

Novoflex MagicBall

The Ultimate Photographic Ballhead



Robert Thompson

Novoflex MagicBall



The first MagicBall on the left, and the current design which has seen a slight update from the original back in 1998. The most notable change is the position of the friction control ring, which was situated on the upper side of the housing. It was later incorporated into the handle grip. The camera can be attached directly to the base of the ballhead via the mounting wheel, or it can be fitted with one of the Arca-compatible quick release adapters to facilitate quick removal and to accommodate vertical and horizontal format shooting.

(Photo of the original MagicBall courtesy of Andreas Marx Novoflex Germany)

INTRODUCTION

There are many different tripod heads on the market today. Popular choices include ballheads, geared heads, three-axis heads and cube heads, to name but a few. Making the right decision is no easy task, especially if you have to buy online without getting the opportunity to see and handle the head of your choice. Photographers often rely on online reviews to assist them in making the right decision, however, many of these are often brief with evaluations based on a few day's usage and often contrived setups. The purpose of this review is to share my thoughts and experience of using the MagicBall routinely over a considerable period of time and in many different photographic situations.

I think it is fair to say that many photographers tend to focus their

attention on choosing the right camera since it's likely to be a large financial investment but unfortunately lack the same commitment when it comes to tripod and head selection. While it's important to invest in a robust tripod to provide proper stability, it's the head that supports your camera and permits you to position it in any direction you choose. It's a well-known fact that many photographers place less importance on a tripod head and are often happy to accept whatever comes with the tripod without giving any thought to the type of photography they routinely undertake. Choosing a tripod head, in my opinion, should be based on the type of photography you frequently do and most importantly, the equipment you are likely to place on it. Making the right choice will improve your experience and help you get the best from your photography.





The MagicBall is more than capable of supporting setups such as this double rail configuration with the BALPRO-1 bellows and the vintage Novoflex 60mm flat field macro for higher reproduction imagery:

Hanging a DSLR or mirrorless camera and a long focal length lens on a ballhead that is too small or is incapable of supporting such a set-up is likely to compromise not only the image quality, but also your camera which may become unstable and in the worst case, end up on the ground.

The shortcomings of an inadequate head when shooting high-magnification macro become apparent especially when a heavy camera setup is placed on it. One of the most common problems is the degree of movement or creep when the camera assembly is secured on the head. It makes framing the subject accurately a little more challenging if you don't have a geared head. With cheaper ballheads, creep is often more evident and when this happens, most photographers compensate by raising the camera slightly to allow for the drop when the camera is secured. At higher magnifications, it

becomes an even bigger problem trying to position the camera assembly accurately. A poorly performing head or tripod can be a frustrating experience especially when opportunities present themselves which are not repeatable. Like many other photographers, I have purchased various tripods and heads over the years and have frequently been disappointed with their performance. I was unable to find a single tripod and head that could accommodate all of my photographic needs until I bought into the Novoflex system. I have always been a committed tripod user throughout my photographic career. The advantage of using one, in my opinion, far outweighs the disadvantages of not having one.

Several years ago, I was given the opportunity to review a piece of equipment designed and manufactured by Novoflex. Naturally I was aware of the company but was not familiar with or

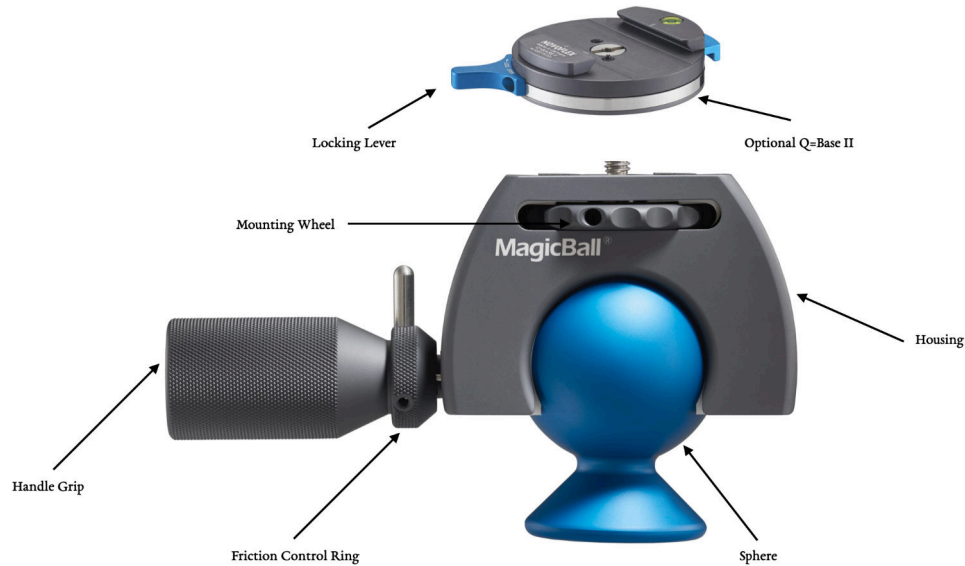


The Castel-M and CASTEL XQII focusing rail for precise placing of the focusing point. The additional rail is useful when working at magnifications beyond 1:1 and saves time repositioning the tripod.

