

## Operation

It is important to adopt an optimal and consistent “working style” with the BH-55 ballhead, or any other photography equipment for that matter. The following description is one working mode that we can recommend. Of course, you can adapt this to suit your own style.

**1. Attach the BH-55 to your tripod** – First tightening the Pan Lock Knob to lock the Panning Base and then screw the ballhead onto the 3/8”-16 threaded stud on the top of the tripod. Tighten the ballhead onto the tripod snugly, but do not over-torque or it will be difficult to remove later.

**2. Set up the tripod** – After deciding on the basic composition of the image(s) and required camera position, set up the tripod so that it will match the required camera position. This step is critical if doing macro photography where the composition may require unusual camera positioning; otherwise, just set up the tripod for comfortable use.

**3. Orient the Ballhead** – With the tripod & BH-55 in front of you, loosen the Pan Lock Knob and rotate the Body of the BH-55 ballhead so that the drop notch closest to the Main Lock Knob is on the left side (at 9:00 o’clock if you are looking top-down) and the other drop notch is at the front away from you (at 12:00 o’clock). This places the Main Lock Knob conveniently for you to operate with your left hand (at about 7:00 o’clock) while your right hand is free to operate the camera controls. Tighten the Pan Lock Knob. With this orientation, you can readily tilt the camera body over from horizontal to vertical using the drop notch.

### 4. Orient the Quick Release Clamp

- a. For camera bodies with conventional style quick release plates (with the dovetailed rail running parallel to the film plane), rotate the **Ball** so that the Quick Release Clamp channel runs side-to-side.
  - i. If your ballhead is equipped with a B2-Pro II screw-knob type clamp, put the clamp’s knob facing front, toward the subject. This places that knob underneath the lens. If there is not enough clearance under the lens to accommodate the knob (as with older, short-bodied 35mm cameras with large diameter lenses), then you will need to either orient the quick release clamp knob to the rear of the camera or switch quick release clamps to the B2-AS II lever-release model.
  - ii. If your ballhead is equipped with a B2-AS II lever-release clamp, you can conveniently orient the lever either towards the front or the rear without worry of interference. This is possible

because the lever does not protrude more than 3/4” when closed.

- b. When mounting cameras with special fore/aft quick release plates or a tripod-collared lens with a lens plate (with the dovetailed rail running parallel to the lens axis), rotate the Quick Release Clamp so that the channel runs fore/aft.
  - i. If your ballhead is equipped with a B2-Pro II screw-knob type quick release clamp, orient the quick-release clamp with its knob pointing to the right. This helps avoid inadvertent release of the equipment from the clamp by confusing the quick release knob with the Main Lock Knob which is operated with the left hand.
  - ii. If your ballhead is equipped with a B2-AS II lever-release clamp, you can conveniently orient the lever either towards the right or the left with little worry of “knob confusion.”

**5. Adjust the Drag Set** – (optional) Some photographers prefer to have tension (drag) on the ball at all times to prevent the camera from suddenly flopping when the Main Lock Knob is loosened. If the drag is set with enough tension, you can position the camera and lens at various angles and if you release the camera it will stay in place without needing to fully tighten the Main Lock Knob prior to exposing the shot. The optimal amount of drag depends on the size and shape of equipment being used as well as the angles at which you wish to place the equipment. Heavier, larger equipment and steeper angles require a higher drag setting. Set the drag with the Main Lock Knob loose then tighten the Drag Set Knob until you achieve the desired tension. ***NOTE: it is easy to forget that you set the drag and then try to loosen the Main Lock Knob with no apparent affect on the operation of the ball. If this happens to you, please check the drag setting first and do not over-loosen the Main Lock Knob.***

**6. Tighten the Main Lock Knob (optional) & expose the image** – As mentioned in #5 above, many photographers simply rely on the Drag Setting and do not fully lock the Ball using the Main Lock Knob. This is fine for many situations depending on your equipment and how high the drag setting is. If using a long telephoto at slow shutter speeds, it is best to tighten the Main Lock Knob before exposing your shot. Conversely, you may want to leave the drag setting loose and only use the Main Lock Knob to control both drag and lock. Experiment and see what works best for you.

As you adopt a procedure that works for you, it’s best to practice that working mode consistently until it becomes second nature. This will save you time in the field and help avoid costly mistakes. Seasoned pros are able to setup and shoot literally within seconds.



**Really Right Stuff**

205 Higuera St, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401 USA

phone 1-805-528-6321  
US & Canada 1-888-777-5557  
fax 1-805-528-7964



## BH-55 Ballhead (Patent Pending)

Thank you for choosing a Really Right Stuff BH-55 Ballhead. It is the culmination of years of development based on first-hand experience and abundant input from seasoned professionals. Please review this manual to see how you can get the most from the BH-55.

