

The New Kid on the Block (Well not a kid....) The New Ronford Atlas 50



A year ago, I was thinking of updating my O'Connor 2575 fluid head and while investigating the new and upgraded heads on the market, John Buckley (at Movietech), recommended trying a modified Ronford Atlas 40 fluid head he had, a prototype to the new Atlas 50.

At the time I was just starting a project in Wales and we agreed for me to have the head for a short period, to assess its capabilities. This initial assessment we thought was going to be a few days.... 6 months later and at the end of the job, I found myself returning the Head grudgingly; I am now awaiting with anticipation the final product "the new Atlas 50 Fluid Head".

Ronford-Baker has been part of my professional life since the late 70's. Over this period, I have worked with most models produced, from my early days on

documentaries, then commercials and finally feature films.

(I remember once trying to explain whilst working on a film in the USA that those metal legs everybody liked so much, were actually produced at the back of a dairy just outside London, in what looked like a very big shed, no one believed my story, those were the days!)

Over the years their name and excellence in engineering has become a landmark in the world of Cinematography, and now their premises have become an engineer's paradise.

Their history speaks for itself (using their own words):

"Ronford-Baker Engineering was formed in 1966 as collaboration between Ron Ford, who ran a camera rental business and Harry Baker, a talented engineer.

Initially set up as a maintenance facility for cameras and associated equipment, Ronford-Baker soon became known as a place to get 'specials' engineered for feature films. These films included "The Clockwork Orange" and "James Bond".

One such special request was for an adjustable tripod for the production of "Ryan's Daughter". It needed to survive daily use submerged in the sea. Our heavy-duty tripod was born!

This internationally patented, and Academy Award winning, telescopic 4 tube design developed into a full range now used in all aspects of the film and television industry throughout the World.

In the late 1960s fluid heads had only 2 settings, on or off.

Ronford-Baker Engineering, led by Harry Baker, designed and developed the first fluid head with variable levels of fluid damping. This Patented design was internationally recognised and as a result received a Technical Oscar.

The continuing development of the technology led to a whole family of heads: F2, F3, F4, F7, F15, F15S, F30, mini7.

The introduction of a counterbalance system gave us the '2000' family: 2003, 2004, 2015, 2030.

Our newest range, the ATLAS, has all the tried and tested attributes that our company was built on, strength, service life and reliability, and adds the functionality demanded by the modern industry – 180 degrees of tilt, variable fluid power including 'free' running, infinitely variable counterbalance, and massive payload capability. All whilst maintaining the effortlessly fluid feel synonymous with Ronford-Baker heads.

Ronford-Baker is still owned and run by the same 'family' of hands-on people, who collectively have over 200 years experience in the design, development, manufacture, service and use of camera support equipment."

A great attribute to a changing and competitive world.

Technically the Atlas 50 head can take any of the cameras in the market and is very easy to use.

- Tilt range + & – 90 degrees
- Pan range 360 degrees continuous Pan bar mounts.
- Two Pan Bars on ratchet discs
- Lifting handles integrated
- Head bases 150 m/m or Mitchell (adaptor)

- Stand off protection on both sides of the head.
- Sand proof sealed.
- Short plate has 7" / 18 cm movement. The Long plate has 13" / 33 cm movement.
- Fluid system, 7 steps pan & tilt with zero positions at either end of the scale.
- Counterbalance can also go into "Free" position.
- Illuminated Spirit level with Tritium light source.
- Adjustable Eyepiece levelling bracket.
- Smooth positive braking on pan & tilt."

Technical Specifications

- Weight 10.50 kgs.
- Height 265 mm/ - 10 ½"
- From the tripod bowl 215mm – 8 ½"
- With Mitchel fitting 250mm - 10"
- Width 250mm - 10"
- Depth b 175mm - 7"
- Max Load 35 kgs.

The Atlas 50 has 50% more fluid power than the Atlas 40 head.



One final word, they are still servicing heads built over 30 years ago, as their clients can never seem to part with them!

We as Camera Operators have our preferred equipment we use, I would recommend that next time you are looking to upgrade, look at the new Atlas 50 you might

also be pleasantly surprised.

Rodrigo Gutierrez ACO