



BRAD HURDELL, CEO, SHOTOVER

Brad Hurdell is the CEO of Shotover Camera Systems. Since starting over 12 years ago, the company has been nominated and awarded for its continuous commitment to innovation; creating stabilised camera systems for the film and broadcast worlds that can be mounted on to helicopters, cars, boats and almost anything else that moves. Its newest, lighter camera system, the Shotover B1, has been nominated as a finalist in the New Zealand Hi-Tech Awards for the Most Innovative Hi-Tech Hardware category – and Hurdell, from his home in New Zealand, was able to tell us why, by giving us the lowdown on some of its features.

Q **DEFINITION:** What was the idea behind wanting to manufacture a lighter Shotover system?

A **BRAD HURDELL:** We saw an opportunity across all of our usual markets; creative, broadcast and news, but we also saw a new opportunity in the markets for industrial inspections, so that's utilities, power lines etc. Just like a lens, the one-size-fits-all approach doesn't always work. And with new camera options coming out and a higher demand for content across the world, we saw the B1 as helping fill that need across all the usual spectrums, but also in this new market.

Q **DEF:** You mentioned new camera options that can be used with the B1?

A **BH:** We started out with the Sony A7 series and Z Cam E2 series, which have full-frame 6K and 8K sensors. But more recently, the Ikegami 4000 has become a big focus of this product. It's a brand-new camera that's yet to actually be released to the market, but it's been built around the B1 so that we could offer a high-end broadcast solution in a much smaller package. We also use the Phase One industrial cameras with the B1, which are great for high-resolution stills photography. And then some of the peer-ins for those cameras would be the Fujinon 19-90mm or 21, 20, 85, 300mm, so that whole Cabrio series, and we then also we can do a host of primes and other similar-sized lenses in that range.

Q **DEF:** What creative benefits does a lighter system have for filming?

A **BH:** It's easy to transport, so that's good when you're travelling the world and need to take all of your equipment with you. On-set, it means new platforms and increased versatility on vehicles, cranes and cable cams. But also, it can fit on to smaller helicopters, like the Robinson series and Cobra B2.

Q **DEF:** The Shotover B1 features your patented Generation 5 technology, which delivers 'unshakeable stability and ultimate functionality' – could you explain what this means?

A **BH:** Over the last decade, we've developed a harmony of sensors, mechanics and electrical hardware and software that all works together. And every piece of that puzzle has to come together to deliver the ultimate result, which are stable images. And having that enables customers to apply it to a huge range of platforms.

Q **DEF:** One benefit is that it's able to reduce operator fatigue for the gimbal controller. Could you explain?

A **BH:** So that's actually more based around the industrial inspection side of the product, and there are two things that we can do there. One is primarily that inspection work is done by a cameraman that is looking out the door of a helicopter and is taking photos manually, so the helicopter has to strafe side on and, between the pilot and the cameraman, it's quite an exhausting process. The B1 allows them to have the doors closed and fly the helicopter in a more typical fashion, and to use the ergonomic gimbal controller. Or, we could go one step further – and we did this for our launch customer, in North America – and actually have the gimbal fully automated with mapping software so that it's pointed at the pipelines as the pilots fly, reducing input from the operator to a very minimal amount.

Q **DEF:** How has Covid-19 had an effect on business?

A **BH:** We're really fortunate, because we're a high-tech based team. We're



ABOVE The Shotover B1 (top) is a six-axis gyro-stabilised gimbal that can be mounted to a variety of helicopters, fixed-wing aircraft and watercraft

able to quickly and easily transition to working from home, so 90% of our team is now working from home, which minimises the immediate effects on the team and obviously the business. We can continue doing R&D, marketing, sales, training etc remotely. The regionalised lockdown is definitely causing some pain for our customers. But we're finding that as some of those lockdowns change, or countries are preparing to come out of lockdown, there are silver linings and opportunities appearing. We've seen some interesting regionalised changes that should hopefully be great for those local industries.

Q **DEF:** Are there any positives to remote working?

A **BH:** Yes, definitely. I mean, from a production perspective, it's going to allow the regions to increase the capability and hopefully produce content in a much more effective and efficient way than before. And then from an environmental perspective, there's no doubt that it's giving the planet a better chance to gasp for breath, so hopefully it'll have a positive effect on the way we consume, interact and travel moving forward. Of course, the biggest risk is that it won't, so hopefully we can take heed from that and change. **📍**

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