## Care

**General Care:** The BH-55 comes packed in our SB-55 neoprene pouch. Keep the BH-55 in this pouch whenever practical. When transporting the ballhead, we recommend removing it from the tripod. When the ballhead is not in use on the tripod, cover it with the SB-55 pouch and tighten the drawstring around the bottom to keep it in place. The BH-55 is finished with a protective anodize plating. This plating protects the aluminum from corrosion and mild abrasion. It will not protect it from scraping against or dropping on rocks/concrete/etc.

**Lubrication:** The BH-55 is lubricated at the factory and parts that require lubrication are sealed. **NO LUBRICATION IS REQUIRED BY THE USER.** Especially **DO NOT LUBRICATE THE BALL** as this will decrease the lock-up capacity and tend to attract dirt/dust. Just keep the ball free from contamination to maintain smooth action.

**Cleaning:** Take whatever precautions you can to prevent your BH-55 from getting fouled in mud, dirt, or sand. A good habit is to keep a plastic bag with your camera gear to quickly cover your camera and ballhead if you get caught in a rain/sandstorm. If the BH-55 is fouled, dry dust and dirt can be blown off and/or wiped off with a soft cloth. Mud or salt water should be lightly rinsed off with fresh water and then thoroughly dried. **DO NOT** submerge the ballhead when washing and do not direct a high-pressure stream of water at the ballhead.

All the knobs are captive, meaning they cannot come off without damaging them so do not attempt to remove the knobs. The knobs have an O-ring seal. They are designed to have enough clearance between the knob and body to allow easy cleaning in case of fouling. The O-ring seal will not allow contamination to migrate deep into the body. If fine sand/grit fouls the knob, simply run a gentle stream of water around the knob while rotating it one-half turn back and forth.

## Key Features/Nomenclature

**1. Main Lock Knob** – Our snag-less, large-diameter knob is designed for easy locking of the ball. The standard version is a beautifully knurled, full T6061 aluminum knob anodized dark grey to match the ball and other knobs.

**2. Body** – CNC machined from solid T6061 aluminum, the robust body is designed for maximum strength with a low profile. Uniquely, the body is slit between the Main Lock Knob and the panning/drag set knobs to act as the integrated clamping mechanism. A neoprene gasket seals the slit to prevent wind-blown dust from entering the body. The body is textured for beauty and to inhibit unsightly finger-printing.

**3. 55mm Ball** – The large diameter ball is hollowed to reduce weight and easily handles heavy loads with ample lock-up. Input from many of our heavy/extreme weather-use customers revealed numerous problems (sticky, inconsistent action) in humid or very cold conditions with ballheads that have an aspherical ball, so to ensure smooth operation under adverse conditions we adopted a completely spherical ball. This equates to a lower weight-handling capacity, but we are confident our BH-55 capacity of 50 pounds is certainly more weight than required by any sane photographer.

**4. Quick Release Clamps** – Our renowned Really Right Stuff clamps have been updated with added features and new, eye-pleasing contours to beautifully integrate with the BH-55. Available in three models: 1) our tried & true screw-knob B2 Pro II clamp (as shown); 2) our patented quick-action B2 AS II lever-release clamp; and, 3) the PCL-1 panning clamp for the ultimate convenience in panorama photography.

**5. Circular Spirit Level** – We've added a compact, high-contrast bubble-level for leveling convenience.

**6. Stainless-Steel Hex-Socket Screw** – Our quick release clamps are conveniently interchangeable. Simply use the included hex-key to remove the hex-socket screw that holds the clamp in place, lift the clamp off the ball stem, and replace with the desired suitable Really Right Stuff clamp.

**7. Quick Release Clamp Jaw**

**8. Quick Release Clamp Knob** – All knobs, including the QR clamp knob are captive. In other words, you need not worry about the knob falling off and rendering your ballhead useless in the field. All knobs have a unique shape and are arranged so that once you become familiar with your BH-55 you will be able to distinguish them by feel without taking your eye away from the camera viewfinder.

**9. Safety Stop Relief** – Relief grooves on either end of the quick release clamp allow maximum adjustability of later-model Really Right Stuff quick release camera body and lens plates and Wimberley plates within the clamp without allowing the plate to accidentally slide out of the clamp if only partially open.

**10. Dual Drop Notches** – Two drop notches are spaced 90 degrees apart, positioned for flexibility when tilting the camera into vertical aspect or at steep downward or upward angles.

