

Cambo PCH Tripod head

Murray Laidlaw



Tripod heads are not something you would normally expect to get excited about but when I first the PCH (Precision Controlled Head) in the Cambo press release a couple of weeks ago I knew it was going to be worth closer inspection.

The PCH is a geared head, therefore it is possible to make very small adjustments to accurately position the camera exactly where you need it, the gears acting on the pivot and tilt axes. Geared heads are always more expensive than ball or three way heads because of the additional complexity in construction but the extra cost is more than justified by the control provided over movement. If you're shooting anything where small adjustments are important read on.



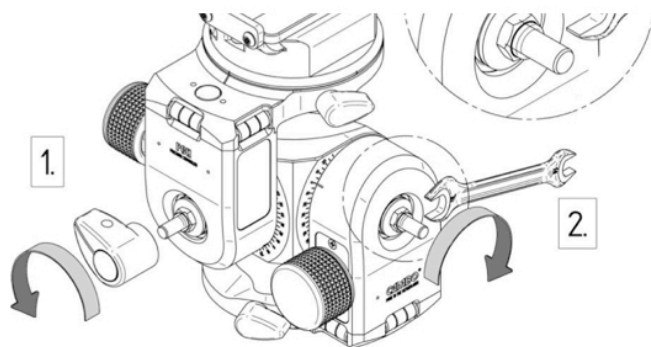
The PCH is relatively compact for this type of head standing at under 140mm tall with an approximate width of 130mm at its widest, quick release knob to manual tilt adjustment locking knob. It's a clean and tidy piece of engineering with rounded corners and very nicely finished in matt black with silver coloured metal knobs. Coming in at 1238 grams it's not overly heavy. The locking knobs are teardrop shaped and grooved to provide good grip, the two smaller ones located at the bottom and top plates control rotation. Both plates when rotated have click stops at 90-degree interval and the top plate is marked with a 360 degrees scale. The two larger ones release the friction on the manual pivot and tilt axes enabling you to position the head quickly then fine adjust it using the geared controls.



The round silver knobs are geared and adjust the tilt and pivot. These have a grip covered with a black indented material, this is quite firm and is probably a type of plastic. There are three; the two larger ones control the pivot and tilt function and the smaller one locks the QR plate in place. This is an ARCA style clamp and it works very effectively. The camera plate has two small studs front and rear that fit into two cut outs in the head

to prevent the camera from sliding out of the clamp, it also has a raised rear edge which may be useful with some camera body base plates.

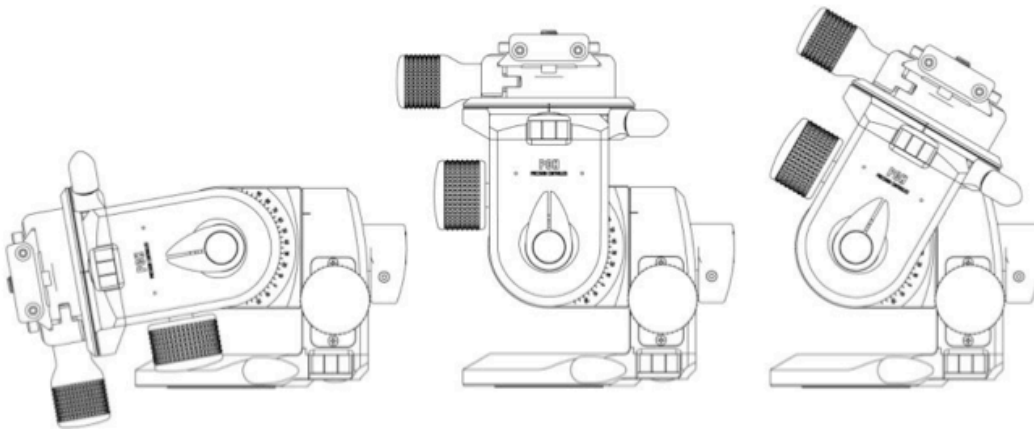
The head is a delight to use; all the actions perform smoothly with a decent amount of friction built in to prevent any sudden movements. The level of friction when pivoting is a little too high in my opinion. In comparison the tilt is near perfect possibly slightly too free with a heavy camera. All the locks work smoothly and with minimal turn secure the head and once locked it stays put.



