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Hold that pose Lightweight Quik Pod makes it a snap to put yourself in the picture

By FRANCOIS CHARRON, SPECIAL TO SUN MEDIA

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We've all had a crack at taking self-portraits or home videos with our favourite digital cameras.

Arms outstretched, we more or less get the thing centred, but unfortunately the results aren't always pretty. Faces come out deformed (like you were trying to find something in a Magic Eye) and half the time, you're not even in the picture.



The Quik Pod provides a sturdy brace for your camera that's far enough away from your body to take pictures and videos of yourself that actually work out.

At the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas this year, I discovered the Quik Pod, the kind of clever gadget people drool over.

Using an extendable arm to hold the camera in place, the Quik Pod provides a sturdy brace for your camera that's far enough away from your body to take pictures and videos of yourself that actually work out. The era of cut-off portraits and messed-up framing is finally over.

The Quik Pod consists of an extendable arm that a digital camera or video recorder sits on using the standard screw-in tripod mount on the bottom of most cameras. Holding the camera at the end of the Quik Pod wand, it's surprisingly easy to produce pictures that are well-centred and actually have flat horizons.

With the added distance from your body, an unforeseen benefit is also at your finger tips: Depth of field. When cameras are too close to their subject, the background is often blurred and out of focus. While this is great for artistic looking portraits, it's far from ideal when

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you're trying to capture the stunning landscape behind you. By holding the camera further away from your body, it's easier to shoot nicely proportioned photos of yourself, with stunning backgrounds that are also in focus!

Still unsure about your ability to get yourself in the frame? The Quik Pod also comes with a mirror that sits just below the camera, letting you see what your camera sees. The company also markets the device, to concert-goers, allowing photographers to get pictures of the band above the heads of the crowd. In short, the Quik Pod amounts to a miniature lightweight monopod, something photographers have been using for years. The difference lies in portability.

There are two models of Quik Pod, each with different maximum arm lengths: 47 cm (18.5 in.) and 135 cm (53 in.). Fully retracted, each model is 19 cm (7.5 in.) and 46 cm (18 in.) long, respectively. They're also extraordinarily easy to take with you, weighing in at only 100 (3.5 oz.) or 250 grams (8.8 oz)!

Once the camera is secured in place on the end of the wand, just set the delayed shutter timer on your camera or hit the record button on your video camera.

Only the shorter of the two models is available at camera supply stores in Canada. The longer model is available on the Quik Pod website, though.

The site also offers a number of accessories designed to complement the built-in versatility and light-weight design.

For a little extra cash, you can get a set of legs to stand your Quik Pod on the ground, a magnetic clip to attach it to any metal surface, a suction cup base to attach it to glass surfaces, carrying cases and belt clips.

Quik Pod

Price: About \$30.

Verdict: A monopod from any camera store will accomplish the same thing, but could be heavier, longer and less portable. Since this is designed for your average point-and-shoot camera, rather than professional photographers, the value and usability is good. While one of the accessories offered is a DSLR kit, experienced amateurs or professionals would be better off investing in a sturdier and more versatile mono- (or even tri-) pod system.

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