

# Does It Make ‘Cents’ to Shoot Your Infomercial in Hi-Def?

**W**ith the exception of a few well-known shows in the industry, infomercials have always been considered low-budget productions produced by companies that, in general, could not care less about shooting on film or high-definition (HD) video. After all, who needs to pay for film or HD when many of the highest grossing infomercials of all time were shot with very inexpensive mini-digital video (miniDV) cameras or on only slightly more expensive Beta cameras?

This mindset is quickly changing. With the market's full

in HD or on film make for increased sales? Quite honestly, the jury is still out on this question, but the *From the Lab* team does suspect that it contributes positively to the voting that happens at the annual Electronic Retailing Association (ERA) awards. Many of the shows that have been honored over the years have been shot on film, and now HD shows are also getting nominated.

There is no doubt that both film and HD look better than traditional video, and we think that shooting a show in one of these formats has to help increase sales to some extent. In fact, we just viewed the footage of a new fitness show in production. It is being shot in HD, and it looks so good that it made the product more appealing. The higher end look made us believe it was more likely we'd pull out our credit cards and call to order. As a matter of fact, we may add a new category to our infomercial scoring system that takes into account the format the show was shot in: one point for miniDV,

embrace of HD programming, infomercial producers are beginning to take production value more seriously, and many companies are paying the extra money to shoot infomercials in HD or on film. There are even viable alternatives for those companies that can't afford HD or film, including cameras that shoot in what is called 24p, or 24 frames-per-second, rather than the standard 30 frames-per-second. This gives video a film-like quality and looks noticeably better than standard video. A novice without a trained eye would have a hard time discerning the difference between 24p video and actual 35mm film.

The real question remains: does shooting an infomercial

two points for Beta, three points for 24p video, four points for film and five points for HD.

The bottom line: if you can afford to spend the extra money to shoot your infomercial on HD or film, do it. If you don't increase your sales, you will at least have a better chance of winning an ERA award. ■



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