

Camera Support Systems: Part 1

Making Your “Hand-Held” Even Better?

By Mitch Ives

Event videography, by its very nature involves a lot of hand-held work. Yes, the cameras are getting lighter, but the lenses are also getting longer... and let's face it, we're not getting any younger.

While watching a national news event, we noticed an ENG shooter with a bracket attached to the front of their camera, and a handle below it for support. After some research, we determined that this equipment was manufactured by Peter Lisand Corp. in Edgewater, New Jersey (201-913-5600).

Different Types

In previewing their website at www.peterlisand.com, we discovered that the Adjust-A-Grip was what we had seen. It comes in three models, designed to accommodate your existing pistol grip lens control, their pistol grip or their “dummy” pistol grip handle.

We also discovered a product called the Lisand Camera Support (or L.C.S.). This is a similar bracket with an adjustable rod that attaches vertically to a belt you wear around your waist.

We contacted the company and arranged to have some equipment sent out for this review.

First Impressions

To our surprise they sent us all three Adjust-A-Grip models, the L.C.S., and some accessories we had overlooked. Among these were some Option2 plates with a built-in Sony quick release mechanism, as well as a monopod that can be added to any of the brackets.

The first thing we noticed was the construction quality. Everything is very sturdy and well finished. Without

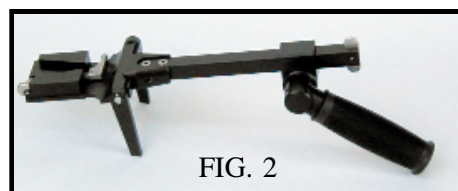
over stating the facts, the machine work is the best we've ever seen, in fact these border on being works of art.

The Adjust-A-Grip Series

The Adjust-A-Grip attaches to the front bottom plate of an industrial or broadcast camera. It can be mounted permanently, or you can use the Option2 plate if you have a Sony camera (fig. 1).



All three models have retractable feet for resting the camera. The Basic model has a fixed bar for mounting the pistol grip or handle (fig. 2), pictured here with the “dummy” pistol grip handle.



The Standard Model, differs from the Basic by having a 24 position rotatable bar for the pistol grip.

The Universal model adds to the Standard, a 45 degree horizontal rotation to the pistol grip mount.

The L.C.S.

The L.C.S. has a bracket similar to the Basic Adjust-A-Grip, but is somewhat lighter and less rigid (fig. 3). It has a sliding mount with one fixed and one swivel mounting posts. You



attach one end of the vertical rod to the swivel post, and the other end goes into the belt. The fixed post accommodates the optional monopod (more on that later).

Field Test: Adjust-A-Grip

We started off with the Adjust-A-Grip, and discovered that they definitely allow a steadier hand-held. This was particularly noticeable when using longer zoom lengths, like our 18:1 (fig. 4). We found that with some practice, we could hold the camera fairly steady at full zoom.

In addition, we noticed that the Adjust-A-Grip helped with camera balance, particularly since the lighter digital cameras tend to be front heavy with longer lenses, even with our dual batteries and wireless mic on the back.

We found the Sony quick release mechanism a must have, as it allowed us to remove the Adjust-A-Grip quickly and switch back to our tripod. There is a safety catch on the back of the quick release bracket, that keeps



you from releasing the bracket unintentionally. This was the first of many nice features we discovered.

Field Test: L.C.S

With the L.C.S., you wear a Nylon belt around your waist. This belt was a Valeo, familiar to anyone who lifts weights. The belt is wide and comfortable. Attached to the belt, is a mounting socket for the vertical rod. The socket has a dual position swivel, and a one-handed release button.

We found it easiest to insert the rod with one hand, and lock it into place, by pulling the knob out and turning it 90 degrees with your other hand. Then place the camera on your shoulder, reaching down to bring the vertical rod up to the L.C.S. bracket, and insert it onto the swivel post. The top of the vertical rod has a slip coupler like the ones on air hoses, so it can be operated with one hand. After that, settle the camera on your shoulder, and then extend or shorten the vertical rod until the camera is positioned at a comfortable height (fig. 5).



FIG. 5

The L.C.S. provided even more stability, the tradeoff being a somewhat longer setup. The belt swivel also allowed us to pivot the camera off our shoulder and rotate it down to waist height, with considerable stability.

Additional Options

There is an optional monopod that can be added to the Adjust-A-Grip or the L.C.S. It has a clever little



FIG. 6

new pistol grips, available for Fujinon or Canon, in 8 pin or 12 pin. It has a slight forward angle to the handle, which eliminates a lot of stress on the wrist. The handle also has machined recesses for your fingers. In addition, the handle can be turned to accommodate different wrist angles.

The start/stop button is on the backside, where your index finger falls naturally. The thumb rocker fits a variety of thumb sizes, and the variable speed limiting knob has a guard around the left half to prevent you from inadvertently bumping it. There is also a return button, to accommodate multi-camera environments.

Evaluating The Results

We learned quickly that among the Adjust-A-Grips, we preferred the Universal model, with all of the adjustability. It was more comfortable, since you can vary the twist and angle of the grip.

With the LCS, we found it more stable when you slide the vertical post mount all the way forward, so that the vertical post runs at an angle to the front of the bracket.

We also decided that we would want a pistol grip with any of these supports, for control over the zoom and start/stop functions, without removing your hand from the forward handle. Adding their pistol grip makes all the difference.

reversible foot, so you can have either a rubber foot, or a usable metal spike (fig. 6). We found that by spreading our stance and leaning on the camera a bit, we could track sporting events quite steadily, and move around.

During our review, Peter Lisand sent us one of their

Conclusions

First off, we could be happy with any of these choices. In the end, we chose the L.C.S., as it provided additional stability, and allowed us to

r e s t
between
shooting,
by simply
lowering
our arms
(fig. 7).
D o i n g
t h i s
allows us
to shoot
for much
l o n g e r
p e r i o d s
of time



FIG. 7

without developing the micro tremors that occur as your muscles tire.

We also purchased a second L.C.S. mounting socket, which we installed on our NRG battery belt, so we can substitute it for the L.C.S. belt when we need to run our Frezzi light. Wearing both belts simply doesn't work.

At a recent press conference we found ourselves waiting for the spokesman to arrive. Each time someone walked in, all the TV stations hoisted their cameras up again. We simply stood there with camera on our L.C.S., and when they finally did walk in, we just spun up the Frezzi dimmer and got the best position while the others were still reaching for their cameras.

Since the unit is almost entirely black, we find it blends well with formal attire, or standard video black clothing.

It makes shooting hand-held fun again, as well as visually rewarding. And let's not forget that the purchase price can be offset by the money saved in chiropractic treatments.

Next time in Part 2, we'll review your options for today's smaller camcorders...

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