

PROFESSIONAL photographer

WEB EXCLUSIVES

Pro review: Monostat RS16 Professional Monopod

When the going gets tough ...

By Joe Farace

Sometimes you encounter situations when you can't carry a tripod or there's just not enough space to use one. That's where a monopod really comes in handy. If you're shooting sports, a monopod is especially useful when working with long lenses in the tight spaces sport shooters are often assigned. If you're photographing from the stands, a tripod can interfere with the spectators but a monopod won't. For nature photographers and backpackers where space and weight is at a premium, monopods are an ideal solution. But let's face it a monopod is just a stick. A stick that has to hold your camera securely, for sure, but still a stick.



Monostat of Switzerland's RS16 Professional monopod takes a slightly different approach but starts with the basics. The RS16 has a three-section design with the ubiquitous twist locks and weighs 1.3 pounds. It's made of lightweight but strong aluminum that extends to a maximum height of 61.8 inches and compresses to two feet, which can be attached to your camera bag or backpack. What sets this monopod apart from the rest is its foot. Unlike typical monopods that have a rubber or spiked foot, all Monostat RS (Rotation Stabilizer)

monopods use a flexible Swivel Toe Stabilizer, a.k.a. foot. This design is stable along vertical and horizontal axes and is grippy on normally slippery surfaces including tile (where I tried unsuccessfully to drag it) and even on ice, which we have a lot of in Colorado this year. The RS foot's pliable design has more in common with a snowshoe than a suction cup and is safe for use on those polished and expensive wooden floors.



I first tried the Monostat RS16 Professional monopod on a slippery tile floor, and it showed remarkable gripping power, but I was unprepared for how well it did in the snow and ice outdoors. The RS foot is not a suction cup but a cleverly designed flexible foot that provides what amount to a ball head on the other end of the monopod.

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Its tubular style is strong because a metal wall completely surrounds the leg and Monostat has chosen to use the old-school twist lock legs because, they say, twist-locks can always be tightened whatever the temperature. I would have preferred a softer more grippy rubber on the twist-locks rather than Monostat's wide tread design, but I can see that their wider grooves are less likely to get filled with snow or mud when the going gets sloppy. You should be using some kind of gloves in these situations anyway, so maybe it won't matter much.

I didn't have to go far to test the Monostat RS16 in snow and ice. This shot was made across the street from my house. (This has been one of those Colorado winters...) It wasn't all that cold when I was working with the Pentax K10D but when it gets chilly I put on my woolly fingerless gloves.

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While I prefer the three-section Professional model, some pros might prefer other configurations' length and number of sections. The RS16K All-Round is a

four-section monopod that extends to 61 inches and retracts to 19 inches. It weighs 1.3 pounds and is available in matte aluminum or black. The RS16SK Compact is a five-section monopod that measures 16.5 inches but extends to 57 inches. Taller shooters will prefer the RS16SL X-Long that extends from its compressed 21.25 inches to 75.5 inches. Prices for all of these models are in the same \$200 neighborhood as the Pro model and vary from \$209.95 to \$269.95.

Though monopods can be used with the same type of heads as a tripod, photographers typically use them without any head, easily tilting to get the perfect angle that the ball-head style RS foot accommodates nicely. All Monostat-RS monopods have a reversible 3/8- and 1/4-inch mount that screws into your camera's base or the tripod collar found on long focal length and zoom lenses. The monopods come with surprisingly nice, lined carrying case and have a two-year warranty.

Like all monopods, it's still a stick, but these precision Swiss-made Monostat monopods with their unique foot design are something special.

SPECS: Monostat RS16 Professional Monopod

Camera mount thread side: Reversible 1/4-inch x 20 and 3/8-inch

Material: matte finished aluminum

Maximum Monopod Height: 62 inches

Column Sections: 3

Closed Length: 25 inches

Leg Lock Type: Twist Lock

Max Load Capacity: 30 pounds

Weight: 22 ounces

Price: \$199.95

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