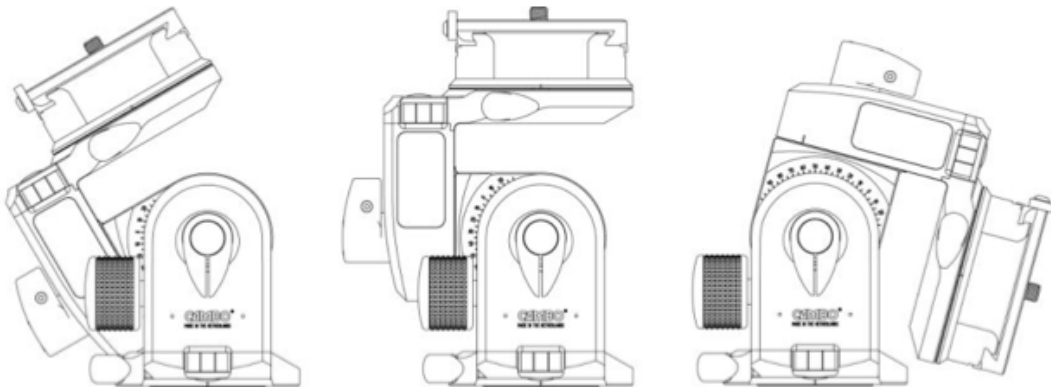
It is possible to “fine tune” the manual friction but it is not something I would rush into as I think you need time to get used to the head. This friction arrives pre-set from Cambo, presumably set up using one of their cameras and is adjusted by removing the manual locking knobs and tightening or loosening the friction setting using an 8mm spanner.

I would have liked to see a definite click point when the head is at zero degrees in both planes, this would just make it easier to reposition without reference to the scale or levels.

Pivoting



Tilting



I found the spirit level bubbles easy to see in daylight but much harder in low light situations. There are four, two on the base plate and two on the top plate – perfect. They are clear rather than the standard yellowish hue and I think that actually makes it easier to read them. They're also a decent size and positioned where you can see them easily.

The gearing is smooth and very precise, really solid when set and easy to use. What I was less impressed with was the gap between the top plate locking knob the locking knob of the quick release plate when rotating the head. There is literally the thickness of a sheet of 90gms paper between them. I'm not suggesting this is a problem, by reducing this space the head is more compact but it could be an issue at some point.



The Key Features as listed by Cambo

360° manual panning at the top and bottom plate

Position click indication every 90° at the top and bottom plate

140° X-axis tilt (30° backwards 110° forward)

Separate manual (fast) or geared (fine) movement around the X-axis

140° Y-axis pivot (30° backwards 110° forward)

Separate manual (fast) or geared (fine) movement around the Y-axis

X-, Y- and Z-axis rotate over the same point

When X-, Y- and Z-axis locking knobs are open the PCH can move freely like a normal spherical head.

Adjustable geared friction

Adjustable manual friction

Arca compatible clamp

4 large spirit levels

Durable stainless steel 3/8" and 1/4" tripod mounting options

What I liked...

- The design and layout of controls
- The quality of construction and finish is excellent
- Separately adjustable friction in both axes
- Smooth action on all movements and locks
- Quick adjustments are easy
- Good solid plate and ARCA style clamp
- Factory pre-set but adjustable friction on manual

What I didn't like...

- I would like to see click stops at zero degrees on the pivot and tilt axes
- A protective bag would have been nice
- No 8mm spanner
- Reassuringly expensive – euro 984 ex tax
- Having to give it back

Features:	10/10
Performance:	10/10
Build:	10/10
Finish:	10/10
Value for money:	8/10

Supplied for review by Chris Ireland, Direct Digital Imaging, Leeds

chris@directdigitalimaging.co.uk

<http://www.directdigitalimaging.co.uk>

<http://www.cambo.com>