

STEADICAM MOUNTING THE ARRI AMIRA

Note: These tests were done using a home-made extra-long Steadicam dovetail plate. All configurations can be made with a standard-length dovetail, but the extra length is extremely useful when it comes to fore-aft balancing. Peter Abraham now manufactures these plates. https://www.facebook.com/pages/Zalex-Steadicam-Accessories/310232185844803?sk=info&tab=page_info

The bare Amira body has two identical female dovetails top and bottom. With no plate fitted to the bottom one, there is no way of attaching the body to anything. With none on the top, there is no way to pick it up. It is assumed that the Amira will come with at least two plates.

I've experimented with four such plates (two top, two bottom) and have found that it's possible to use any of them to connect directly to a Steadicam dovetail plate, without the use of any other adaptor plate, with varying, but acceptable, results. I'll deal with these plates in order of probable availability, even though option three, the **UAP-2**, is clearly the best.

Option 1: WPA-1



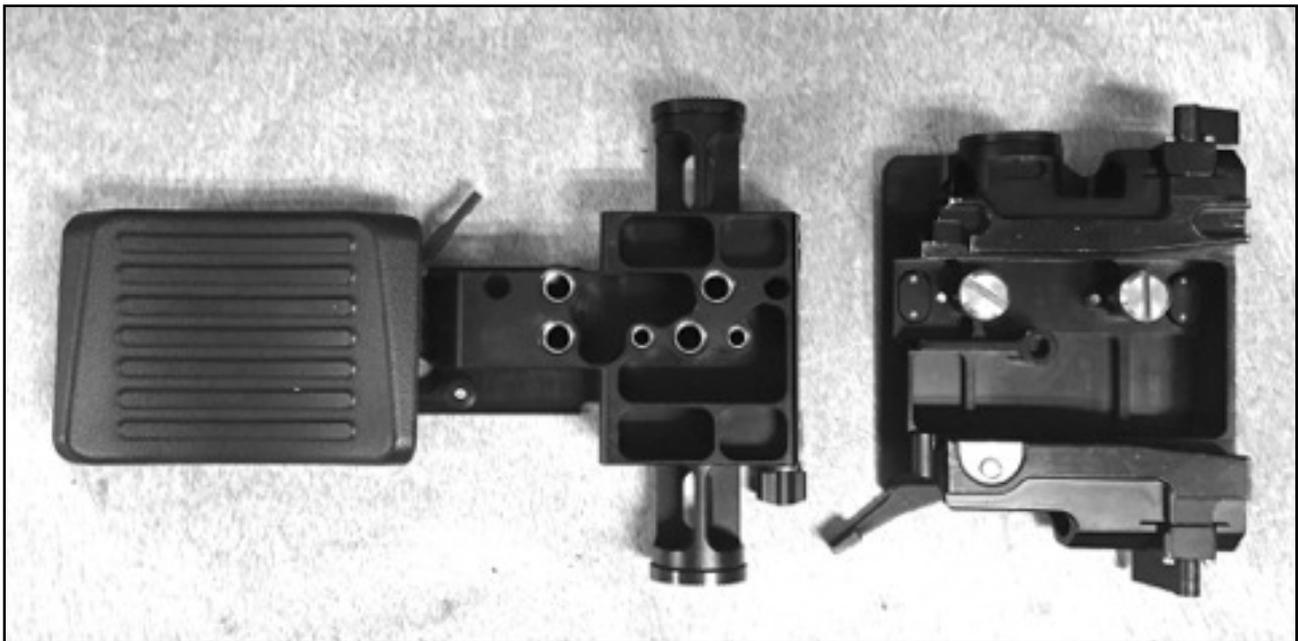
The most common bottom plate is likely to be the **WPA-1**, a Betacam-style quick-release plate. You can use this in conjunction with the **QRP-1** quick-release baseplate that mates to it, but this is not ideal. Quick-release plates are notoriously sloppy, becoming more so over time, allowing the camera body to roll from side to side. So unless you have a quick-release baseplate that is designed specifically for Steadicam (and there are several great examples of these), using it is likely to introduce vibrations into the rig. The second problem is that the **WPA-1** is already such a high plate, that introducing yet another plate between it and the Steadicam dovetail raises the centre of gravity of the camera even farther. This extra height makes it harder to counterbalance heavy payloads, especially on lighter rigs, and the resulting higher lens height can, in some circumstances, be a liability.

You can mount the Steadicam dovetail directly to the **WPA-1** in the following way. Use the standard 3/8-16 threaded hole at the front, and lock down the rear of the plate using the washer trick described here: <http://youtu.be/ulmIKHFTSBE> (This entails placing a threaded washer or thin nut inside the rear of the **WPA-1** quick-release mechanism, then screwing into that through the Steadicam dovetail. It's fiddly the first time you do it, but it locks down surprisingly well.) Fore-aft stability is great; side-to-side stability is average. Of all four configurations described here, this shares joint first place for highest.

