

My experience with CFTS automotive booms

By Jim Davis, professional photographer

I've been doing "rig-shots" of cars and trucks for about 6 years now. From my point of view, a very rigid boom with minimal flex is key to producing a clear image, especially over rough and uneven surfaces as well as doing longer exposure rig shots - should you be faced with that problem. When I first started, I was using an aluminum boom made by another vendor that was built specifically for these types of photos. While it was a well-made product using band clamps and slip fit ends, the assembly of the boom was time consuming and proved over time not to be the ideal way to fasten the sections together. I would strip or break at least 3 clamps per year and believe it or not I even cut my finger on two separate occasions from the sharp edges of the flanges on the boom. Since this aluminum boom was fairly thin walled tubing it also had a considerable amount of movement or "bounce" when trying to capture a longer exposure shot or over a rough surface, this was more noticeable when the camera was mounted to the end of the boom.

A couple of years passed and I started shooting with another photographer who has a rig boom set up he made himself from small diameter galvanized steel piping. While this was extremely rigid since he was using a cable bridge system for extra tension and support - it was VERY heavy and took just as long to assemble. Not to mention if the inevitable happened and the boom fell, that would most likely result in damage. It was almost a two person job to assemble and mount to the car as well. After doing some research on what I could replace my aluminum boom with I found the Carbon Fiber Tube Shop website after a friend mentioned it and the gears in my head started to turn. I emailed Adam and discussed options and he provided me with details on how the boom is made and how it fits together. I know many commercial based automotive camera rigs are made from carbon fiber and are extremely stable so it had to work better than the aluminum one I had.

Once I received the finished boom I was pretty impressed with it. All holes and edges were smooth, the carbon weave was perfect, and the boom itself was made from thick walled carbon tubing (about 1/8" thick) - definitely no signs of flex. I went with the 15-foot version which is made up of three sections. Each section slides together with a male/female set up and is held together with an industrial quick release push pin that's 3/16" in diameter and stainless steel, this works much better than using a wrench or socket with the clamps on the aluminum boom. I can literally assemble the boom in approximately 20-seconds, This saves a lot of time if you are trying to get a shot with the last few minutes of daylight working against you. Disassembling the boom works the same and just as quick. There are also many options when ordering the boom too, such as a sanded finish for a reduced chance of reflections, different length sections, and different overall lengths.

I have put the boom through a few tests of durability and stability, a 30-second shutter speed and very minimal signs of bounce can be seen in the photo. I've used it on a dirt road mounted to a truck, mounted to a car doing a slow moving burnout, and it has accidentally come in contact with a large tree - it has proved itself time and time again. Light weight, durable, stable, easy to assemble and disassemble, and easy to transport. It has passed my test and received my stamp of approval. I couldn't be happier with it.

davisphotographer@gmail.com

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