had reviewed any of their products at that time. I was so impressed with the quality and the innovation, of that equipment and the company's customer support to its clients; it was a major turning point for me. I decided to invest in the 'Novoflex Concept' where every component integrates seamlessly with another, rather than adopting my usual dolly mixture approach of purchasing accessories from different brands. It is, without doubt, the best decision I've ever made. My only regret was not coming to that conclusion much sooner. I no longer have to worry about compatibility issues between different pieces of equipment.

Although based in Memmingen Germany, Novoflex's reputation extends well beyond Europe, with many photographers from around the globe using their products. One of the company's major attributes is the ability to develop specialised equipment and

important accessories, which most of the leading camera manufacturers seem to avoid or no longer want to do. The performance and reliability of their equipment is acknowledged across the photographic industry as being among the best out there; that is certainly the case in my experience. Their innovative approach to design and manufacture is based on practical experience and most importantly, having complete control over the production process right through to completion. I have been a committed user of their equipment for some time now and have invested in many accessories, including their tripod system and other specialised gear from rails and heads to panoramic equipment. Every piece is beautifully engineered, extremely reliable and finished in the usual but distinctive colour branding of blue and grey that defines the Novoflex system.



The component parts of the MagicBall (The Big One). The Q=Base II is also included in the diagram to illustrate quick and easy removal of the camera assembly. I prefer to work with a Q=Base rather than connecting directly to the base of the MagicBall housing.

NOVOFLEX MAGICBALL

The MagicBall is no newcomer to the plethora of ballheads available today. Its uniqueness and long-term sustainability in this challenging sector is another example of the company's consistent ability to design and develop cutting-edge equipment. It was first introduced back in 1998 and was the brainchild of Reinhard Hiesinger, the CEO of Novoflex at that time and Klaus Bothe. Its exceptional design earned it the IF Design Award (one of the world's most prestigious awards for innovation) in 1998. There are three models in the MagicBall series; your selection will depend on your camera setup and the accessories you plan on using. All three heads have excellent load capacity. The MagicBall, is, without doubt, unique among ballheads and the quickest by far to position compared to conventional



The three MagicBall heads showing their size in relation to each other. Also the MagicBall Mini does not have a friction control ring.

(Photo courtesy of Andreas Marx Novoflex Germany)

designs, most of which require dropslots. In this review, I am referring to the MagicBall (The Big One), although virtually all of my comments are applicable to the MagicBall 50 (The Universal One) and the MagicBall Mini. The technical specifications of all three ballheads are at the end of this review.

The MagicBall housing

The U-shaped ball aluminium housing forms the core of the ballhead design and is manufactured from extruded aluminium producing an extremely strong and balanced housing. It has an internal liner fabricated from Polyoxymethylene, which is a high-performing thermoplastic material used in precision engineering for the manufacture of specialised components and renowned for its high strength, rigidity, and low friction. The internal opaque polyoxymethylene provides an extremely smooth, friction-free movement throughout the sphere, allowing the photographer to move heavy setups with relative ease and speed in all directions. Its state-of-the-art design removes the need for any vertical dropslot within the housing. Its rapid positioning ability makes it the quickest of any current ballhead on the market today. I can certainly testify to this having owned many different designs and models over the years.



The internal structure of the MagicBall housing. You can see clearly the polyoxymethylene retentive pad which secures the housing to the sphere.

(Photo courtesy of Andreas Marx Novoflex Germany)



The sphere which is anodised in blue denoting the well-known colour branding of genuine Novoflex products. Unlike some other anodising the sphere is pretty scratch resistant.

(Photo courtesy of Andreas Marx Novoflex Germany)

The sphere

The 60mm diameter anodised blue ball on the MagicBall (The Big One) has a scratch-resistant coating, which aids the remarkably smooth resistance-free movement across the sphere with relative ease. The MagicBall 50 and mini have identical spheres with a ball diameter of 50 and 40mm respectively. The coating works in combination with the polyoxymethylene liner, which aids vibration-free rotation. The design of the ball means you have access to 85% of the sphere, which accounts for the housing's extensive range of movement. I frequently use a Nikon Z 9 with a Castel-M and Castel-Micro along with a range of different rails, and macro lenses, which the two larger MagicBall units can comfortably accommodate. I also use the larger ballhead when photographing seabirds, in combination with, large telephotos. The MagicBall performs flawlessly and retains the setup in its precise position with no creep.



