

BENCHER SLIDEMATE COPYSTAND

It's a Whole System and a Real Worker

by Jack and Sue Drafahl

PHOTOGRAPHIC'S USER REPORT

When PHOTOgraphic magazine told us we were to review a copy stand, we weren't very excited. After all, what's in a copy stand? A baseplate, two lights, and an upright column with camera carriage. It's true that copy stands are pretty simple in design, but they do differ considerably from one manufacturer to the next. We found this very true when we unpacked the Bencher Slidemate copy system.

We decided that our first test would be to see if this simple copy stand could be assembled without looking at the instructions (who has time to read the instructions?). In ten minutes the copy stand was ready for use. Maybe

this product review was going to be fun after all.

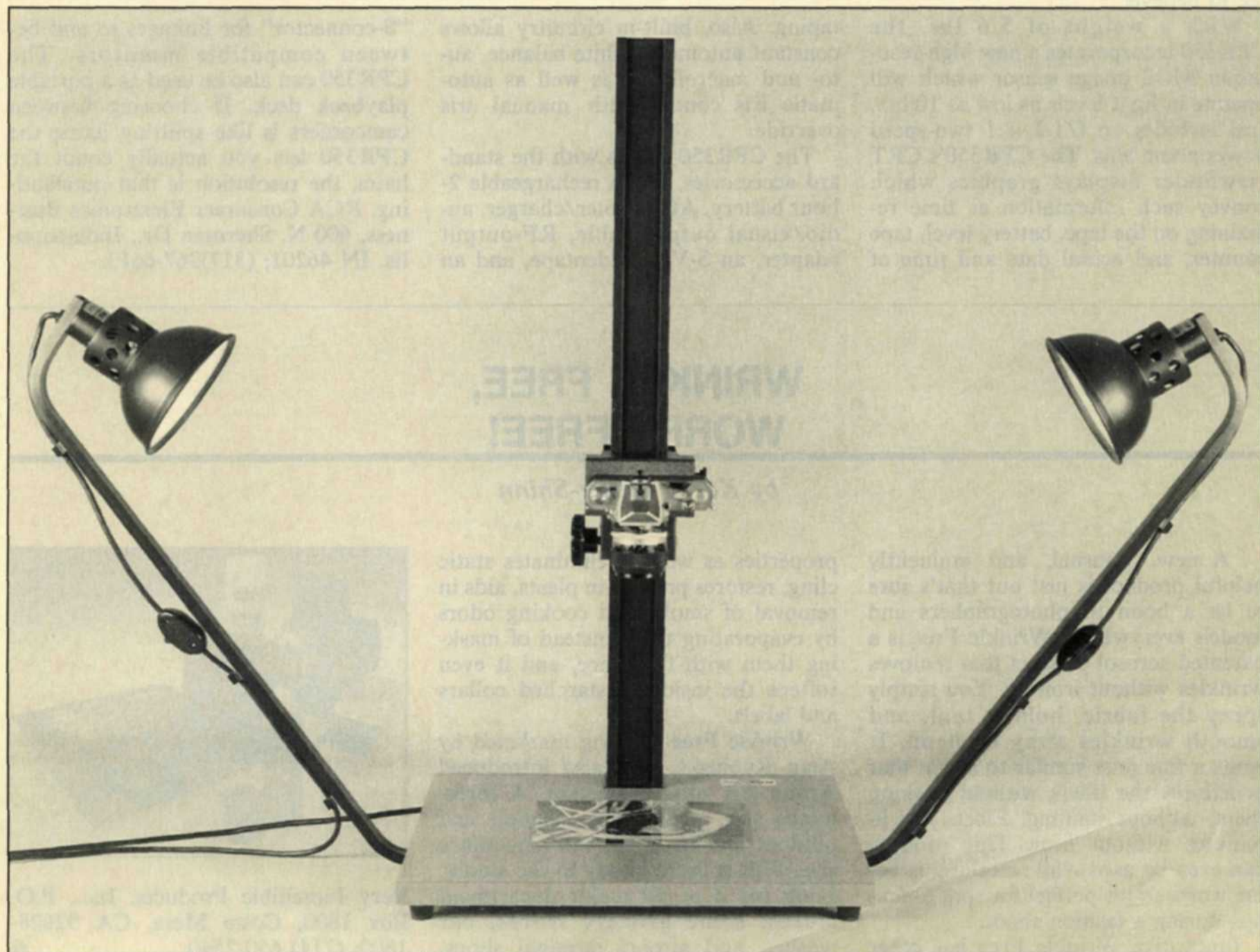
Actual assembly and disassembly consists of four ($\frac{1}{4} \times 20$) bolts at the base of the column, two ($\frac{1}{4} \times 20$) bolts for each light, and one quartz lamp for each copy reflector. The 18% gray baseplate is 19×20 inches allowing for copywork up to 16×20 inches.

