NewBay Media

DIGITAL TV—FCC REVEALS 600 MHZ PLAN, P. 19

HPA ANNOUNCES 2014 AWARD WINNERS
PAGE 6

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BROADCAST ▪ PRODUCTION ▪ BROADBAND ▪ SATELLITE ▪ MOBILE

Virtual Broadcasting

The opportunities of integrated channel playout

—page 14

Audio Advice

What content creators should know about sound for television

—page 16

Equipment Guide

Video Monitors

—pages 24-30

Technology Takes a Tightrope Walk

NBC battles high winds, logistics to broadcast Wallenda feat

Photo credit: Discovery

BY SUSAN ASHWORTH

CHICAGO—As a man prepared to walk off the edge of a skyscraper and on to a 340-foot-long steel cable, Marc Weinstock had other things on his mind.

While 65,000 people on the ground and more than 6.7 million viewers were watching daredevil Nik Wallenda walk untethered across a tightrope over the city of Chicago, the director of technical operations for NBC's field and production operations had his mind on technical things. Weinstock was part of the two-department NBC team that was producing the event for the Discovery Channel. And as such, they'd strung 1,500 feet of fiber up and down buildings, set up 22 cameras and rigged a POV camera on Wallenda himself to catch his attempt to break two Guinness

TIGHTROPE, PAGE 8

A Level Playing Field

FCC chairman outlines vision for TV's future

BY GARY ARLEN

WASHINGTON—FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler is seeking to put broadband/online video onto a level playing field with cable and satellite carriers—including their relationships and requirements to retransmit broadcast channels. In a blog posted to the FCC website earlier this month, called "Tech Transitions, Video, and the Future," Wheeler spelled out his vision for à la carte program or channel delivery as well as giving "Internet video services... access to" broadcast content. The blog is a prelude to a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) that will be another notch on Wheeler's "Open Internet" agenda.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Although Aereo is never mentioned in Wheeler's blog, the demise of that wireless Internet service provider is

FIELD, PAGE 10

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VIDEO MONITORS

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USER REPORT

Chopperguy Takes Marshall Monitor to New Heights

BY BRUCE HAFFNER
Owner/Pilot/Cameraman
Chopperguy Aerial Video

Bruce Haffner

SCOTTSDALE, ARIZ.—"It sure beats working for a living" is how I describe our Chopperguy aerial video business. Flying a Robinson R44 Newscopter, we shoot high-definition aerial video with a gyro-stabilized lens and camera mounted on the helicopter's nose.

Our "bread and butter" is flying 80 hours a month shooting television news for Phoenix stations. Our other passion is aerial production work and our clients include Fox Sports, The History Channel and some independent film companies. I'm fortunate to have been recognized for television photography and production work, winning 15 Emmy awards along the way, but even luckier to get to fly a helicopter and earn a living doing so.

TOUCHSCREENS NEED NOT APPLY

After we purchased our R44 and set up the camera installation, we elected to go with a Marshall Electronics V-LCD90MD nine-inch high-resolution camera-top monitor. We'd tried other monitors in other airborne platforms, but the lack of hard buttons on those other units proved to be a deal breaker as the vibration that you encounter during flight makes it very difficult to use touchscreens and menu wheels. We learned that the Marshall V-LCD90MD didn't use this control strategy and after getting a demonstration we bought the unit.

We're using the V-LCD90MD in conjunction with a laptop controller that operates the gyro-stabilized camera system we nicknamed "Elvis." Operating the laptop controller is similar to playing a video game with a joystick and the key to everything is viewing a great image of what you're shooting. The Marshall monitor has a bright, crisp image which makes precise focusing of the camera really easy.

The monitor uses hard buttons for presets, and we're almost constantly pushing these depending on the shooting situation and conditions. There's a waveform preset that's indispensable when I need to adjust the exposure, and the monitor has other important features that make airborne video easier, including a histogram overlay to aid in exposure, focus assist, and peaking to indicate whether we are crushing blacks or blowing out whites. You have a choice of using any or all of the preset functions, depending on your shooting situation.

EXCELLENT SUPPORT TOO

Of course no product—no matter how perfect or functional it may be—is truly a good investment unless its manufacturer stands behind it. Marshall's customer support team was able to wade through all my questions and directed us to other users for input on the company's products.

I'm a photographer at heart and demand the best from my equipment. And at the end of the day, our helicopter is really just an expensive tripod and our Marshall monitor helps us to make the best use of our video acquisition toolset. Television newsgathering demands tools that are both simple and reliable and our V-LCD90MD provides both attributes and much more. It allows us to concentrate on what's really important: shot composition and storytelling.

Bruce Haffner has been in the aerial newsgathering business for 30 years. He may be contacted at bruce@chopperguy.com.

For additional information, contact Marshall Electronics at 800-800-6608 or visit www.lcdracks.com.