

Camera Equipment Review - Wimberley Head WH-200

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Wimberley

When NPN's editor, Jim Erhardt, offered me the opportunity to review the new Wimberley head version II (WH-200), I jumped at the opportunity. The original Wimberley head has been my main head when photographing with my Canon 600mm f/4. It provides effortless control over a large telephoto lens. The new Wimberley head features a refined design, a reduced profile, and is an improvement upon the original in many ways.

New Design

The most significant design change with the WH-200 is the horizontal pan control. To adjust the horizontal movement on the original Wimberley head, the user needed to reach under the lens to turn the knob. This was awkward and required two hands in order to lock both the vertical and horizontal motions. The problem has been solved on the WH-200 because the horizontal pan control has been moved to the same side of the head as the vertical pan. This is a huge advantage when shooting because it allows you to use one hand when adjusting the head while still having a hand free to fire the camera when needed.

Redesigned control knobs have replaced the old style round knobs. The old knobs were smooth and perfectly round and functioned fine with bare hands; however, they were very difficult to grip and turn with gloves. The new knobs are a "lobed" design and are covered in a grippy rubber material. Therefore, they are now very easy to grip and turn tightly even when wearing bulky gloves.

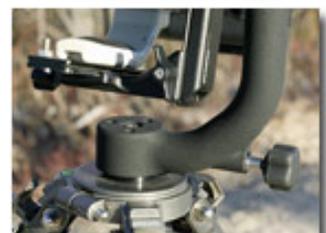
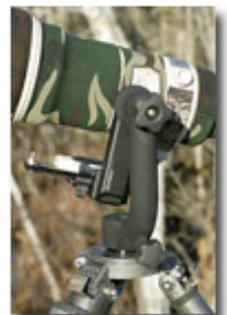
Unlike the old head, the WH-200 has an integral quick release clamp that helps reduce weight and bulk from the head and displays a more refined look. Also, the new clamp is in the Arca Swiss format and will accept Arca Swiss lens plates.

Wimberley has also reduced the weight and profile of the WH-200. They have managed to shave off one pound of weight and have lowered the overall height by two inches. This may not sound like a lot, however it makes for a more compact, less bulky head while still keeping the balance just right.

With the old Wimberley head, I used the M-5 Wimberley head flash module along with the M-3 module for my flash. The WH-200 will not accept the M-5 flash module as Wimberley has redesigned the new head's platform adjustment arm in the Arca Swiss style. The old head used a dovetail design, therefore you will need to buy the FA-9 adapter or purchase the new M-9 module that will fit the Arca Swiss groove on the WH-200. Since the new M-9 fits the Arca Swiss groove, it can now be attached to lens plates, unlike the M-5. This offers greater flexibility when shooting without the head. The new M-9 module fits very securely and the redesigned knob is easy to grip and turn. Personally, I would opt for the new module over the adapter for the old M-5 module.

In the Field

In the field, the WH-200 performs flawlessly in all conditions. Having the horizontal pan on the same side of the head as the vertical pan makes for quick adjustments and lockdowns. Coming from the old head, the WH-200 takes a little getting used to and I found myself reaching under the



head looking for the horizontal pan knob a few times! Old habits are hard to break but it didn't take long to get used to the new layout. The WH-200 performed flawlessly in snow, ice, and temperatures near zero degrees Fahrenheit.



The WH-200 is also advertised as having zero play when locked down which makes a very stable setup without any creep. You do have to apply a fair amount of force in order to lock down the head completely but the new knobs make it very easy.

Conclusion

Improving upon the original Wimberley Head's ease of use and performance is no small feat. The same perfect balance and motion of the head has been maintained for effortless movement of your long lens. Wimberley took the basic design of the original head and refined it to create the improved WH-200. The greatest advantage of the WH-200 is the new position of the horizontal pan control. Being able to use one hand to lock the head without having to let go of the camera is a great improvement from the old design. Shaving a full pound off the head is another bonus when dealing with large heavy lenses and camera bodies. I commend Wimberley for listening to their customers and making life easier for photographers using large telephoto lenses. The WH-200 is the pinnacle of design in gimbal style heads and anyone using one will not be disappointed!

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GM-NPN 0459

Garth McElroy is a full-time nature photographer specializing in birds. He is from the rural state of New Hampshire and has always had a strong passion for birds and photography. His images have appeared in many publications and have been used by several private organizations. Garth's photos can be found on his website, www.featheredfotos.com.

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