

Your Parents' Truck

Trucks Grow Up



Figure 3.17 A 1970s vintage truck with Norelco PC-70s, the main competition for RCA's TK-44. In fact, the PC-70 became the prevalent truck camera of the time. Internally this trailer's production compartment was much more spacious than earlier trucks. Starting in the '70s, and accelerating through the '80s, equipment rapidly shrunk in size, allowing two things to happen. Trucks got bigger and smaller at the same time. The trucks geared for high-end productions got larger. Forty-foot trailers were common in the late 1970s; by the mid-80s 48-foot trucks were prevalent; and today, the maximum allowed FTC length of 53 feet is common.



Figure 3.18 Conversely, trucks devoted to one- and two-camera productions got smaller. Trucks geared for single-camera operation became numerous, as a van could now carry the necessary camera, VTR and support equipment. Raw videotape footage could be captured in the field and edited back at the station. (Source: A.F. Associates)



Figure 3.19 This D.C.-based CBS truck used for news shows in the late '70s and early '80s had up to six cameras and two VTRs, and could handle up to 12 more sources. (Source: A.F. Associates)

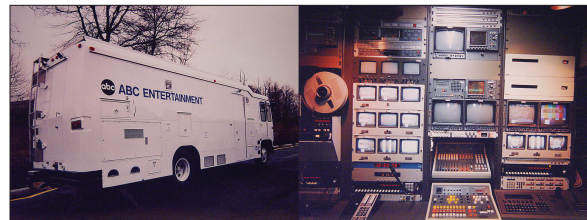


Figure 3.20 This ABC truck was used in the 1980s for soap opera productions. (Source: A.F. Associates)



Figure 3.21 ABC's Phase 7, a two-trailer unit, first launched in 1977. One trailer housed production, audio and camera controls. The other housed the primitive graphics of the day, plus more and more VTRs, as those items got smaller and more useful. At first there were three slow-motion units and two VTRs. At the end of the '70s, VTRs obtained the ability to playback in slow motion. (Source: A.F. Associates)



Figure 3.22 Equipment getting smaller didn't equate to more people space in trucks. It just meant more equipment could now be carried. As the number of sources increased, the amount of people required onboard during production also increased. To accommodate those folks, trucks that expanded out (expando) when parked arrived on the scene. (Source: A.F. Associates)

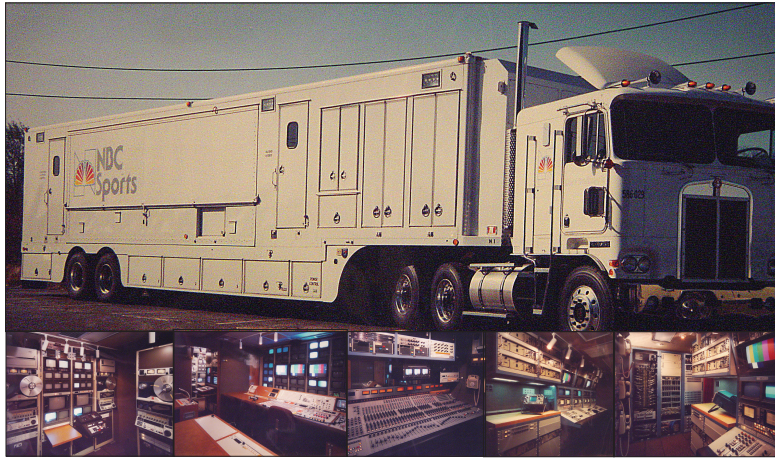


Figure 3.23 Tour of 1980s network truck. Walking from front to back: video control and transmission (two farthest right insets), audio compartment (front door), and then production compartment and on back past the graphics station and into the VTR compartment. This truck carried eight cameras and three VTRs. (Source: A.F. Associates)

Figure 3.24 Remotes can be quite different. As a result, utility trailers began showing up. The trailer shown contained power and environmental support, and video and audio cables to handle any additional equipment necessary. This extra equipment could include VTRs, graphics, camera robotic controls, etc. Also, workbenches in the truck could be used for onsite equipment repair. An interesting note about this truck, which was put on the road in 1982, was that it was reconfigured 20 years later to serve as the unit providing in-car pay-per-view for NASCAR, as well as the NASCAR International feed. (Source: A.F. Associates)

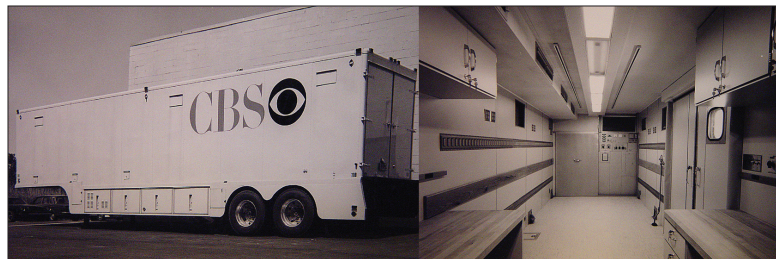


Figure 3.25 In the second half of the '70s, the handheld camera arrived on the scene. Thus, a mix of studio (also known as hard cameras) and handheld cameras became the complement of most trucks. Here another photo of Phase 7 shows its seven studio cameras, and two handheld (or soft) cameras on display. The handheld cameras are the front two cameras on tripods. (Source: A.F. Associates)





Figure 3.26 The triax camera had a major impact on remote operations. Instead of large cables from the truck to the camera, much thinner cables could be carried. This allowed for more cable, which meant more cameras, and more dispersed camera locations. Triax is a close cousin of the coax cable. Left is an RCA TK-47, right is an RCA TK-86.



Here we've seen that trucks 25 years ago were starting to look a lot like trucks today. Equipment continued to get smaller, allowing more sources, and more people to work in the truck. VTRs started to become numerous, and trucks geared at new niches in the business sprang to life. These evolutionary lines continued on all fronts, leading to the trucks in use today. ■

Figure 3.27 The 1980s introduced the satellite news-gathering (SNG) vehicle. This type of truck has electronics for uplinking to the Ku frequency band of satellites. In this drawing, the electronics at the rear of the truck support that operation. Some trucks also have limited production equipment, and almost all have editing facilities (front area of this truck). (Source: Wolf Coacht)