



BIKE, CAMERA, ACTION

BY **JOSH TACK**

→ **WHENEVER** I head out for a ride, whether it's an afternoon jaunt, an all day affair, or an extended tour, something of interest occurs. Maybe I rode a stretch of dirt road I didn't know about previously, got caught out in nasty weather, scared up some wildlife on a trail, or simply felt better than usual on a climb. Whatever it may be, there's always something to take away and it's fun to share those moments with others.

In my early days of riding, a time when social media was relegated to AOL chat rooms, my main sharing outlet was telling my parents and high-school classmates stories. As I rolled through college, blogs started to gain some steam, allowing me to share my words online. Then came the social-media onslaught, which, coupled with a huge leap in the quality of digital photography, has allowed me to share words and photos on various social networks. And now the next

step in sharing my experiences is through video. With more video uploading sites popping up all the time, and as internet networks become more powerful, uploading video content is only getting easier. It's now possible to push more robust video content through our websites, blogs, or whichever online outlet we choose. You may have even noticed that a lot of companies in the bicycle industry, including Adventure Cycling Association, have been pushing video contests alongside their more traditional photo contests.

Right now, there are a couple gateways to get you hooked on videography. The most accessible option is probably a smartphone and, while they don't take the best video, it's usually good enough to get some experience setting up shots and uploading them to the internet. Digital cameras are another easy avenue, as many

budget-friendly point-and-shoot cameras are equipped to shoot fairly decent video.

When it comes to cycling, howev-

er, phones and handheld cameras aren't the best way to capture footage, since it requires a free and steady hand or one of the many bar mounts that are available. The best method are sports-specific cameras that mount to either your bicycle or your helmet. There are a bunch of players in this market, but the biggest name in the game is GoPro.

In 2009, GoPro first captured the attention of sports enthusiasts with their original HD Hero camera, which shot wide-angle 1080p HD video in addition to five megapixel still photos. Just a few years after that, they released their Hero2 camera, which improved video quality and the field of view. This past winter, GoPro launched the Hero3 Black Edition camera, their latest and greatest installment of the Hero series. It's smaller and lighter than its predecessor, offers improved photo quality at 12 megapixels, and now includes the capability of shooting up to 4K resolution video, just in case you wanted to see inside the pores of the human face.

The Hero3 Black Edition package includes a waterproof camera case, various adhesive camera mounts, a rechargeable Li-ion battery, a USB charging cable, and a WiFi camera remote. There are also a number of accessories that you can purchase to go along with the camera. For cycling the two accessories you will want

first are the helmet mount, which is available for both vented and non-vented helmets, and the handlebar/seatpost mount.

I would also recommend their Battery BacPac as well, which will double the



life of your battery.

As far as the mounting system is concerned, not much has changed since the original HD Hero system, so if you've got some mounting hardware from a previous Hero camera, you should have no problem using it with the Hero3 unit. For the most part, their mounting system is pretty dialed. The threaded bolts are well measured out, providing plenty of thread to securely attach to either a 27.2-millimeter seatpost, or 31.8-millimeter handlebars. The adhesive mounts will stay secure at very high speeds, so long as they are installed properly on a flat clean surface.

The actual case for the Hero3 unit has also been updated. It is waterproof, but the closure system has become more secure, requiring two hands to open. Another improvement is that the lens window is slightly recessed and flat, where it was convex in the previous models. This not only helps reduce distortion, but also keeps the window better protected from scratching. The lens window is a replaceable piece, so don't get too down on yourself if you manage to scratch it.

As far as collecting video is concerned, this is where I really stress some patience if you haven't used these video cameras in the past. For me getting the hang of this was very similar to my experience learning how to use the more advanced functions on my DSLR camera. My advice is to start by using the basic video functions to get an idea of the quality and perspectives you can achieve. From there you can refer back to the directions to learn about shooting in other modes, in addition to playing around with different mounting setups for unique points of view. Before

too long, you'll have a good idea of how to best use different camera functions to obtain the shots you want.

The controls that manage the settings are pretty easy to use. The camera itself has only three buttons: a power/mode button, shutter/select button, and a WiFi on/off button. These are well labeled on the camera, however, the labels are hidden when the camera is inside its case. I ended up making some markings on the case to make sure I didn't accidentally turn the camera off while trying to shoot video. There are also a couple indicator lights on the camera which help you see whether or not it's shooting video. The included WiFi-enabled remote turned out to be really handy for shooting while riding. It can be strapped to your handlebars and, when synced to your camera, can control shooting functions from the remote. Just remember that when the WiFi function is turned on, the battery will drain faster.

While the Hero3 Black Edition hypes its ability to shoot 4K resolution video, I actually had more fun shooting with some of the lower-resolution functions and still-photo options. For capturing video, I spent most of my time in the WVGA resolution setting. This setting captures pretty good quality video and does so at 240 frames per second. In post editing, you can slow the playback way down and get some really cool slow-motion video. I'm partial to it because I can pinpoint that fleeting moment where my legs actually look flexed during a pedal stroke.

Another fun shooting mode is the time-lapse photography function. You can choose between still photo intervals of 0.5, 1, 2, 5, 10, 30, or 60 seconds. While

not an ideal setting to use while riding, it is great for catching a time lapse of the hustle and bustle around an evening campsite, sunsets/sunrises, or star constellations moving overhead at night. The camera needs to remain still for these photos, but when attached to the handlebar mount, your bike can make a pretty good tripod.

Depending on how you shoot your video, there may or may not be some video processing to do afterwards. For me this process was more time consuming than simply processing photos, but I found it to be pretty enjoyable. To get started, I would recommend playing around in a basic video editing program. For Apple users, iMovie is an intuitive program to work with and Movie Maker is a comparable option for PC users. Both of these programs let you trim or split your clips in addition to speeding up or slowing down the playtime. You can also add soundtracks to your video as well as a few basic effects such as title text and end credits. GoPro also has their own free app that you can download from their website, but it's functionality is a bit limited compared to these other options.

The GoPro Hero3 Black edition retails for \$400, which initially seemed steep to me, but putting it in perspective, it's not too far off what I would expect to pay for a good digital camera. Be sure to check out some of the video I shot with the GoPro here: adventurecycling.org/goproreview. **AC**

Josh Tack is Adventure Cycling's membership coordinator. For extended content to this article, check out Josh's weekly blog post at adventurecycling.org/resources/blog. For questions or comments about this article or your Adventure Cycling membership, you can email Josh at jtack@adventurecycling.org.

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