The underside of the housing showing the coverage of the internal retentive sleeve. Much of the sphere is covered ensuring a smooth resistance-free movement and a solid connection.

(Photo courtesy of Andreas Marx Novoflex Germany)



Handle grip

What I find so reassuring about these ballheads is their large, knurled handle grip; an ingenious design with immense locking power which allows you to place the camera precisely in any position and with a single rotational twist, secures the head with no movement or creep. The handle grip rotates completely around the sphere which can be opened or closed with either hand, or in any position.

Friction control

The two larger models have integrated friction control, which is extremely useful when you need to use heavy setups. The desired setting is controlled by the tension adjustment ring, which is located between the handle grip and the housing wall. You can adjust the resistance setting by tightening the ring to reciprocate the camera's weight.

Mounting wheel

The large, contoured mounting wheel allows you to connect the camera directly to the ballhead. The camera setup can be removed from the base by unscrewing the wheel which can occasionally become a little tight. A slight rotation of the camera itself solves the problem. Using the MagicBall without a Q=base means when vertical shooting is required you need to be using an L-bracket or similar device with the ability to allow you to attach the camera in the portrait position. I prefer to use one of the Q=bases and an L-bracket on the camera; this allows for quick release and selection between both formats.

Sunset from Dunquin Pier looking at the Blasket Islands. The MagicBall is the ideal choice for Landscape photography.

Rotational range

One of the key features that make this head truly exceptional is its incredible positioning range of 120° in any direction; this feature alone is state-of-the-art and unique among conventional ballhead designs which require dual dropslots on opposite sides to achieve 180° of movement. The camera and housing tilts in a smooth action in any direction without having to rotate the base.

Load capacity

The load capacity varies between the different-sized ballheads. The largest ballhead in the range accepts loads up to 22 lbs/10kg and is suitable for 35mm, medium format cameras, large telephoto lenses, and professional video systems. The MagicBall (The Big One) is my most frequently used ballhead. Its versatility means I can use it in a wide range of situations when weight is not an issue. The MagicBall 50 is the medium-sized ballhead in the series, providing all of the features of the top-of-the-range model. It has a load capacity of 16lbs/7.5kg and is recommended for camera systems up to that capacity. I also find this ballhead extremely useful when travelling abroad on workshops, where weight is at a premium e.g. on flights etc. It supports my Z 9, and an assortment of different lenses and various accessories easily and comfortably while giving me the versatility to shoot macro, conventional landscapes, and panoramas. The MagicBall Mini is great when you are shooting in mountainous regions where you want to keep your overall weight to an absolute minimum but not compromise on the results. It lacks tension control which is available on the



The Q=Base II and the Q=Mount are the ideal choice for the MagicBall. The former is a compact quick release version and is 120g compared to 100g manual coupling of the Q=Mount. The camera is secured to the Q=Mount by tightening the screw. It's a matter of personal choice between the two bases.

Photo courtesy of Andreas Marx Novoflex Germany

two larger units, but its ideal on monopods and lighter tripods. All the ballheads in the range are equipped with 1/4 and 3/8 tripod screws.

CHOICE OF CAMERA MOUNT The Q=Base II/Q=Mount

While it is possible to use all of the MagicBall's independently of a camera mount. I would strongly recommend it for convenience and speed of use and fitting it with one of the Arca-compatible Q=Mounts available. There are distinct advantages in doing so, such as quick connection and removal from the tripod head and being able to shoot in horizontal and portrait formats are the primary reasons if the camera has an L-bracket attached to it. I prefer the Q=Base II for the majority of my work and have these fitted to most of my Novoflex ballheads. When attached, it's solid, allows single-click connection with the camera's Arca Swiss plate or L-Bracket and is securely locked into position with the blue locking lever. Removal is done by releasing the locking lever and pressing the rectangular button on the opposite side to cock the circular disc. There is an inbuilt safety pin to prevent the camera from slipping in any direction however, this only works with

original Novoflex Q=plates. Another advantage is its height. The unit sits low to the base of the head, ensuring that the camera assembly is as close as possible to the housing. You can also opt for the Q=Mount, which is the manual version of the Novoflex quick coupling base. Securing the camera is by manual rotation of the clamping screw and is solid and precise with no movement. Either base ensures firm, stable support of the camera assembly.



