



VIDEO COPY SERVICES

Celebrating 25 years

by Kime Harless

VCS features a Teranex VC100 and a Sony SRW5000 High Definition Suite. Photos by John Heredia.

Video Copy Services (VCS) celebrated its 25th anniversary in July. What started as a company that produced copies of VHS and Betamax tapes has transformed into more than a dub house. VCS offers four different HiDef formats, the ability to author Blu-ray, and continually expands its offerings.

VCS opened in July of 1984 as a company that “mostly served corporate accounts like Delta and Coca-Cola with marketing tapes for different departments and clients,” said Trish Thompson, director of business development. Thompson has worked at VCS off and on since 1989. “I started out doing a lot of packaging work and then went into the more technical end of it in duplication.”

George Helms, the current owner of VCS, bought the business in September of 1997 from then owners Sonny Davis and Ed Matthews. Davis and Matthews also owned Technical Industries of Atlanta. Technical Industries

was expanding, and they wanted to sell Video Copy Services because it was smaller. “I ran Technical Industries for them as Chief Operation Officer for a few years and they knew I wanted to come back from Texas,” said Helms. “So, I visited them one day and they said, ‘How’d you like to buy a dub house?’ and I said, ‘What’s a dub house?’ Literally, I had no idea. Next thing you know, I bought it strictly because I knew them and they wanted to sell it.”

Helms partnered with then president of VCS, Tim Harris. They bought it and ran it together until Harris retired in 1999. Helms then partnered with Judd Wesley and began exploring digital encoding in addition to DVD authoring and duplication. Wesley resigned in 2007, leaving Helms as the sole owner of VCS.

Until 2000, VCS was located near North Druid Hills and I-85. Says Thompson, “Children’s Healthcare took over that whole complex on North Druid Hills. They made us an offer we

couldn’t refuse.” VCS is now located in the DeKalb Technology Center near Spaghetti Junction off of I-85. A number of reasons went into selecting the new location. First, Helms and VCS wanted to find a location that would already be built out. VCS also partners with an organization in Stone Mountain called DeKalb Enterprises to employ special needs people to do packaging. To qualify for the program, the business needed to stay within DeKalb County limits.

The new location is much larger and more accessible. The North Druid Hills location was an office space. Helms said if the crew needed to bring in inventory, there was no loading dock, just a small office door in the back of the building. “It was not conducive for what we were trying to do with packaging and stocking inventory,” said Helms.

Things haven’t always been easy for Helms and VCS. The company was the primary pro-

vider for Delta for eight to ten years. Helms says VCS used to run a dedicated shift every Sunday night, and they would need to have the job done by seven o'clock Monday morning for a Delta employee to pick up. "Overnight [Delta] decided to run it in New York with someone that had the rights to produce their [in-flight] movies so that they could integrate it all together. They pulled the plug on us at the same time we were getting ready to move," said Helms. It caused a spiral. Several other back-to-back events made the early 2000s very difficult. But, VCS recovered. They eventually won a bid to become Turner's in-house duplication provider.

"I think that Turner chose us because we were small and had just a few points of contact. We just kind of won them over with good customer service," said Thompson. To win the Turner bid, Helms focused on the customer service angle: "We went in and said we understand the broadcast industry. We understand it's onesies, twosies, it's quality, it's custom service...Our published hours are 8:30-5:30, but if you come here any Saturday or Sunday, someone's in here running a job."

Helms' flexible nature goes over well with his co-workers too. "All of us agree at Video Copy that he's a great guy to work for, and we really enjoy our time there. It's a fun place to work. He is laid back and just works with us and lets us have a flexible schedule which makes us work harder for him," said Thompson.

VCS maintains success now because Helms moves with current technology. "The prior company and management would wait until [technology] was out for a year or two and were safe with it, but I always felt you'd lose clients that way. They are going to go to someone else, and once they do, they are just going to stay with them. So, we've actually done it the other way. We've become early adopters," states Helms. VCS was one of the first duplication houses in the area to offer HiDef duplication and Blu-ray technology.

According to Helms, eventually everything will be done digitally. "There are still a lot of complexities because as [technology] moves into HiDef it's interestingly enough moving back, in the short term, more towards video tape. The bandwidth requirement for HiDef is so great that you can't send it the way you can send a simple file in standard definition. The file sizes are astronomical."

What's in store for VCS? Helms says they will continue expanding their digital offerings, on-line delivery and HiDef services. "The nature of the business, when it goes digital, is such that you do have to get into certain aspects of editing. A lot of people come in and want their files encoded digitally. They might want it in a format so that they can edit, so they might need it in an Apple ProRes. Well, you need an Apple editing system that produces that codec. So it necessitates putting in small edit suites that let you encode it," said Helms. VCS will be moving into some editing in the near future. They will be able to provide simple cuts and may even rent out their edit suites.

But as Helms says, "We're not really getting into the production business, that's not our thing. You go shoot it and produce it and we'll help you get it where and how you need it."

Congratulations, and here's to another 25 years for Video Copy Services!



George Helms, owner and President, Video Copy Services.



Trish Thompson, director of business development, Video Copy Services.

The way we were: Video Copy Services duplication rooms were VHS and Beta friendly. (Photo courtesy of Video Copy Services)

