompter... (cont'd)

It's Not About The Equipment, It's About The People, Part 1

Welllll, that's a nice thought, but, come on...sometimes it *is* about the equipment. Mitch Bird is a technology maven...one of those people who can talk to machines. Mitch and Bethal have built TexPrompt on the philosophy that there are no excuses for failed equipment on show site. When the house lights go down and the stagelights come up, the prompter is ready and waiting to roll. No exceptions, no excuses, no worries.

Mitch has (and still does) modified equipment to suit his clients' needs. In the shop or on the job, Mitch and his team will do whatever it takes to *make it work* and maintain state-of-the-art functionality.

It's Not About The Equipment, It's About The People, Part 2

It really *is* about the people, and Mitch and Bethal Bird are the kind of people you want on your team. They have the background, the ability, the problem-solving mojo and the experience. Their thorough training and client-centered work ethic is fundamental to the DNA of the entire TexPrompt team. Whatever situation is at hand, your TexPrompt operator will always calmly light the way, and the words will always be there. TexPrompt will always be one production element you will not have to worry about.

In The End, It's Really All About The Client

Okay, what it's *really* about is the equipment *and* the people creating a strong foundation to support the client. "We are client-centric." That idea is key to the success and longevity of TexPrompt. They base everything they do on that ideal. But until you work with TexPrompt, it's hard to appreciate what "client driven" really means. TexPrompt has been built on a foundation of anticipating and answering clients' needs, helping their presenters achieve excellence, from rehearsal through performance. From run-and-gun to full presentation coaching, TexPrompt brings what the client needs.

If anything about this business is predictable, it's that you can expect unpredictability. TexPrompt accepts that and thrives on it. "We LIVE for changes!"

All of TexPrompt's operators are cross-trained to be virtually interchangeable in the way they manage files from job to job, from client to client. This creates a seamless, layered backup system that protects the integrity and continuity of your job. In an emergency, any TexPrompt operator can step in and keep your project going smoothly. To work with TexPrompt is to know what it's like to have an entire organization at your disposal. "We are in this for you."

What else can we tell you about TexPrompt? Please ask us...we're not shy!