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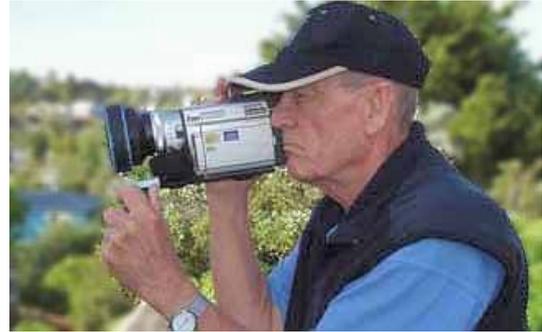
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# CAMERA SUPPORT IDEAS

by Brian Deakin

High on the wish list of most n-c film and video makers is the ability to get shots that are steady and smooth, especially at times when the use of a tripod is out of the question or just not practical.

First of all let me emphasise that nothing can beat a good solid tripod with a nice fluid action and we use one whenever possible. However, we often find ourselves in situations where a tripod is an encumbrance and often quite useless. Indeed, many of the world's historical sites and museums will not let you enter if you are carrying one. So how do we overcome this problem? First of all let us analyse what degrees of steadiness are required.



- ☞ For scenes that have plenty of movement taking place within the frame, e.g. bustling markets. A little camera movement is often forgiven and hardly noticeable. Indeed, it can add to the atmosphere by following the action.
- ☞ But for establishing shots e.g. wide-angle scenery shots, buildings, monuments and the like. These should be rock steady and wherever possible taken using a tripod, particularly if zooming or panning is involved.

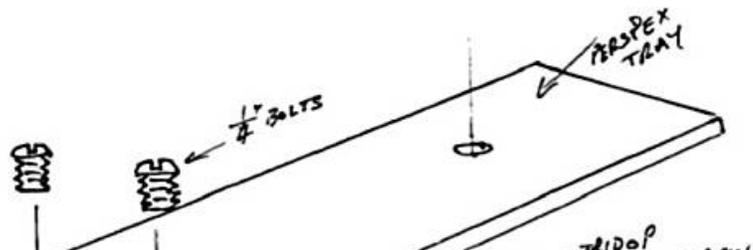
These are the methods we use to ensure the maximum amount of usable footage when a tripod is not in use.

- ☞ First and foremost we fit a good quality wide-angle lens to our cameras and use it constantly. This has the effect of increasing depth of field with better focus and reducing obvious camera movement. The only time we remove it is if we intend to take a long telephoto shot from a tripod or some other solid based object.
- ☞ We make use of solid objects around us e.g. lamp posts, fences, walls, trees, or any stationary solid object near at hand that we can use to brace ourselves against. Even just placing a leg up against a low stationary object will dramatically reduce the amount of body sway and shake transmitted to the lens.

The additional equipment that we employ is very simple and some of it home made.

- ☞ The "Bean Bag" A small bag filled with beads or seeds, ideal for sitting the camera on walls for that long or short telephoto shot. Or the dashboard of a car for that smooth on the moving shot. The camera is best operated with the remote control.
- ☞ We do use a "Monopod", but rarely extend the leg to the ground unless we have something else to brace against. This is when we find it most effective.
- ☞ Our latest piece of equipment is very simple and easy to make, we call it the "Camera Mounting Tray". The photograph above shows me using it. The effect of the tray is to stabilise the camera at both ends, particularly at the lens end where most of the body's shake and movement is transmitted. We have just used it to great effect on our latest trip through Turkey and are very pleased with the results.

The tray is constructed from one piece of ¼" thick Perspex (plexiglass), about 3" wide by 10" long. It has a ¼" hole drilled to match the position of the camera tripod screw, into which you insert a standard tripod mounting screw. The front end has a piece of 1" x ¼" alloy bar, bent downward with a rubber grip



fitted and the whole thing is bolted to the front of the tray.

Of all the bits and pieces we have tried over the years, and we have tried a few, this has proved to be the most effective, particularly when used in conjunction with other stable ground based objects as previously mentioned. We hope this information will be of help to other movie makers.

- Brian Deakin

*Brian and Pat Deakin have an enviable record of fine travel movies. Based in New Zealand they seem to travel the world a lot, always taking pictures as they go.*

