

PRomptBox in the Field with the U.S. Forest Service

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by Neil Tanner



Steve Dunsky (behind camera) and Ann Dunsky (holding mic boom) shoot a video with John C. Heil III, regional press officer for the U.S. Forest Service.

Producers understand the need for prompters. With a prompter, there are fewer takes and less stress. However, prompting on location has always been a struggle since traditional prompters require a heavy-duty tripod, laptop, cables and power. That recently changed, however.

Steve Dunsky, audiovisual manager for the Pacific Southwest Region of the U.S. Forest Service and his wife Ann, an editor and producer, have been making films for the Forest Service for 25 years. They recently worked with the PRomptBox Mobile prompting system.

"I'm not a highly technical person, and I could set this up in just a few minutes [and] in just about any location," said Steve Dunsky.

PRomptBox Mobile uses a tablet or cell phone as the screen, so mounting to a dSLR or camcorder is easy. PRomptBox uses a proprietary top shoe mount or 1/4- 20 pistol-grip mount from below. The system is adjustable to full-size cameras, including studio cameras, jibs or Steadicams, and can be deployed easily in the studio or in the field.

“We do a lot of productions in very remote areas, no access to electricity, and have to carry gear for long distances, and this appeals to me because the PRomptBox you could carry in a backpack,” Steve said. “I have an iPhone and an iPad, so I have the devices that are compatible with the PRomptBox. Obviously, from the perspective of portability, affordability and also just general convenience, this is a significant leap forward for us.”

Here’s a sample scenario used by the Duskys for the Forest Service: They dictate text into a mobile device, tap “Save,” tap “Loop” and the mirrored script appears on the screen. They place the same mobile device into the PRomptBox, and it’s ready for production.

John Heil, press officer for Region Five of the U.S. Forest Service, read off the PRomptBox for one of Steve’s recent shoots. They determined an appropriate speed for the script, set it, and were mobile to the various locations.

“We’re based here in California but we make video productions for the Forest Service all over the country, and even internationally,” Steve said. “To include the PRomptBox in a flypack or production kit seems like a no-brainer.

“[As a government agency,] we’re all looking to save money. The reality is we don’t have the budget to hire prompter operators like we used to and even in some cases we wouldn’t use one if we didn’t have access to a prompter such as the PRomptBox.”

The latest generation of PRomptBox, a collapsible model for full size tablets, has just launched.

Neil Tanner is contracted to provide services for PRomptBox. He can be reached at www.neiltanner.com.