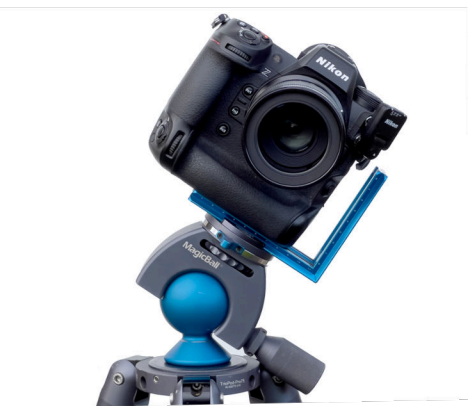
*(Previous page) Peacock Butterfly Aglais io.
(Above) MagicBall fitted with the quick release Q=Base II; my routine configuration.*

VERSATILITY OF THE MAGICBALL

When you try MagicBall for the first time, you become quickly aware of how much free rotation you have and how easy it is to precisely place the camera without having to line the head up with the nearest dropslot as in conventional ballhead design. The MagicBall is compatible with other specialised equipment, not only from Novoflex but other companies too. I have found the MagicBall to be one of the best all-around ballheads I have ever used and is especially suited to photographers who frequently have to shoot a range of different subjects. It's my preference when shooting macro, ultra-macro, landscapes, and panoramic images. There are times when I need a ballhead with the ability to cope with a range of subjects. The MagicBall is perfect in this respect and handles these situations superbly well.



Beadlet Anemone Actinia equina. The versatility of the MagicBall is second to none. When shooting in rockpools having 120° of movement is extremely useful when you have to angle the camera frequently to avoid reflections.



Holy Monastery of Varlaam Meteora Greece. Shooting panoramas with the MagicBall is a very simple and straight forward process irrespective of you tripods angulation. With the panorama 48 and other Novoflex pano bases you can correct the angulation quickly without the need to adjust the tripod to achieve extremely accurate repeatable results every time.

Panoramic photography

Novoflex excels in the field of panoramic photography. They have, without doubt, the most comprehensive range of specialised panoramic equipment available today, all of which integrates nicely with the MagicBall. Regardless of the position or configuration of your tripod, the MagicBall, when equipped with any of the specialised panorama kits or bases, allows you to quickly configure the head to produce outstanding, corrected, repeatable panoramas with optimal accuracy.



The Panorama 48 in combination with the Novoflex L-Bracket and the CASTEL Q rail for accurate repeatable steps and locating the nodal point of the lens to ensure perfect panos every time.



Slime Mould Arcyria species photographed at 2.5X. The setup up illustrated below with the Castel-M and Laowa 2.5-5X which is my normal choice when shooting at magnifications above 1X.

Conventional and Ultra-macro

Successful macro photography demands a more critical approach when it comes to stability and focus. It's important to have a head that is capable of holding your setup in precisely the right position with no creep and no vibration that can compromise the image quality. The MagicBall is the ideal choice and my most frequently used ballhead. It provides excellent stability even when heavy setups are placed on it! Having the flexibility of 120° makes framing subjects much easier than having always to reposition and use a dropslot.

When it comes to high-magnification macro, stability is even more critical. Photographing at magnifications above 1X requires a head that will hold your camera assembly precisely; this is particularly important especially when focus bracketing, where each image needs to be captured in exactly the same position. All of the current Novoflex

rails integrate perfectly with this ballhead providing excellent stability, especially when using the Castel-M and the electronic version the Castel-Micro. The larger MagicBall models are ideally suited to this type of photography and with these specialist pieces of equipment.



Atlantic Puffin Fratercula arctica. The magicBall gives me the freedom to pan quickly when shooting birds in flight while having the flexibility in positioning the camera and lens.

Large telephoto photography.

The MagicBall is an excellent choice for long lens shooting. I frequently run seabird photography workshops using lenses up to 600mm. The MagicBall (The Big One) is the perfect choice as it supports the camera assembly while at the same time gives me the freedom to track the subject while making any corrections to your lens position on the fly.



Razorbill Alca torda. Having considerably more rotational freedom, this ballhead allows for quick rotational change when required.



The Nikon 200-500mm lens one of my frequently used combinations when photographing birds. The MagicBall is how I like to work in these situations rather than using a Gimbal Head which is too restricting if I'm shooting a diversity of subjects.



Scarlet Elf Cup Sarcoscypha austriaca. Working close to the ground is common practice with macro. Having 120° rotational movement allows greater flexibility making framing considerably easier.



Elegant Anemone Sagartia elegans. Working among rockpools is always challenging when trying to frame and compose subjects. The versatility of the ballhead and friction control make it easier to achieve the shot.

