

## "VIRTUAL PERSON" RIG HOLDS VIDEO CAMERA AND CROWN SURROUND MICROPHONE ARRAY



Audio engineers and video-camera operators for field productions have a new tool for carrying their camera, lighting, recorder and surround mics -- all without breaking their back. An article on this invention appeared in the March/April 2008 edition of *Michigan Vue* production magazine; written by Gary Pillon, contributing editor. Some portions are excerpted below:

"I've been trying to capture video with surround sound since 1981, when the rig was binaural microphones, a tube Ikegami camera and a ¾" tape deck. Five years later, Sound Moves Productions' "The New Historians" show proved that my newly invented Crown PZM stereo shotgun microphone worked from a Steadicam. Ten years after that, I shrank this 'virtual person' technique down to the first Sony and Canon DV cameras sitting on a ProMax SteadyTracker; counterbalanced by a Crown SASS-P MKII stereo microphone"

Gary recently invented a new portable rig that includes a high-definition camera, Crown SASS-P MKII surround mic array, lights, batteries and a Flash memory recorder. On top of the rig, Gary mounted two SASS mics back-to-back to capture surround sound. He calls it the BBP array, for its inventors Billingsley, Bartlett and Pillon.



The mount holding the audio/video gear is shown above on a tripod. Alternately, an Easyrig3 Cinema body brace can be worn by the user. It would support the weight of all those devices by transferring the load to the user's back and hips.

This system requires an EA 265 arm, mentioned only on the European Easyrig site. The arm, which comes up and over an operator's shoulder, clamps to a U-shaped auxiliary mount coming up between the two SASS mics. The U holds a dowel that allows the counterbalanced nylon cord to clamp to the microphone assembly and avoid mechanical noise.

The user might need to remove the plastic swivel mount from the base of the BBP array, attaching the Manfrotto clamp to the aluminum base plate directly. This would let the BBP mics sit closer to the Fig Rig, and the plastic adjuster would not be in danger of cracking and dumping the rest of the load from the bottom of the array. This process would hold the Virtual Person directly in front of the operator, allowing the device to be steered with the arms, not held by them.

Gary describes how the rig works:

"...I brought my co-invented Crown BBP Surround SASS array, and Jamie Scarpuzza loaned me his Deva IV hard disk recorder to demonstrate a completely working prototype. This particular version of the design, held together by the QB-02 adaptor, will safely lift the array 10 feet in the air, making it perfect for people like noted location mixer Lang Elliott to do his extremely quiet nature recordings, while my PZM system can shoot over crowds while passing the extremely loud sound effects of a NASCAR race or a Harrier Jump Jet take-off. Furthermore, any Iconix or Sony HD Teleconference camera mounted to the crossbar can be remotely controlled, making it the perfect live music center camera. The surround microphone will be at the right acoustical spot, and directors can't complain that it shows in the wide shot, because the camera is making that shot from underneath the microphone array."

For more information see the links below:

Crown BBP Surround SASS Array  
[http://www.crownaudio.com/mic\\_web/Surround\\_SASS.htm](http://www.crownaudio.com/mic_web/Surround_SASS.htm)

Pillon "Virtual Person" production system (2001)  
<http://www.glidecam.com/pdf/markee-magazine-aug-2001.pdf>

Pillon PZM Stereo Shotgun (1985)  
<http://www.crownaudio.com/pdf/mics/127089.pdf>