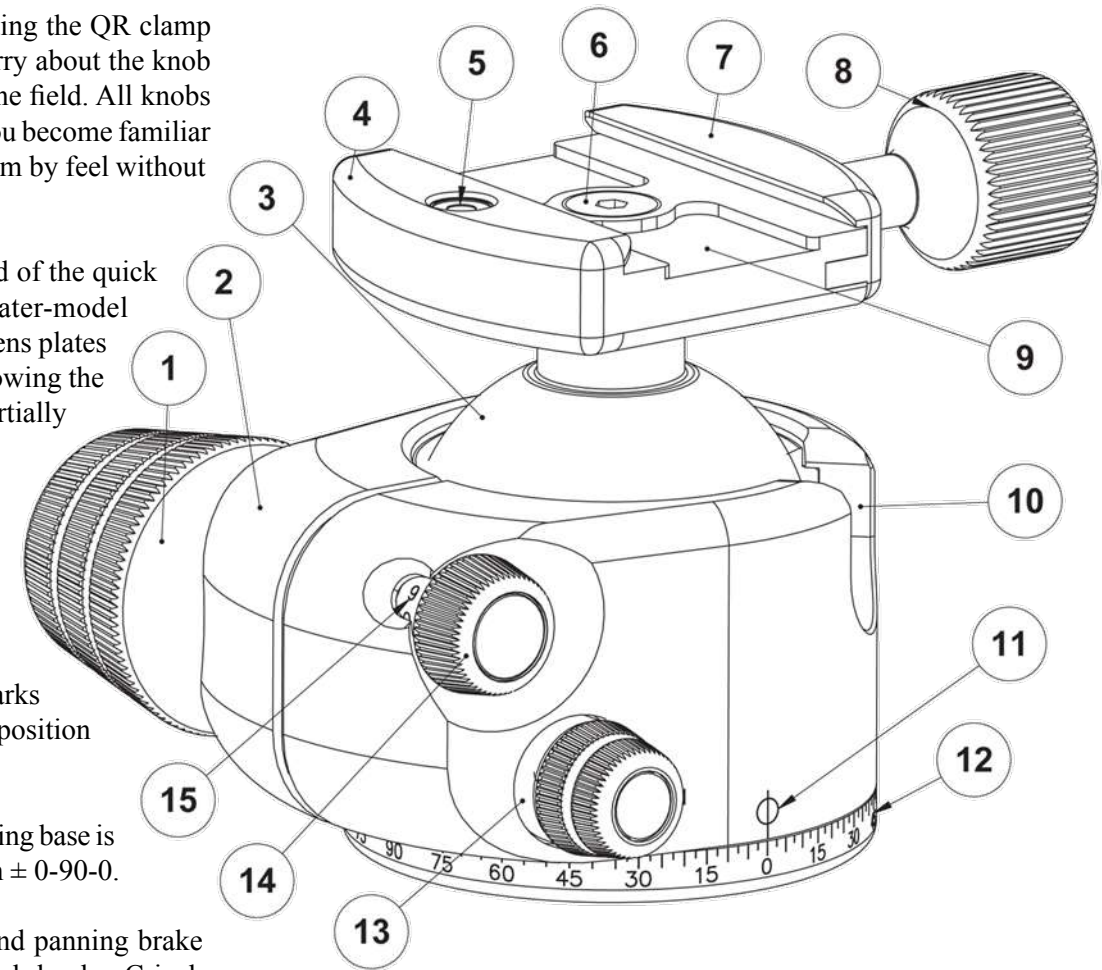
**11. Panning Index Marks** – Three unique index marks are spaced 90 and 180 degrees apart for rapid pan position identification.

**12. Laser-Engraved Panning Base** – Precision panning base is finely laser engraved in 2.5 degree increments from  $\pm 0-90-0$ .

**13. Pan Lock Knob** – Our exclusive drum and band panning brake is locked with one of the industry's largest pan lock knobs. Crisply knurled for superior lock up, the photographer can easily apply enough clamping force to unscrew the ballhead by hand off the tripod without the panning base slipping.

**14. Drag Set Knob** – Like the Main Lock Knob and the Pan Lock Knob, the Drag (tension) Set Knob has a snag-less design, unique shape and incorporates an O-ring seal. It is nicely recessed into the body to allow unencumbered access to the Pan Lock Knob. Control is independent from the Main Lock Knob to ensure logical operation and absolute reliability in the field.

**15. Drag Set Scale** – The drag can be set at various tension levels (for different size equipment) with perfect repeatability using the numeric scale which is laser engraved on the drag set knob. The numbers are visible through the drag set scale window milled into the body.



### Specifications (BH-55 Pro)

Load capacity:	50 pounds (23kg)
Ball Articulation:	$\pm 40-45^\circ$ , 2x $90^\circ$
Spirit Level:	Circular, .375" Dia., 130 minutes
Tension Adjustment:	Independent
Panning Base:	2.5° increments, laser-engraved
Height (top of clamp jaw):	3.7" (94mm)
Tripod Mount:	Stainless Steel 3/8"-16
Base Diameter:	2.86" (72.6mm)
Ball Diameter:	2.165" (55mm)
Weight:	1.85 pounds (840g)
Warranty:	5 years, materials & workmanship