IN THE FIELD

Virtually all of my photography is undertaken in the subject's natural environment; it's the way I like to work. The optimal test for any piece of equipment in my opinion is how it performs in all of the different aspects of my work and the types of weather conditions I frequently have to shoot in. Naturally, like any new piece of equipment, it takes a little time to acquaint yourself with the MagicBall since it does not follow the conventional ballhead design. Whatever camera and lens configuration I use, it is always extremely smooth with no resistance throughout its movements. My tripod is frequently close to or on the ground, often among vegetation where dirt and small bits of debris could easily find their way between housing and sphere. The lubricant-free design prevents anything from getting lodged between the sphere and its housing. I have been using all of the MagicBall heads for quite some time



The design of the MagicBall ensures when working at ground level there is no dirt and debris that can enter the housing.

now throughout a range of different conditions and temperatures from the tops of snow-covered mountains, along the seashore and in rock-pools and sandy habitats with no problems at all. It has supported comfortably every lens from a 14mm ultra wideangle to a 600mm telephoto with a simple adjustment to the friction control with no creep or other issues. Its all-around versatility allows me to quickly alternate between different



subjects without having to carry an additional head. Shooting panoramas with this head is very quick and straightforward with any of the Novoflex panorama kits or panning bases. These can be an additional accessory or be attached to the MagicBall base, or have the Q=Base integrated into the unit. Perfect alignment can be quickly achieved irrespective of the tripod position. Certain bases have selectable click stops allowing you to choose the number of individual images in each panorama; it is not even necessary to have your eye to the viewfinder during the capture process. The base will ensure continuity and accuracy in the overlap for each image to produce a perfect panorama every time.

(Middle left) Mourne Mountains. I often switch to the MagicBall 50 when photographing in the mountains. It can still hold my setup comfortably but having the lighter ballhead helps when you need to keep your weight to a minimum.

(left) Tripod and ballhead setup for the shot of the Elegant Anemones illustrated above.



Slime Mould Hemitrichia decipiens. A high magnification shot of these tiny 2mm slime moulds. Photographed with the CASTEL-Micro and Laowa 2.5-5X ultra macro; one of my favourite combinations along with the CASTEL-M for high magnification images in the field. See bottom image.

The MagicBall is my preferred choice with the Novoflex Castel-M and Castel-Micro motorised focusing rail the Nikon Z 9 and various Laowa ultra macro lenses. The overall combined setup is heavy, but I'm impressed by the larger MagicBall's performance; even at magnifications up to 5X. There is no visible sign of creep or sagging during the shooting process that I could detect. For me, this head is a real game-changer and the most versatile ballhead in my collection. Another advantage is being able to work all of the ballheads functions with gloves especially when in the mountains and in very cold sub-zero temperatures.

(Middle right) camera setup with the Castel-M my choice routinely when working with subjects up to 5X. Supported on the MagicBall (The Big One).

(Right) The camera setup with the Castel-Micro and Laowa 2.5-5X ultra macro for the 4.5X image above. It's important to have a tripod and ballhead that provide perfect support and stability during the focus stacking process.



One of the very early Magicballs that came in for repair to Novoflex. It is still working perfectly after 20 years. It only needed the ¼ tripod screw replaced. It's a real testament to the build quality of this ballhead.

(Photo courtesy of Andreas Marx Novoflex Germany).

A FINAL WORD

There is no doubt that the MagicBall range is impressive in many aspects. It is evident from its design and construction that a lot of time has been invested by the company to produce a product that is unique in many ways and stood the test of time. I use mine continually in the field and it has performed flawlessly and is more than capable of withstanding continual professional use. I have not encountered any wear or drop in its performance. The solid construction of the head and its component parts indicate that it should give many years of service without any major issues. In contrast, I have often found that inexpensive heads where low-priced materials are used, are subject to wear more quickly and performance becomes compromised. I don't abuse nor am I careless with any of my equipment. However, having said that I do not wrap it in cotton wool either. It's there to do a job and must be capable of functioning

in the conditions it's designed for and in all types of weather. I have found all of the MagicBall range to be extremely reliable and manufactured to the same high standards.

The uniqueness of the MagicBall series and their design makes them extremely competitive in terms of price and value for money. The versatility of these heads set them in a class of their own. Although I have stated this many times before, the designers and engineers at Novoflex under the current CEO Michael Hiesinger are equally committed innovators developing high quality products that are often ground-breaking and unique. They don't always follow conventional approaches but push the boundaries producing equipment that sets them apart from other mainstream competitors. Their MagicBall is certainly a testament to this and the best in ballhead design that I have used to date.

MagicBall Specifications



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MagicBall – The Big One Design Award Winner 1998.

Suitable for 35mm and middle format cameras with big telephoto lenses and professional video cameras up to 22lbs/10kg. Integrated friction control.

Technical specifications:

Height: 4.13"/105mm
Ball: Ø 2.36"/60mm
Length: 6.3"/160mm
Base diameter: Ø 1.97"/50mm
Support pad: 2.1" x 1.5"/55 x 40mm
Weight: 2.0lbs/920 g
Load capacity: 22lbs/10 kg

MagicBall 50 – The Universal One

The medium sized model from the MagicBall family provides the same features as his larger brother and is recommended for cameras and equipment up to 16lbs/7,5 kg. Integrated friction control.

