

USER REPORT

EasyRig Proves to be a Practical Invention

by Jody Eldred
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Cameraman/Writer

MARINA DEL REY, CALIF.

I remember the first time I saw the EasyRig. It was at NAB, maybe seven or eight years ago. One of the inventors was walking around wearing it. Each year that I've attended the show, I've seen several really goofy creations, and my first thought upon seeing this one was, "Well, there's another crazy invention that's clever, but impractical. Not to mention funny-looking." And I dismissed it.

The next year, there it was again, this time at Band Pro's booth. I've bought five cameras, lights, support gear and you-name-it from Band Pro for years, so I know they're not into crazy, impractical inventions. I figured there must be something to this. I tried it on, and all of the sudden it hit me—this thing is great! It will totally save my back on those long, handheld days!

But I didn't buy one. Not yet.

It was not until I was hired to be a handheld cameraman on a Mark

Burnett program, "Combat Missions." It was a USA Network series and basically a military version of "Survivor."



The Band Pro EasyRig in use in a stealth camouflage operation

We were looking at some long days, with almost all cameras handheld, chasing around Navy SEALs, Green Berets, Delta Force, Marine Recon, and SWAT doing simulated missions.

IT SAVED MY BACK!

I was right—it did save my back!

And there were lots of envious cameramen on that shoot.

The EasyRig transfers the weight of the camera from your right shoulder to your hips, much in the same manner that a good backpack works. Your back doesn't get that S-shape curve to it after several hours, and you're not dealing with backaches and chiropractors.

You really can shoot handheld all day long with this thing and not get burned out. And the tension cable that holds the camera allows you to shoot at any height—waist high, for example—without requiring you to painfully shoot from your knees. You can raise and lower the camera instantly, and shoot from your waist letting the EasyRig support it and not burn out your arms. It's terrific.

EXTRA BENEFIT

It also allows you to shoot very steady shots at longer focal lengths than you would normally attempt handheld.

I didn't expect that benefit.

I've used my EasyRig with my Sony D600 Betacam and my F900 CineAlta HDCAM. The EasyRig has several models with different weight

capacities, so you can find one for any camera you can think of—all the way up to 35mm Panavision film cameras. The company recently introduced a new model for small DV and HDV cameras (like the Sony Z1U). Anyone who's shot with these for any length of time has experienced muscle strain in the forearms, as you can't rest these on your shoulder. You have to hold them out in front of you, very un-ergonomically. This new EasyRig does all the holding for you, and also has a small built-in backpack for accessories, batteries, tapes and the like. Very cool.

So if you're looking for easy handheld days, less chiropractor visits, and an additional 10 years to your handheld career, give the EasyRig a try. And prepare to be very pleasantly surprised! ■

Jody Eldred is an Emmy-winning director/cameraman in Los Angeles. He currently shoots for ABC Network News, CBS and NBC. He may be contacted at Ejody@aol.com.

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USER REPORT

Miller Proves a Winner at WTAE-TV

by Ralph Bell
Chief News Photographer
WTAE-TV

PITTSBURGH

I've been covering television news for over 23 years now and have been with WTAE-TV for 19 of those years. This is a demanding profession, as news coverage doesn't schedule itself for anyone's convenience. We're on call 24/7 and have to be ready to shoot at the drop of a hat. We have to have everything go right the first time; there are no second chances or make-good opportunities in this field.

Our camera packages run on the heavy side—Panasonic 810 DVCPRO cameras, Anton Bauer battery packs and on-camera lighting and Lectrosanics wireless receivers. I estimate that this amounts to around 23 pounds. To provide a good stable platform for our shoots, we need a heavy-



WTAE's Ralph Bell with a Miller Camera Support DS-30 head and Sprinter tripod duty tripod and head. That's where Miller Camera Support comes in.

The Miller Arrow System two-stage Sprinter carbon fiber tripod, with mid-level spreader, along with the DS-30 head, is a really nice combination for our purposes. It stands up well to the sort of abuse equipment gets in news applications and provides a rock steady support platform for the cam-

era. We've been using the DS-25 camera heads, but have found that the DS-30 is a better match for the new DVCPRO technology. I expect that we will be converting over entirely to DS-30s in the future.

We have about 10 Miller packages in daily use here at WTAE, and all of our news photographers are very pleased with them.

Over the years, I've worked with a good variety of professional tripods and heads, and while we still use more than one brand here at the station, most of our people prefer Miller. One area where Miller really shines is in service and support after the sale. We don't have too many problems with their equipment, but occasionally something will break, and all it takes is a phone call and they immediately dispatch a replacement out to us. It's almost always an easy fix. The same goes if we have a unit that has to go into the shop for more extensive

work or mods. They turn these jobs around lightning fast. Any issues have been extremely minor.

To illustrate the sort of customer support we get, Gus Harilaou, Miller's sales manager, pays us a visit here in Pittsburgh at least once a year. And he's not here just on a sales call. He's out to see how well the Miller products we're using are performing and to hear us out on any problems or suggestions that we might have.

During my career, I've had to make lots of equipment choices, but selecting Miller was one of the easier ones. I'm very happy with both the pricing and with the product itself. ■

Ralph Bell is chief news photographer at WTAE-TV. He may be contacted at rbell@hearst.com.

For additional information, contact Miller Camera Support at 973-857-8300 or visit www.miller.com.au.