

What I hate about doing Video Assist

I know the title of this piece sounds like a gripe, well, I guess it sort of is. The thing I hate most about doing my job, Video Assist, isn't having the entire hair, makeup and wardrobe department parking their chairs on my cables, it's not having to explain over and over to the producer that the "B" camera has a black and white video tap, and there is nothing I can do to make the picture more colorful.

It's not even having three carts of equipment to haul around set and only two hands. No, I think the worst part about my job is... Telling people who don't work in the industry what my job is. I'll be on an airplane or at a dinner party, and someone will ask "What sort of work do you do?" My usual response is just to say I work in the Motion Picture industry. If they ask for more information, I'll say, I do video assist. This is usually followed by a puzzled look, at which point I'll run through the list of names given to my craft; video playback, VTR, video village... This might generate a response like "Oh, so you carry tapes and batteries for a cameraman?" I then go on to tell them that I set up and operate the video monitors on set for the director and producer, etc... More puzzled looks. By this point, if the person hasn't excused themselves to go powder their nose, I'll go on to explain the whole mechanics of my job, from the little video camera attached to the viewfinder on the big camera, to my video recorders, to the director's cart. Even once they have an intimate understanding of my job, they still might throw me a "So, you record everything on video? They don't even put film in the camera anymore?" By this point, if the person I'm explaining all of this to isn't an attractive female, I'm tempted to excuse myself to powder *my* nose, or see what's exciting on the weather channel or something, anything.

I mean, outside of the industry, nobody knows what a Best Boy is, or even what a Dolly Grip does, but even those folks can explain their jobs pretty well, in ten words or less. I have a hard time explaining what I do in ten minutes or less...

I guess that's why they pay me the big bucks.

Chris Wagganer

Proud (yet somewhat frustrated) Video Assist Operator