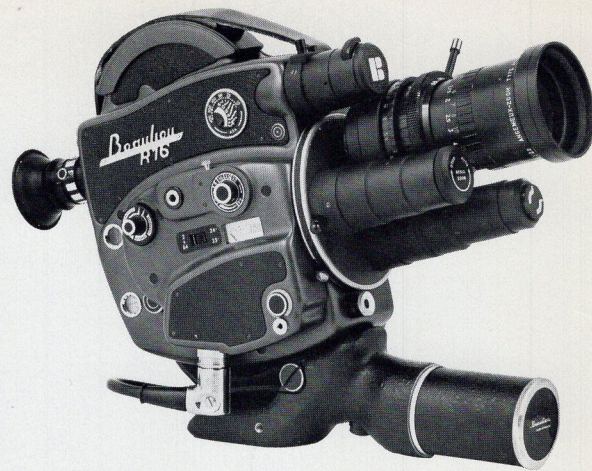


PRODUCT PROFILE

BEAULIEU R16B (PZ)

by HAL DENSTMAN

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If there's one thing that professional cinematographers will agree on, it's unquestionably the fact that filmmaking is a painfully demanding business, devoid of the glamour which the viewing public imagines after seeing an exciting film. To be successful at making motion pictures, whether for fun, profit or both, requires dedication, knowledge, visual sensitivity, conditioned reflexes, a strong back and equipment that works for, not against, the cameraman.

In the category of professional 16mm motion picture cameras, one doesn't find the assortment of equipment available in other formats, but rather a handful of instruments, designed for professional filming, not amateur theatrics. Among the handful who understand the film-maker's problems and needs is Cinema Beaulieu, a division of Hervic Corporation, distributor of the camera tested for this report, the Beaulieu R16B(PZ).

I must admit that prior to opening the packing crate, the closest that I had ever come to seeing a Beaulieu close-up was in printed literature. It didn't take long, I can assure you, before I developed a great deal of respect for a remarkable piece of machinery. The Beaulieu R16B makes you want to pick it up, put it to your eye and start running film. So, like any normally curious cinematographer, I did.

In what I consider to be a reasonably thorough hands-on evaluation, my admiration for the Beaulieu camera increased with each challenge that the camera met handily; with only minor assistance from the cameraman it's only fair to add. In every attempt to foil the automatic exposure system (as a crystal-clear example of integrity) the power-actuated system easily tracked along with the changing light levels, opening and closing the diaphragm with the precision of a fine watch movement. Much to my surprise and delight, I couldn't get a bad series of exposures on any of the films exposed, except in cases where the film's sensitivity was too low for the light conditions. When the manufacturer states that the exposure system is designed to give perfect results under normal light conditions, no exaggeration is made.

The new Beaulieu R16B(PZ) power-zoom system (PZ stands for power zoom) was released in March, 1972. The camera features a very smooth, automated-zoom system that can easily be operated with a finger of the left hand, while the palm of the same hand is used for stabilization. The power zoom

on the camera tested was coupled to a honey of a lens, a compact 17 to 68mm f/2.2 Angenieux, which seemed like a natural choice for a hand-held system. The compact Angenieux is short, light and generally inconspicuous compared to its more ostentatious family of professional zoom lenses. Larger lenses can be used, however, depending on the cameraman's preferences and focal length requirements of the work being done.

An interesting and very helpful feature of the R16B with power zoom is that one can vary the zoom speed while the camera is running. This is accomplished with the flick of a finger on the speed-adjustment knob, conveniently positioned in front of the forward and reverse zoom buttons. With its unique "all-or-nothing" micro switches, the zoom motion can be instantly activated or halted, thereby eliminating the mechanical inertia common to electrical zoom systems, and ensuring 100% precision. Another excellent feature of the power zoom (and one which professional cameramen should appreciate) is the full zoom range of 3 to 15 seconds, all accomplished automatically without annoying on-screen zoom jerks.

While the Beaulieu isn't self-focusing (nor is any other camera), the manufacturer has certainly provided a helping hand, or perhaps I should say a helping button. An automatic pre-focus aid, activated by fingertip pressure, quickly zooms the lens to its maximum telephoto position, while simultaneously opening the diaphragm to its widest opening. The cameraman can then perform precision focusing with full image brilliance without moving his eye from the viewfinder. Result: no wasted motion, no lost footage, more accomplished with less effort.

The R16B's power-drive system, which draws its energy from two types of screw-on rechargeable batteries, can expose 700' with the small battery cartridge and 1600' with the larger size. All of the camera's motors and power accessories are driven by the same battery system which, when attached, forms the forward segment of the hand grip. An additional power cell can be carried in the cameraman's pocket and attached in seconds, a big advantage over many other systems.

Also designed for use as a synchronous sound system, the R16B has a special tachometer control device to provide accuracy in the sound synch range. A speed changeover

switch shifts the Beaulieu's motor control to a precise 24-25 frames per second mode to facilitate accurate sound recording, while non-synchronous filming is done in the 2 to 64 frames-per-second range. For recording, a special synch pulse generator is available.

Although the camera tested was not equipped with an external film magazine, the mechanical fittings for attaching the 200' accessory film container, consisting of two locking screws, appeared to be sturdy and capable of holding the magazine in place with no undue stress. The pass-through chamber appeared to be light-tight and free of film-abrading obstructions. From experience with similar magazine configurations, I am sure that the magazine can be attached and the film threaded into the film gate in less than half a minute, a big help when you are in a hurry. Also, the operation seems simple enough and the camera light enough that the replacement of a magazine could be performed under difficult conditions, like being perched on the top of a tree, ladder, mountain or other treacherous places from which film people have a propensity to shoot.

The Beaulieu R16B power-zoom camera has all the features one needs to do high-quality filming, including specialized scientific documentation with appropriate accessories. Moreover, the system is compact and reasonably light, about 6-1/2 pounds with the zoom lens and full hand grip. In use it's a real delight, providing all the conveniences that one could ask for in this type of a system; more than a lot of photographers are accustomed to, in fact. The only drawbacks found were in the simplicity of the motorized zoom mechanism and automatic exposure device. They work so well that a bit of restraint is needed not to over-use the motor; while in the latter situation, the photographer may forget how to use his exposure meter.

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