Option 2: BPA-3

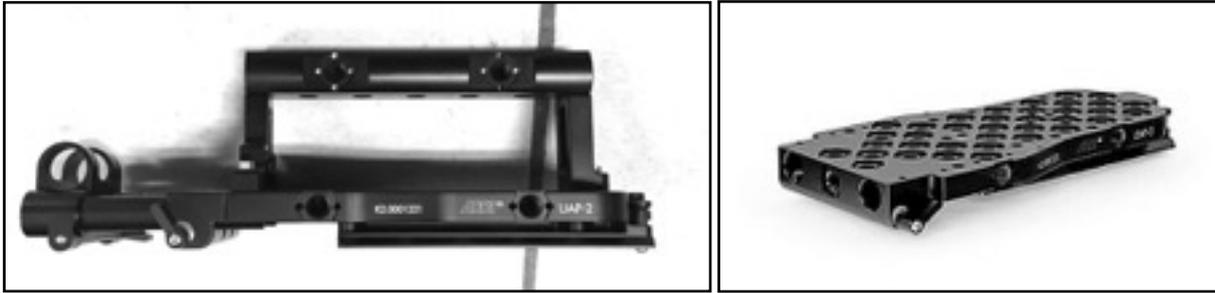


Probably the second most common base plate is the **BPA-3**. ARRI describes this plate as follows: *The **BPA-3** opens the world to the standard camera mounting plates like the **BP-8** or **BP-9**. It includes the appropriate connectors and provides the correct measurements for 19mm (or 15mm Studio) rods. This plate disassembles (shown below with dovetail section to the left), leaving a good selection of 1/4-20 and 3/8-16 holes into which you can screw your Steadicam dovetail.*



The problem with using this plate is that the maximum fore–aft spread of the holes is about 2¼" (less than 6cm), so unless you get the centre of gravity of the camera package above this you may get vibrations in the image if you run hard or subject the rig to violent shocks. (In my tests, I didn't detect any vibrations, so treat this as a caution.) The advantage of this over using the **WPA-1** is that the overall build is about ¾" (2cm) lower. If you're trying to counterbalance the Amira on a light rig like a Steadicam Zephyr, this might make all the difference. Fore–aft stability is average; side-to-side stability is great.

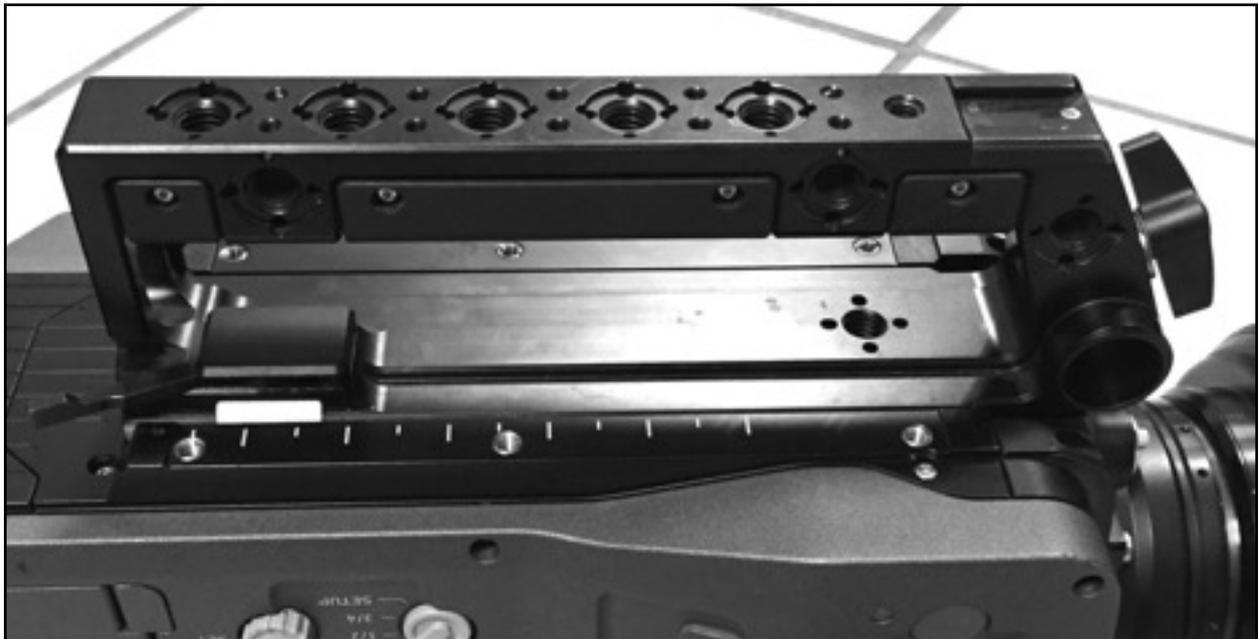
Option 3: UAP-2



This is the plate you really want. It's shown on the left with a handle for mounting on top of the Amira, but when it's stripped down (on the right), it's designed for, and is absolutely ideal for Steadicam mounting to the top or the bottom of the camera. It is rock solid, and keeps the centre of gravity where you want it, close to the stage. It's by far the lowest configuration, and both fore-aft and side-to-side stability are great, and offers plenty of mounting holes. Need I say more?

Option 4: CARRYING HANDLE

This one is a bit of a hack, but works surprisingly well. The carrying handle below is shown mounted to the *bottom* female dovetail of the Amira.



You can now screw the Steadicam dovetail directly into that. This results in a configuration that is the same height as when you use the **WPA-1**, though it's still less than when you connect the **WPA-1** to a baseplate like the **QRP-1**. Fore-aft stability is great; side-to-side stability is better than average.