

Funny Name, Serious Tripod!

by
E.J. Peiker

Several years ago the Hungarian company UniqBall made a splash with their Uniqball Tripod heads which combined the versatility of a ballhead for smaller lens/camera combinations with the ease of use of a gimbal head for large super telephoto lens/camera combination in a single, relatively light, and easy to travel with package. The UniqBall quickly won over many customers that previously traveled with both a traditional ballhead and a large, heavy gimbal head. While it has some compromises for both usage models, once a photographer gets used to them, it performs very well and is very travel friendly from both a size and weight perspective. More recently the same company, UniqBall, introduced three new carbon fiber tripods; a short 3 leg section model with a 48" maximum extension, a slightly less short 4 leg section model with a 56" maximum extension and a taller 4 leg section model with a 60" maximum extension. They are called the iQuick3pod 36.3, iQuick3pod 36.4, and iQuick3pod 40.4 tripods respectively. Both tripods use the same Black and metallic red color scheme of the UniqBall giving the combination a coordinated look. The tripod, at least during its initial offering period, ships with a high quality padded tripod bag and tripod spikes that can be used in place of the rubber feet. The company indicates on their website that these extra items will be optional in the future and are included during an initial promotional period of unspecified length.

The three iQuick3pod tripod models are similar with the exception of the extra leg sections and height. In general the 60" iQuick3pod 40.4 will be much more useful to the vast majority of photographers as the others are too short for most people so the rest of the review will focus on that model. Basic specs are as follows:

- Load capacity: 99.2lb
- Maximum height: 59.8"
- Minimum height: 3.7"
- Folded length: 22.6"
- Weight: 5.7lb
- 10x Carbon Fiber Construction
- Integrated leveling base with bubble level
- 3 position leg locks
- non slip twist locks



When one first unpacks this tripod one is immediately impressed by the high quality feel of the tripod. It is hefty! The top legs are 1.5 inches in diameter and even on the taller 4 leg section model, the bottom legs are still 1.125 inches in diameter. They are constructed of very strong 10x carbon fiber for maximum stability. Leg extension is done with large rubber twist locks and the leg sections themselves do not rotate. One of the three legs is covered in neoprene for more comfortable carrying, especially in cold temperatures. The angle leg locks, often the bane of tripod design are friction slides that work very well. The hinges should require no maintenance other than tension adjustment with the provided Allen wrenches.

The tripod base is basically designed as a cradle or frame for the red leveling base. It will remain to be seen how strong structurally this frame is to hard side impacts in extreme cold but the design looks like it should be highly crack resistant since the holes in the frame should act as a stress relief. The red leveling base has a built in bubble level and it's tilt angle is limited only by the tripod head's width. It will tilt up to the point where the head hits the frame that holds the leveling base. This could be as much as 60 degrees with a smaller head. Using UniqBall's own larger 45XC head or a ReallyRightStuff BH-55, the maximum leveling angle is approximately 20 degrees. With a smaller head such as a ReallyRightStuff BH-40, the maximum leveling angle is approximately 45 degrees. The top of the leveling base includes rubber rings that will hold a tripod head firmly in place without the need to over-tighten it while maintaining the capability of easily removing the head. In addition to the standard 3/8" socket, there is also a set screw that can be used to more permanently secure a head to the base or to prevent any undesired twisting of the head on the base.

Overall the iQuick3pod tripods are very well thought out and a pleasure to use in the field with no major annoyances. They are extremely strong and stable for even the heaviest gear on the



market. They isolate the camera system exceptionally well from environmental influences such as vibration or wind. The built-in ability to level the base at relatively high angles allows this tripod to be used in areas where normal tripods, even those with traditional leveling bases which are usually limited to about 15 degrees, simply cannot be leveled.

As with all products, there are some areas that could be improved. For a 6'1" photographer, a 60" high tripod is not tall enough. Even when adding a head and a large telephoto lens mounted on its lens foot, the tripod is still 4 to 5 inches shorter than desired. A peculiar engineering choice is the integrated bubble level as UniqBall's own 45XC ballhead covers the level when mounted. While the 45XC does have its own level in its base, it still seems like a minor product integration failure by the engineering teams. As mentioned, only one of the three legs has a neoprene covering on the top leg section for ease of carrying, it would be nice to have this extended to all three legs. There is no hook on the underside of the leveling base to add even more mass to the setup if needed. Finally, if one is not careful, without a tripod head attached and the leveling base lever loosened, it is possible to twist the leveling base right out of its cradle and it can be difficult to get it back into place once that happens without scratching the red metal anodization on the base. This can't happen with a head attached or if the base is tightened down but if the base is shifted to an extreme angle without a head, it can pop out.

Overall, the iQuick3pod is an outstanding, strong, and user friendly tripod made for hefty loads. It is easily of the same quality as the major players in the super sturdy carbon fiber tripod market.



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