

New Products & Services



Denz OIC-16 Director's Viewfinder

by Jay Holben

I recently had an opportunity to test the new OIC-16 director's viewfinder from the Germany-based company P.E.D. Denz. Because of the PL mount and the size of the viewfinder, I assumed it was intended for 35mm, and aside from the fact that "16" is in the product's name, there was nothing in the literature to tell me otherwise. I soon discovered the viewfinder is set up for 16mm and Super 16mm fields of view, and I had trouble imagining a 16mm shoot here in the States that would require such an advanced director's viewfinder — episodic television, perhaps?

Nevertheless, the OIC-16 is a well-constructed, robust piece of gear. The viewfinder without lens or handle is 5.9"x3.35"x3.94" (150cm x 85cm x 100cm), and once you attach the handle (without lens) it weighs just under 2 pounds (900g).

I took the OIC-16 to Alan

Gordon Enterprises in Hollywood to try out some lenses, compare it against other viewfinders, and put it up against a camera to see how accurate the framing was. ASC associate member Grant Loucks and his son, Wayne, the owners of Alan Gordon, brought out a set of Zeiss High Speed 16mm lenses.

The locking ring on the model I worked with was a bit idiosyncratic; it would rotate about 25-30° past the "stop," which would expose the key, but didn't give enough clearance to get the flanges of the lens' PL mount in place. Once that was corrected, the lens fit beautifully, and it gave the viewfinder significant heft beyond its already beefy 2 pounds.

The OIC-16 has two "ergonomic" wooden handles, one for right-handers and the other for southpaws. They interchange smoothly through the use of a thumb wheel that unscrews a standard 1/4" bolt (handy if you want to mount the viewfinder to any standard tripod 1/4" bolt) in addition to two pins that lock the handles in place and prevent any rotation or inadvertent loosening. The handles are very pretty but awkward, not very comfortable and certainly not aligned with the viewfinder's center of gravity, particularly when a lens is attached. I found myself naturally holding the viewfinder *above* the handle at the point where the handle mounts to the viewfinder body; this seemed like the real center of gravity with any lens I tried. Additionally, the handles are made of very smooth wood that is slick to the touch. With dry hands, I didn't feel as though I had a good grip. It would be nice if the handle shape were merely spherical and offered some kind of purchase, such as a rubber grip or textured inlay.

The eyepiece features an adjustable diopter from -5 to +5. There is a metal fastening stirrup on the top

of the viewfinder to attach the long carrying belt that comes with the viewfinder, but this is not something you would ever carry around your neck.

The real star feature of the OIC-16 is the rotating internal ground glass for different framing options. With a simple turn of the dial, you can choose 1.33:1 (regular 16mm), 1.33:1 (TV), 1.37:1 (16mm), 1.55:1 (14x9, the British terrestrial television compromise between 4x3 and 16x9), 1.66:1 (Super 16mm), 1.78:1 (HDTV) or 1.85:1 (HDTV).

The viewfinder is very comfortable to the eye, is bright and clear, and offers clear ground-glass markings. Although there is rarely a need to change aspect ratios during a shoot, it is handy to have such a wide variety of options available in one device because it eliminates the need for multiple ground glasses.

Alongside an Arriflex 16SR-3 with the same Zeiss High Speed 50mm lens, the viewfinder was dead-on with the ground-glass markings in the camera. In this case, I compared it to a 1.85:1 Super 16mm ground glass and was astounded at the precision with which the OIC-16 matched the camera.

Although the various aspect ratios are engraved on the top of the viewfinder, there is no indication on the selection wheel as to which ratio you are currently on or which is coming next. It would be nice to have aspect-ratio markings on the dial so you know what you've selected before you look through the viewfinder. Also, in the model I tested, there was a bit too much play in the selector wheel for my taste.

As a final touch, the OIC-16 comes with an incredibly robust, red anodized aluminum port cap, one that will certainly protect the ground glasses and won't get confused with the rest of the camera gear.

I tried the OIC-16 alongside an

older Mitchell viewfinder and found the Mitchell much more comfortable to hold, but it didn't hold a candle to the extremely bright and clear optics of the OIC-16. Additionally, I tried the Mark V next to the OIC-16. Although the Mark V is a very versatile tool that covers many formats and aspect ratios (and is very accurate), it is no match for a viewfinder that uses actual photographic lenses.

The OIC-16 comes in a well-padded, hefty carrying case that isn't too big and will protect the viewfinder from all but the most devastating impact.

For more information, visit www.denz-deniz.com or call +49 (0)89-62 98 66 0.

Birns & Sawyer: New Home, New Monitor

Rental/sales house Birns & Sawyer recently relocated its camera division to a new, larger facility at the ArcLight Cinema complex at 6381 De Longpre Ave., Hollywood. As a result, the company has more room for all departments and plenty of validated customer parking, as well as a dedicated loading dock.

Birns & Sawyer is also the exclusive representative of the new JVC DLA-HRM1 48" HD Reference Monitor. With full 1920x1080 HD resolution and a 3,000:1 contrast ratio, the D-ILA monitor is well suited for postproduction use, video production, screening digital dailies and more. Brightness is rated at >300cd/m². Features of the monitor include a 17-node 3-D color LUT (lookup table), 12-bit gamma correction, three gamma presets and one user-defined preset and HQV scale processing by Teranex. Color gamut is greater than Rec709. Inputs include: HD-SDI, SDI, HDMI, DVI, component, Y/C, composite and VGA. It is NTSC and PAL compatible. The 48" diagonal screen is non-reflective, with a wide viewing angle in the 16x9 aspect ratio with 0-percent optical over-scan. It's sizable — 44"x44¼"x30" — and weighs 175 pounds (79.5kg).

For more information, call (323) 466-8211 or visit the Web site: www.birnsandsawyer.com.