



Photo Credit: Joan Hurton csc

ZTV founder Steve Zajaczkivsky in his workshop.

# In ZTV We Trust

By Guido Kondruss

“Hi, I’m Steve!” I was shaking hands with Steve Zajaczkivsky, the owner and founder of ZTV, one of Canada’s foremost professional video equipment rental houses. A young-looking 40-something, wearing a small button-down checked shirt, black cargo shorts, black Reeboks, and sporting a green ear stud, Zajaczkivsky is not exactly the image one has in mind for the head of an enterprising broadcast services company. He may be the CEO, but Zajaczkivsky is still willing to roll up his shirt sleeves and dirty his hands to get the job done. “I’ve been in the back with the fellows, moving and cleaning gear,” he says.

The company name, pronounced ZEE-TV, was inspired by Zajaczkivsky’s name. To many of his friends, he’s known as Steve “Zee,” and it didn’t take much for it to be pressed into service as the company moniker. The ZTV story runs something like *The Little Engine That Could*. Starting off 20 years ago, literally as a one-man rental band working out of his basement, Zajaczkivsky nurtured and developed ZTV through the years into an ever-growing concern that is now housed in a spacious 10,000 square-foot industrial complex in Mississauga, Ontario.

Zajaczkivsky earned his industry chops early in life. As a teenager he drove, for over a year, the equipment truck for Norman Jewison and his Canadian Centre for Advanced Film Studies. “They had this boxy truck, like the mailmen drove. The logos on the sides were painted over, but you could still see them. The insides

had been ripped out and shelves installed that were loaded with lights and cabling, like a grip truck. The Centre didn’t have much then and made do with what equipment they could get. It didn’t pay a dime, but I was fed, I got to take the truck home, and I learned a lot about the business,” Zajaczkivsky says.

What followed for Zajaczkivsky were stints at the CBC working on shows such as *Mr. Dressup*, *Street Legal*, and *The Kids in the Hall*. He also worked City-TV’s Much Music before gravitating to equipment houses where he acquired his taste for the rental business. “I was also freelancing for all these different staging companies, making contacts. I saw where it was all going and thought, ‘I’m going to buy myself one of these cameras. I can do this,’” he recalls.

Right from the beginning, ZTV carved its niche in the video rental business, servicing the live staging industry with cameras, camera gear and camera crews. Whether for television or the huge screens at a rock concert rolling through Canada, there’s a good chance that ZTV will be there. In fact, they provided the cameras for U.S. comedian Jerry Seinfeld’s tour this past summer. Another area of ZTV that is growing exponentially is production rentals to cinematographers, right from videographers through to production DOPs. Helping facilitate ZTV’s rapid growth is the newly appointed sales and marketing whiz Ted Mitchener and his expertise in cameras. With decades of industry experience under his belt, Mitchener spent 17 years at Precision Camera

honing his skills before calling ZTV home. "With Ted coming on board," says Zajaczkivsky, "it took ZTV to another level. We're bigger, better, and the sky's the limit."

Specializing mostly in Sony, ZTV also has Panasonic products and can put together Hi-Def or Standard Def, single camera or multi-camera packages depending on a customer's needs. "There is a market for everything," says Mitchener. "Technologically we can supply gear from the 1990s to present. We've got Betacam and DVCAM, but we're definitely into HD with the Sony PMW F-3 and their EX1 and EX3. We've just acquired the new Sony Digi Trax HD/SD Multi-Format Camera System. Plus, we have Panasonic, such as the AG-AF 100AVCCAM and their AG-HDX900." However, Mitchener warns, one can't stand still when it comes to the rental game. "In this business you need to buy it before you need it," he says.

Zajaczkivsky agrees, saying you've always got to keep an eye trained on future trends, anticipate your clientele's needs, and continuously add to your inventory. "I'd like to have a couple of Sony 800s in the next six months. We're going to be buying a wireless HD system probably in the next few weeks. Our acquisition wish list is endless."

It could be said that ZTV is the house that trust built. This is trust from clients underpinned by ZTV's knowledge, experience, service and quality equipment. Zajaczkivsky says trust doesn't happen overnight, that it took years of nurturing to cultivate

relationships of this type. Judging by the volume of returning customers, ZTV has a winning formula. "People have choices, they can go many places. It's all about who they trust. This is a personal business built on relationships. I think if you have good service and people trust you, you will do well," Zajaczkivsky says.

And providing good service is a 24/7 commitment when people rent from ZTV, according to Zajaczkivsky, especially if there is a problem that needs solving. "I've got this old-school pager. It's no wonder doctors have these, because they work in underground parking lots, they work in Sudbury, they work everywhere, while BlackBerrys and iPhones, well, you know, they are limited. If a client can't reach us then what good are we to them?"

The dedication to excellence and customer care permeates throughout ZTV and is mirrored by its staff. For longtime employee Henry Pinnock, in charge of rentals and technical support, it's all in a day's work going that extra mile for customers. "If there is a problem we'll solve it, we'll make it work even if it's in the middle of the night. That's what we do," he says.

ZTV may have been the little company that could at one time... Well, it did do it and is now a robust shiny express train with no expectation of slowing down. For Steve "Zee" it's about what's important and being all that one can be. "It matters to me what people think, so if you are going to do something, do it well," he says.

For more on ZTV, please visit their website: [ztvbroadcast.com](http://ztvbroadcast.com) 

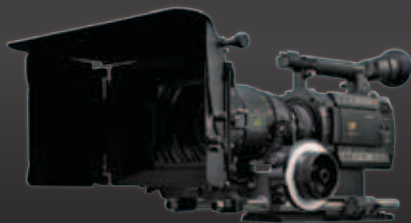


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