Technical specifications:

Height: 3.54"/90mm
Ball: Ø 1.97"/50mm
Length: 5.9"/150mm
Base diameter: Ø 1.65"/42mm
Support pad: 2" x 1.3"/52 x 34mm
Weight: 1.35lbs/610g
Load capacity: 16lbs/7,5kg

MagicBall Mini

The smallest and lightest member of the MagicBall family. Suitable for camera equipment up to 11lbs/5kg. Ideal for use i.e. on monopods. Without tension control.

Technical specifications:

Height: 2.95"/75mm
Ball: Ø 1.57"/40mm
Length: 4.3"/110mm
Base diameter: Ø 1.38"/35mm
Support pad: 1.77" x 1.18"/45 x 30mm
Weight: 0.73lbs/330 g
Load capacity: 11lbs/5kg

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere thanks to Martin Grahl General Manager of sales and International distribution at Novoflex, Memmingen, Germany for the use of additional photos. Some of the product images in this review are under copyright from Novoflex Germany and Andreas Marx and require their permission before use.

For further information on the Novoflex MagicBall visit:



Robert Thompson is a professional natural history photographer, author and conservationist. He is a Fellow of the Royal Photographic Society and the Irish Photographic Federation; an acclaimed macro specialist in the UK, and the author of a number of books on natural history and photography. His work is widely published in the UK, Ireland and internationally; with numerous photographic credits in a variety of publications including, Nikon Pro, Nikon NPS, Nikon Owner and other media sources.

As an active conservationist, he has worked on many high-profile natural history projects in Ireland. He has had several solo exhibitions of his work and is a frequent traveller, running workshops in some of the most picturesque alpine regions of Europe and at many of Ireland's most iconic locations.

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The Amphitheatre Giant's Causeway

MagicBall Gallery

The following gallery pages illustrate examples of images photographed with the MagicBall and its various accessories over the last number of years. The ballhead has been used heavily with no sign of wear or failure of any part. Its retentive abilities when supporting a wide range of accessories and setups is just as effective as it was when I first removed it from the box several years ago.

I should also make it clear that the Novoflex equipment I review is my own, I am not an ambassador for Novoflex and my opinion of their equipment is based on my own evaluations and usage in the field; the primary reason why I like to share my experience with other fellow photographers who are perhaps thinking of purchasing some of their excellent equipment.

I should also point out that there are ballheads that resemble the MagicBall but not in quality or performance. They are easily told apart by the colour branding among other aspects of their design. All genuine Novoflex equipment bears the well-known bicolour combination of blue and grey.

Landscape Gallery



(Left) Lough Leane Killarney National Park.

(Above) Image of behind the scenes showing the camera setup. Z 9 and the MagicBall supported on the Novoflex PRO75 tripod.

Sunset looking towards Tory Island North Atlantic. The MagicBall in combination with the Novoflex PRO75 is my standard combination for landscape photography. The PRO75 is modular with interchangeable legs and inserts for the spider base, which means I can change the configuration to suit my shooting requirements.



(Left) The giant sea stacks on North Atlantic coast.

(Above) The behind the scenes camera setup for the shot supported on the Novoflex L-bracket and the PRO75 and standard legs

Panoramic Gallery



North Atlantic coast. Shooting panoramic's with the MagicBall is quick and easy when using one of the designated pano bases for example the panorama 48, sold as an accessory.



Mourne Mountains. A 16 image pano shot with the panorama 48 with the CASTEL Q for nodal alignment of the lens. Supported on the Novoflex PRO75.



Sunset on the North Atlantic coast. 16 image pano with the panorama 48, supported on the Novoflex PRO75.

Panorama Panning Bases

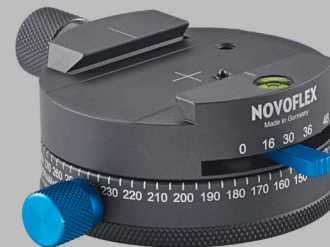
The following panorama bases are the ideal choice for the MagicBall. They all contain an individual spirit level and can be connected directly to the base. All have a 360° scale with 5° divisions which ensures accurate repeatable panoramas every time. Novoflex are one of the leaders in panoramic photography with many different systems to meet the needs of the professional and amateur sectors. Visit their website for in-depth brochures on technique and systems. available.



The Panorama II, has an integrated spirit level for horizontal alignment. You can attach the camera directly to the upper base plate or use one of the Q=Bases for ease of use. It can also be used with other commercial ballheads. You can mount it between the ballhead and camera or between the tripod and ballhead.



Panorama 48. One of the lightest panning bases with integrated click stops. The incremental division is (16) 22.5°, (30) 12°, (36) 10°, (48) 7.5°. The base also has stepless rotation. The 0-360° scales allows for precise adjustment of the pan. The base also has incorporated a ball bearing which allows smooth play-free rotation. It also had an anti-rotation pin which can be removed if necessary:



The Panorama 48 in place showing my regular pano setup. The CASTEL Q for precise alignment of the nodal point of the lens and camera assembly:



The Panorama 48 in combination with the Q=Base II for quick release and to facilitate horizontal and portrait shooting.

