

## When to Rent, When to Buy

Janet Milly, TLS, Inc Newsletter October 1998

Rentals are a great way to supplement the equipment you already own, or to add just the right touch to your production. Here are some answers to a few questions regarding our conceptual approach to renting equipment, answered by Ed Nicholas.

**Q:** How have customer requirements changed in recent years?

**A:** In the past few years we have seen an increase in requests for more sophisticated lighting equipment and effects. Audiences of all genres are beginning to realize that the message does not get lost in the production, if done properly. Instead, the addition of just the right equipment can enhance and make the production more palatable to the audience, if done correctly.

**Q:** How do we help customers determine what they need in order to get the effect they are looking for?

**A:** We try to LISTEN to what the customer's ideas and concepts are for his application. Then, by working with our large rental inventory, we try to come up with a reasonable and cost effective way to make it happen. By relying on our broad range of resources and experience we try to make the customer's job easier.

**Q:** How do we determine what type equipment we add to our rental inventory?

**A:** By listening to our customers' needs and keeping a close eye on new technology and equipment entering the marketplace, we try to have the "latest and greatest" to service our customers' needs.

**Q:** How large a part does budget play in the rental process?

**A:** Unfortunately, we all have to live with budgets. What we try to do is give the customer options at different cost levels and explain why, very often, the cheaper option can be ultimately more costly in the long run.

**Q:** When is it better to rent rather than purchase?

**A:** If the equipment is only going to be used a few times per year, or is relatively maintenance intensive, renting makes sense. If it will be used every week or on a frequent basis, then some type of purchase may be in order. Also, much like the computer industry, as the technology changes, we at TLS have to continuously upgrade our equipment to offer the latest to our customer. Most likely we sell off that gear as "used equipment". This gear should be a consideration in the "rent or buy" decision.

**Q:** How is TLS different from other Rental companies?

**A:** TLS offers the latest equipment and we try to rotate our stock by selling off used equipment, to keep our customers up to date in the fast changing marketplace. Also, customer service is the most important goal that we have. With today's complex equipment we can say with certainty that things break at the worst possible moment. We try to offset this with customer support backed up by a great Repair Department. But, mostly we put a lot of emphasis on maintaining our gear. All equipment is checked before it goes out the door. We want it to work problem free. This makes life easier for both of us.

**Q:** How can the customer help make the rental process simple and easy?

**A:** A key concept would be "reserve early"! By waiting til the last moment we are sometimes limited in our options for helping customers, even with our large inventory. Bring us in on the initial planning stages for your event and we will be glad to help you develop your concept. Remember, this is what we do, let us put our expertise training and experience to work for you.