The two light arms are attached under the edge of each side of the baseboard. These arms extend out at a 45° angle and hold six-inch quartz light reflectors and 150-watt bulbs. The lamp cords can then be inserted into special plastic clamps that adhere to the light arms, which keep the cords out of the way. Each reflector base is ventilated to allow cooling. An incident meter

reading from the baseboard showed no more than $\frac{1}{10}$ of an f-stop change in exposure from one side to the other.

The most critical part of any copy stand is its column and camera carriage. The 36-inch fluted Bencher column is lightweight, but at the same time extremely steady. Medium- and small-format cameras can be attached at four different points on the carriage baseplate, depending on where your tripod socket is located on your camera. This camera baseplate is layered with a corklike material that keeps the camera in place.

A large knurled knob on the right allows smooth movement of the camera up and down the column. A smaller knob on the left tightens down the



carriage and camera when the camera is correctly focused.

A unique device on the carriage allows an additional horizontal movement once the camera is focused and locked down. This movement is made possible because of two large rails that run through the main carriage. This makes it easy to align artwork.

We made vibration tests on the Slidemate using several different cameras at a variety of shutter speeds. Photos taken at the most critical shutter speeds from 1/15 to 1 second were all very sharp, and showed no movement from mirror slap or external vibrations. This copy stand kept looking better and better to us.

Color copy with the 150-watt quartz lamps was well balanced with tungsten film and daylight film with the 80A filter. The 18% gray base was handy when taking meter readings.

SYSTEM ALTERNATIVES

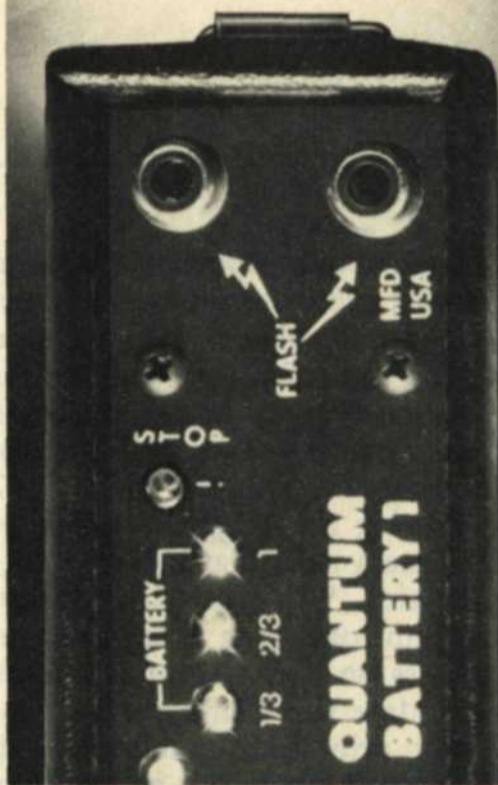
Bencher has designed the Slidemate copy stand to be an add-on system, offering the basic copy stand, which weighs 29 pounds, for \$250, or the Slidemate copy stand with quartz lights, at 36 pounds, for \$395.

Bencher has teamed up with Polaroid to provide a third package, the Instant Slidemate Copy System, which includes the Slidemate with quartz lights, Polaroid Power Processor, an illuminated slide mounter, a light-strip box, several books, Wess gels, a gray card, instructional materials and video tape, as well as film coupons from Polaroid. This package weighs 49 pounds and sells for \$675.

A wide variety of accessories are available to adapt the Slidemate to all copy situations: a copy holdown device, precision leveling camera plate, fine focusing and centering device, camera quick release, camera reflection shields, column scales, and extra camera plate.

We conduct seminars requiring the use of a copy stand in such remote locations as small islands in the Bahamas. We hate trying to use a makeshift copy setup with tripods and lightbulbs. We could envision packing the Bencher Slidemate in a small case and including it in our luggage on our next seminar trip. But then, we would have to take it out of commission from our studio where it was performing like a champ, doing hundreds of copy slides a day. The Slidemate was competing with some of the bigger, more expensive copy stand systems, yet the more we used this Bencher Slidemate, the more we liked it. For more information, contact Bencher, 333 W. Lake St., Chicago, IL 60606; telephone (312) 263-1808.

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