(Left) Panorama=Q 48. One of the panning bases with an integrated quick release Q=Mount. It has a ball bearing system for smooth rotation. The incremental division are (16) 22.5°, (30) 12°, (36) 10°, (48) 7.5°. The base also has stepless rotation. The 0-360° scaling allows for precise continuous rotation.

Conventional Macro Gallery 1



(Left) A rare form of this Pale Jelly Ear *Auricularia auricula-judae* var. *Lactea*.

(Above) Behind the scenes camera setup to take the shot.

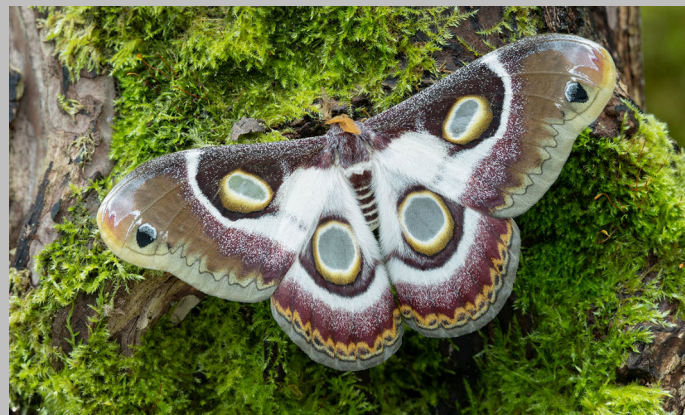


(Far left) Common male fern *Dryopteris filix-mas* uncurling its fronds.

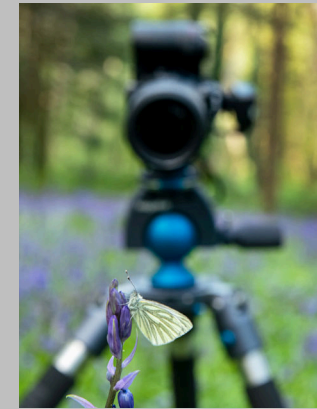
(Left) Southern Atlas Moth *Epiphora bauhiniæ*.

(Above) Baron's Green Racer *Philodryas baroni*.

All of the images photographed using the MagicBall supported on the PRO75.



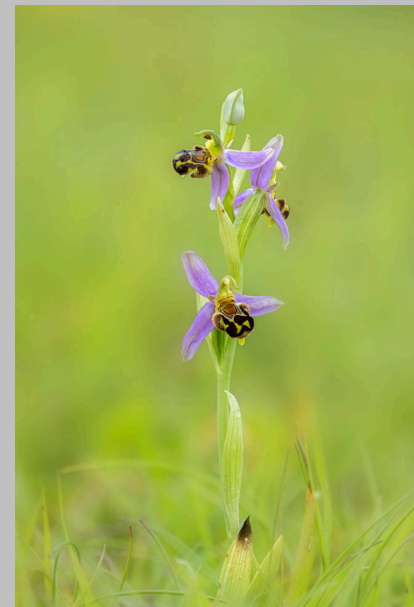
Conventional Macro Gallery 2



Green-veined White Pieris napi. Early evening shot among bluebells.

(Left) Photo showing behind the scenes shot.

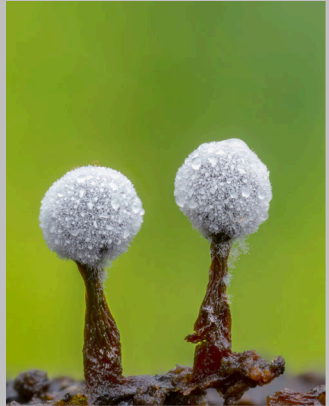
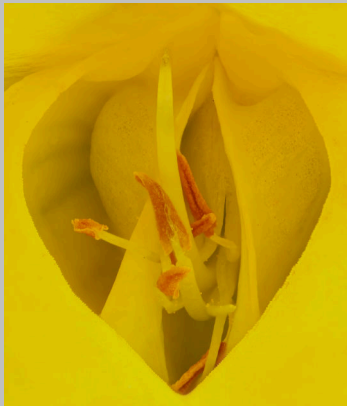
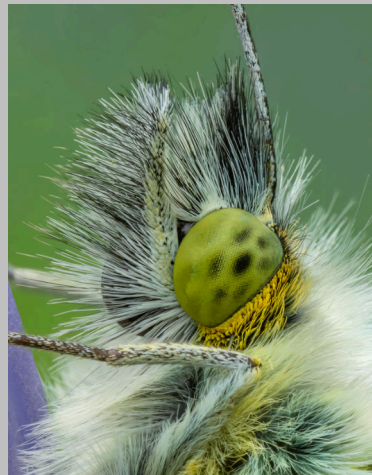
(Below) A Vapourer moth larva *Orgyia antiqua*. The MagicBall is ideal here as I had to rotate the camera quite a bit to achieve a diagonal position.



