



Meet Team Denecke - Stephen Perricone, Justin Manning, Ian Smither, Kim Parra & Charlie Parra

Denecke, Inc

A look inside the walls of time's favorite slate.

Time. Everyone knows what it is. It marches forward in definite regularity. Some wish they had more. While others count the seconds away. It triggered the start of the first moon landing and politely tells us when our freshly baked chocolate chip cookies are done.

Einstein said, "The only reason for time is so that everything doesn't happen at once." But the intuitive people over at Denecke may tell Albert that's exactly what they are looking to do.

Founded in 1975, Mike Denecke was working as a sound man on set at the time. After speaking with Manfred Klemme, an innovator in the motion picture industry in his own right, Mike took Manfred's suggestion that he should build some kind of time code slate. The TS-1 Time Code Slate was born shortly after. An automated clapperstick activated display that could be held with one hand and be seen by the camera lens no matter the lighting condition. It quickly became the standard in music videos as it eliminated the need to re-transfer takes to film mag, to sync music to picture, and the need to re-record the playback tape with con-

ventional sticks as a marker.

Once the television and commercial industry saw its advantages to view dailies, Denecke's Time Code slates became part of every production. Even after thirty-seven years, Denecke's precise ability to match sound with picture, still continues to evolve at the forefront of this now highly technical field. Now in its new home off Avenue Tibbitts in Valencia, California, S&P knocked on Denecke's door to see how the company keeps everything in sync.

When I first walked through the door, I was expecting to sign an NDA and be escorted by security for a pat down before meeting the brain child and team that makes Denecke's product line possible. But that wasn't the case. Tucked away in the industrial district off the 5 freeway sits a company that defines the heart of what America was built on - a small business that breathes ingenuity. Evolving with the film industry, Denecke doesn't only make time code slates. They manufacture an entire line of readers, time code generators, Cine Sync equipment and

audio accessories.

After the passing of Mike Denecke in March 2000, Charlie Parra took over the business with Mike's wife Celia until 2005. Celia eventually moved on and sold her interest in the company fully to Charlie. He then moved the business to Valencia in 2006, and his wife, Kimberly, joined him shortly after. Through it all he set out to do one thing - continue the legacy Mike built. Charlie is a calm guy who smiles not only because he's beyond polite, but you can tell just by watching him at his work bench, he loves what he does. "This job is fun. Part of me has always been a techie," says Parra. "Nothing is more satisfying then starting something, finishing it and then the public picking it up and saying this is really cool. It's such a natural high for me."

Mike took Charlie under his wing and taught him everything he knew about time code. Keeping the Denecke name going is such an intricate driving force behind what they do inside these walls. "Mike saw the interest I had early on and sent me to a trade school to take courses in electronics and pro-

gramming,” recalls Parra. “I remember working with Mike and he would take care of the hardware side of things and I would do the software side. We worked very well together. When he passed away, it was absolutely scary at first. I had to start doing both.”

The first three or four years after were tough for Charlie. The one thing he regrets during that time was the handling of the SB-T Video Sync Generator. “We had the SB-T about ready to go until Mike left us, we ended up holding back on its release during that time. When we did eventually release it, we ended up being a little late to the game. Thankfully, everyone supported it and it was great,” mentions Parra.

Though Charlie can be looked at as the minute and hour hands to a clock at Denecke, Kimberly is truly the second hand, moving constantly to keep everything from order fulfillment in check to answering calls from customers. Whether it is a potential issue someone is having with one of their products or a sound mixer calling up suggesting an idea, they note everything and look to improve their products with future models.

The introduction of the GR-2 World Master Clock that happened this year is a prime example. “We rely a lot on customer feedback,” states Parra. “We get calls almost daily from people who mention it would be cool if Denecke did that or did this. We’re always listening and if more people come to us with the same premise, we start considering the idea.” One of the reasons they upgraded the GR-1 to the GR-2 was not only because parts they use to manufacture the product were becoming obsolete, but they were getting a lot of feedback from Sound Devices 552 users that they wanted something small and portable they could plug in and do bag work with. The GR-2 operates with an easy-to-use joystick control module and GUI. The low power consumption provides fantastic battery life and it can read or generate a variety of rates (23.976, 24, 25, 29.97, 30 drop and non-drop) which are easily seen on the back-lit LCD.

Before hitting the market with a new product, Charlie puts his working ideas into the hands of a few mixers for feedback. “There is stuff I simply can’t think of because I’m not in the field. Our product testing is an intricate part to our success,” admits Parra.

From the hardware schematics to



Stephen (left) & Justin work together to assemble some of the more intricate parts inside Denecke's products



Ian works on circuit boards for the Denecke's TS-C slate

engineering the software, Charlie puts a lot on his plate. Luckily, he does have help. Justin Manning, Stephen Pericone, and Ian Smither are also part of the Denecke family. The trio help build the Denecke products by hand and work pretty contentedly alongside Charlie. Justin has been with the company the longest and he and Stephen are both heavily into music, playing in bands. “I used to work at a guitar company building guitars, but the work kind of fizzled out. Since many of the precision jobs out there are done by machines because of efficiency, I feel pretty lucky to have landed at a place that still allows you to work with your hands,” says Manning.

Denecke has already responded to the digital age of filmmaking by introducing a TimeCode ToolBox Apple

device app designed to read and generate LTC time code. “It’s a start,” explains Parra. “The internal accuracy of the devices are not as good as ours and drifts about a half frame every hour, so we suggest using it to “jump start” a device like one of our sync boxes or slates.”

The entire morning I spent with Denecke, I was surrounded by a form of politeness you rarely see anymore. They redefined the idea of Main Street for me, and I couldn’t have been happier meeting them. So the next time you clap a slate or adjust a frame rate, remember the people over at Denecke will always have time for you.

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