

# RESOURCE MAGAZINE

For the Professional Photo Productionist

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*flockin up*



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ETIQUETTE:

# Equipment Rental

By Jonathan Melamed | Photos by Shane Wilson

**A**llow me to pose a question, faithful readers: what is a photographer without his camera? He is still somebody with, as they say, an excellent "eye." But eyes don't capture photos: no matter how deft one is with the art of composition, without that magical little box, a striking pose or subtle yet telling expression on the model's face will never be captured for others to enjoy.

Which leads to lights and other tools used to create emotion, feeling, and life in an image: are they not equally indispensable to the art of photography? If all of this is true, then isn't the photo equipment the most important part of a shoot? Of course nothing is that simple. We all know that many elements are necessary to create a pleasing image, which is why all the separate departments, with their compartmentalized skills and duties, are so essential. Everybody has a specific job that they are expected to execute with utmost professionalism and proficiency. It is the rental company's duty to stock, maintain, and deliver all the needed equipment for a photo shoot.

They may not be more important than everybody else, but you cannot have a shoot without a camera and some lights, so in a way, everything starts with them. They are almost like gods and should be respected as such. Photo crews should not dare forsake these gods, because like it says in some really old book that I read in a motel once, "the Lord giveth and Lord taketh away."



## Always:

Be specific when ordering. "Lemme get two of those big lighty thingies that go on those big wheelie stands, and throw in a couple of them tortellini clamps while you're at it." This is not the professional way to order equipment. Most rental houses have websites or catalogues complete with photos and descriptions of their stock, which, after only a few minutes of researching, should give you more than enough info to order briskly and appropriately.

Label equipment. As you're tearing off slivers of gaffer's tape to spike the tripod and mark the positions of your subject, why not break out the sharpie and label what pieces of equipment came from what rental houses? It will make wrap go faster and ensure a smoother return day.

Report broken or missing equipment immediately. Photo assistants all agree that the most commonly broken pieces of equipment are usually flash tubes or modeling lamps. Bulbs are as fragile as uncooked eggs. Maybe the new guy forgot to throw a sandbag on a stand, or a rambunctious makeup artist overturned a light en route to a model's face on set: these things happen on a fast-paced shoot. Judging by the frequency at which these lights break, the rental house won't be too surprised when you report the problem. Just make sure you alert the producer and call ahead before returning the damaged goods, saving everyone tons of time figuring out the spike in the equipment rental budget.

Get insurance. I hate to sound like an electronics salesman, but shit does happen. When you damage a piece of equipment worth thousands, you'll be glad you had the hindsight to part with a minute percentage of the item's cost in order to cover your ass.

## Never:

Forget to wrap cables. Returning a hamper full of stingers, all haphazardly thrown together in a knotted, serpentine heap will not make for a happy rental house. That extra few minutes you spend during wrap to make sure the cords are properly wrangled and bound will save the crew at the rental house much time and ensure their faithful service in the future.

Hire a clumsy assistant. A photo set should not mimic the set of a slapstick comedy. When the cyc is a mess of cords, lunch boxes and stands, you want to ensure that you hire crew members that are cautious and quick on their feet. Leave large lights on stands at the end of the shoot. Always lower stands and remove all lights. This will save the equipment room employees from being brained by a rapidly falling HMI.

Forget the law of photo production karma: do not only what is expected of you (that goes without saying) but do a little extra to make someone else's day go smoother and to ensure lasting and fruitful professional relationships.