(Above) Bee Orchid *Ophrys apifera*. I needed a virtual ground level shot with this plant. The MagicBall is perfect in this situation and a few second inverts the legs of the PRO75 to achieve the result.



Ultra Macro Gallery 1



(Top) These tiny Dewdrop Bonnets *Hemimycena tortuosa* were only a few millimetres in size. Photographed at 4X with the Castel-M and Laowa 2.5-5X. See setup image.

(Above) Gorse stamens *Ulex europaeus*. Photographed at 4.5X Castel-M.

(Above right) Slime Mould *Metatrachia floriformis* 4X.

(Middle right) Green-veined White *Pieris napi* close-up head shot 1.5X.

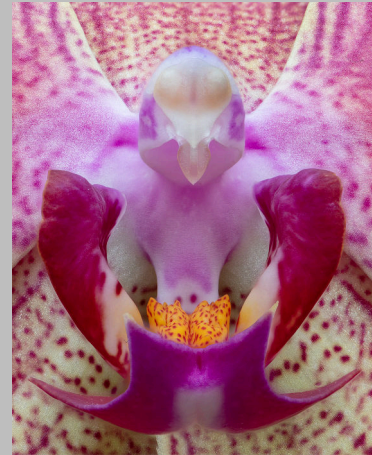
(Right) *Hemimycena* species. Photographed at 4X with the Laowa 2.5-5X macro and Castel-M.



Ultra Macro Gallery 2



Slime Mould *Arcyria* species. Photographed with the Novoflex CASTBAL PRO, Novoflex 60mm flat field macro Castel-M, Supported on MagicBall See above the setup to get the shot.



(Middle left) A close-up of the tiny reproductive components of a *Phalaenopsis* Orchid. Composite image.

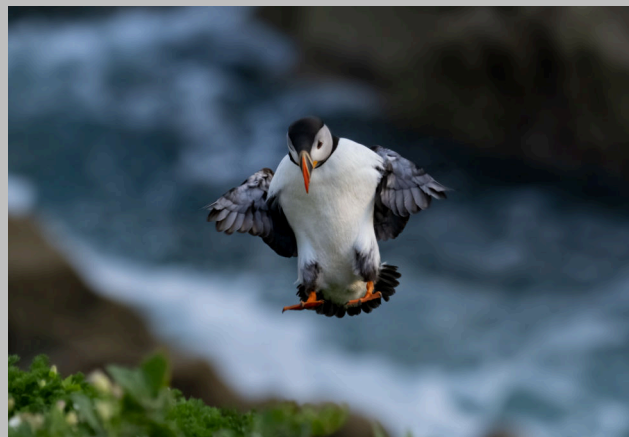
Green Pergesa *Pergesa acteus* A high magnification image of the head of this hawk-moth. The Camera assembly supported on the MagicBall and the Novoflex PRO75 tripod.

Lemon Disco Fungus *Bisporella citrina*. A 2.5X magnification photographed with the Laowa 2.5-5X macro, supported on the MagicBall and Novoflex PRO75.



*(Left) Red-crested Pochard *Netta fufina* Photographed with the Z 9 and the Nikon 200-500mm supported on the MagicBall and the Novoflex PRO75.*

*(Below) Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus* captured in flight as its coming into land. Nikon Z 9, MagicBall supported on the Novoflex PRO75.*



*(Above) Atlantic Puffin *Fratercula arctica*. These small birds fly fast and are often challenging to keep in the frame. Having the rotational freedom to track a fast-flying bird is a big advantage with this ballhead.*

*(Right) Fulmar *fulmarus glacialis*. The MagicBall is an excellent choice for flight shots giving you the ability to pan and rotate when you need to alter your position quickly. I use it routinely for all of my bird photography.*



Equipment Configurations

The following images below are examples of some of the various macro configurations I use in the course of my work. Each setup has its own advantages. The MagicBall plays a key part in providing stability and rotational freedom when composing challenging shots.



BAL-F bellows, Schneider Kreuznach Pyrite F4.5/90mm and the CASTEL XQ II focusing rail.



BALPRO 1 bellows, Nikon 50mm EL lens and the CASTEL XQ II focusing rail.



CASTBAL-PRO bellows, connected to the Castel-M. Ideal setup for focusing bracketing.



CASTBAL-PRO bellows, connected to the Castel-M, 60mm macro and CASTEL XQ II rail.



CASTEL-M and the Laowa 2.5-5X Ultra Macro. Ideal setup for higher magnification macro.



CASTEL-MICRO electronic rail in with the MagicBall. Ideal for automatic focus bracketing.



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