



A Steady View

Glidecam HD-4000 & Glidecam X-10 Professional Camera Stabilizers

BY SEAN SEAH

An essential part of any professional videographer's arsenal, stabilizers are often used in movies, dramas and lately, wedding videos. This newfound interest has prompted other vendors to follow in the footsteps of the original Steadicam by Garret Brown, one of which is American company Glidecam Inc. This month, we check out the Glidecam HD-4000 and the Glidecam X-10; a potent combination which videographers might find worthy of consideration.

The Glidecam X-10 is a dual arm full body stabilizer, paired with the new HD-4000 handheld sled for large cameras. The X-10 is an upgraded version from the original Smooth shooter which was a single arm full body stabilizer released back in 2007 to cater to the masses. The X-10 on the other hand, was released in 2008 to cater to those who wanted an affordable dual arm rig. The HD series sled was introduced just this year to replace the aging Glidecam Pro series, with a new design

boasting several welcome refinements to the stage and baseplate.

The main component of the stabilizer is the Sled, arm and vest. Proper set up of all the components is required to achieve stabilization. The sled is normally mounted on an optional balancing stand. Balancing the camera on the sled is rather tedious and the stand makes it easier.

The sled comprises of the top stage, the post as well as the baseplate. The sled's main function is to mount and stabilize the camera. The sled itself operates on a counterbalance concept. The two ends of the sled are counterbalanced at a pivot point and secured with a freely rotating mechanism called the gimbal. The gimbal is connected to a yoke that is the single point of control. The HD4000 can be handheld by holding the yoke alone. However, we wouldn't recommend handheld operations this for cameras beyond 2.3kg



Here's how the HD-4000 looks like with a video camera mounted.

unless you happen to have some seriously strong arms to cope with the weight and balancing. When operating with the X-10, the

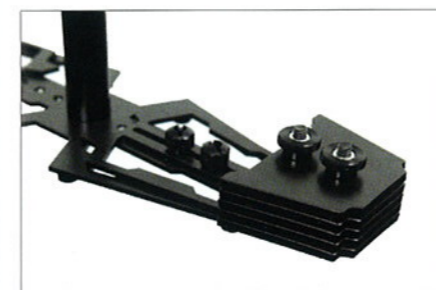
straight handle is a little awkward to handle but if an angle is incorporated, handheld operation would not be possible. This is somewhat of a minor niggle, but one that most should be able to live with, given the relatively low asking price of the equipment.

The HD-4000's top stage can be adjusted to a high degree of precision via thumbscrew adjustments. As millimeters of displacement can throw the sled out of balance, thus making operations unsteady, small improvements like these on the new sled can have a very big impact.

The telescopic central post is made of aluminum hence it is very sturdy. The stage and baseplate are both connected via internal threads within the post. However one problem that exists is the alignment of the stage and baseplate. It's a little difficult to align via estimation due to the distance of the stage to the base. This will make repeat balancing a little difficult at times but it is not a major issue.

The baseplate is now designed with flexibility in mind, with sliding options to expand or contract the baseplate for better rotational inertia. Weights can be added selectively and adjusted precisely. In comparison, the old sled had large washers as weights and they were difficult to be positioned precisely again should the unit be dismantled. Unfortunately, the new sled does not come with gimbal position adjustments, which would have enabled quick and dirty low mode operations.

The Dyna-Elastic support arm serves to absorb shocks and bumps from movement when booming and panning on the go. Booming



Weights can be added on for extra stability.



The vest is a little heavy, but fits Asian physiques surprisingly well.

with the X-10 arm is smooth, with each arm able to be tuned individually for desired lift. However the tuning can be tricky as a particular tool is required, with two points on each arm to be tuned. In other words, unless you happen to be a part-time octopus, having two persons should be required for tuning work.

During testing, we encountered heavy bouncing of the arms on one of the rigs, which made straight movements a little difficult to execute for long periods. With additional tuning work, you should be able to minimize the bounce to a further degree.

The arm is capable of sustaining up to 18 pounds (approx. 18kg) of weight while up to 0.7m away. For convenience, the arm is collapsible into two sections for easy storage. Operators a little on the chubby side might find it interesting to know that the design also incorporates a tilt adjustment to cater for those with larger midsections. Tilt adjustments help to keep the operator posture upright and that is important for operating endurance and comfort, otherwise one may end up "fighting" to balance the camera. Lefties should be pleased to know that the arms can be customized for both left-handed and right-handed operation.

The vest is worn by the operator to distribute the weight of the camera, sled and arms to the body in a uniform manner. The vest is well built but a little on the heavy side, making operational endurance a little shorter. Most importantly, it fits the Asian physique very well. Having tried and owned several stabilizers, the Glidecam HD-4000 and X-10 are certainly



The support arms of the X-10 can accommodate both left-handed and right-handed individuals.



The support arms, as well as the rest of the setup, can be easily dismantled for convenient transport.

well worth the money spent, considering the overall build quality and thought put into a design that works very well. Although not perfect, it does the job well enough, offering a good balance for both handheld and rig operations.

For a test video of the Glidecam HD-4000 and Glidecam X-10 in action, do check out Sean Seah's blog at <http://seanseah.wordpress.com>. HWM would also like to thank Expandore.com for the loan of both the Glidecam HD-4000 and Glidecam X-10.

SPECIFICATIONS

Glidecam HD-4000

Camera Plate	X,Y Head Dimensions	Camera Weight	Weight	Price
1/4" & 3/8" mounting	22.22cm x 12.7cm x 2.54cm	1.8-4.5kg max	1.5kg	\$5990 (not including GST)

- Designed for compact and full size cameras weighing from 4 to 10 pounds
- X,Y Head Dimensions: 8.750" x 5.00" x 1.00"
- Base Platform Dimensions: shortest—13.75" x 4.75" Longest—18.25" x 4.75"
- Central Support Post: 1.00" diameter
- 20" tall in shortest mode
- 28" tall in longest mode
- Weight: 3.315 pounds without counter weight plates.
- Each Custom Counter Weight Plate averages .272 pounds.
- The Glidecam HD-4000 includes 12 custom counter weight plates.
- 12 counter weight plates = 3.264 pounds
- Camera Plate has 1/4" & 3/8" mounting holes
- Includes Bonus Balance & Docking Bracket

Glidecam X-10

Support Arm	Arm Weight	Arm Boom Range	Individual Weight Plates	Price
Left & Right handed	2.6kg	30"	366g	\$3360 (not including GST)

- The Support Arm can be setup and configured so either a left-handed, or a right-handed operator can use the system.
- Dual Support Arm Boom Range: 30"
- Dual Support Arm Weight: 5 pounds 12 ounces in Two Spring Mode, without arm posts.
- Individual Weight Plates: each 12.9oz (366 grams)

HWM'S VERDICT

Glidecam HD-4000

Physique: 8.5
Features: 8.0
Performance: 8.5
Value: 9.0

8.5
Out of 10

Glidecam X-10

Physique: 8.5
Features: 8.0
Performance: 8.5
Value: 9.0

8.5
Out of 10

A potent combination for the videographer.

