



# MicroFilmmaker Magazine

Equipment, Book, Training, & Software Reviews



## Equipment Review: *microX*

Company: Redrock micro  
 Website: <http://www.redrockmicro.com>  
 Type: microX Flip Accessory for the M2  
 MSRP: \$345  
 Sample Footage: [Click Here](#)  
 Expected Release: Available Now  
 Review Date: November 1, 2008  
 Reviewed By: A.J. Wedding

**Final Score: 9.8**

I often find myself asking the same question whenever I shop for filmmaking tools: "Why does that cost so much?" It's just a metal stand, or a plastic cap, or a rolling cart to carry things. The answer is always the same, "This is for film." Ah yes, therefore it must be a magical cart that will immediately make my movie look better! That explains it! Unfortunately we can't all afford such extravagant and unnecessarily expensive gear. That's when we turn to companies like Redrock.



Redrock has been a champion of micro-budget filmmakers since they started their little company in 2004 and introduced the micro35 Cinema Lens adapter. The micro35 allowed you to achieve the look of film by using inexpensive 35mm lenses (the kind you would use on your Nikon or Canon SLR) and focusing the image they perceived on a spinning wheel of frosted glass, which your digital camera could then record. When the improved follow-up came out at the end of 2005, it was christened the M2 Cinema Lens adapter. Having been a huge fan of film since becoming a director, I always hated the overly crisp, artificial, and everything-in-focus look that digital projects had, until I tried the M2. Being able to create such short depth of field with a digital camera just wasn't possible before, at least not without spending ten grand on the adapter made by a French company (insert your favorite French insult), whose name I won't mention because my parenthetical statement could be interpreted as libel if I did.

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Now, while the M2's abilities were amazing, there was some give and take. Because film lenses actually record their images upside down, you couldn't use the viewfinder (because trying to monitor an upside down image reliably while moving the camera is very difficult without lots and lots of practice) and would require either an upside down external monitor or previewing software that could flip the image, like OnLocation or Scopebox. Then, when it came time to edit, you would have to flip all your images right side up before you could edit them. While it was worth doing all these things for the amazing images, fortunately, this is no longer necessary, thanks to the microX.

The microX Flip accessory is a fairly simple yet brilliant solution. It's a prism that mounts between the M2 Lens Adapter and the camera you are using, flipping the image with a minimal amount of light loss. No batteries required.



### Ease of Use

There is very little difficulty with the set-up and use of the microX. If you are using it, you are already an M2 owner, and, as such, understand the basics of lining up the camera lens with the ground glass. The only thing that is slightly difficult and time consuming is the initial set-up.

When using the microX with your M2, you have to adjust the Redrock Support Base with the new Riser Block that comes with the microX. The camera will sit a little higher on the support base to make up for the extra

height required by the lens-side of the microX. Once I added the riser block and adjusted the shims, I decided I wasn't going to use the M2 without the microX ever again. When you finally get those vertical and horizontal adjustments correctly aligned, you won't want to change it either! (It would be nice if Redrock considered making an all-in-one version of its adapter and microX, similar to how Letus35 makes theirs. As I believe Redrock is the only manufacturer to use a spinning wheel of glass vs. a vibrating glass element, perhaps there is some technical reason that this won't work in Redrock's setup, but it would make it very convenient for people who want to buy both the Redrock M2 and microX in one streamlined package.)

The microX also requires a new achromat, which is much smaller than the HD achromat (55mm) and has special threads for use with the M2. The achromat is included, but make sure you figure out which step-down ring you need (85-55mm or 72-55mm) because you don't want to pay extra shipping for forgetting that tiny item.



### **Depth of Options**

Adding the microX to your M2 lens adapter does more than just flip the image. It also increases 'edge-to-edge sharpness' of your lenses by equalizing the distance between the achromat and the center and edges of the ground glass. It fixes the fairly common gripe of barrel distortion that the M2 has had in the past. (Though often that problem is due to improper set up or just a crappy lens!) One thing to keep in mind when buying lenses is the size of the rear lens element. You want a larger rear element, as some of the lenses I have tested with small rears (approx. the size of a dime) create some vignetting, even with the microX.

### **Performance**

I guess you could call it a leap of faith, but I tested the microX for the first time on the production of my web series, Infamous. This was my baby, and I wanted it to look great. Something told me that the guys over at Redrock wouldn't put something out there that made the image quality worse. We had a grueling six day/six episode shoot with two HVX200 cameras and Redrock adapters equipped with Nikon lenses.

Everyone's big complaint with the M2 adapter is the light loss. But once you are used to shooting with a little more light, it's fine. I have never had a situation I couldn't shoot through, and I don't have any sources larger than a 1k. The great thing about the microX is that it doesn't add a lot of light loss. People measure light loss in many different ways, but I think the practical answer to that question is that the microX takes about a half stop. M2 owners who are used to lighting with their camera set ups simply won't experience a

huge difference in how they light.

The only thing that I think could be improved on the microX is the way it mounts to the achromat and the camera. It has these really tiny allen screws that are used for adjustment and mounting. They are so small that they are easy to lose, just like the allen wrench you need to adjust them. I would improve those screws by adding twist-able heads that you could turn with your fingers. But other than that, the microX is very easy to use and compliments the M2 very well.



### Value

To be honest, I was surprised at how low the cost of the microX was, even though I knew that Redrock aims at low cost solutions. After all, it's a pretty serious prism. When you consider that you can have the full M2/microX combo for a total cost of \$1745, you are looking at an amazing return on that investment. When people see our web series, Infamous, they assume that it has a pretty decent budget. That simply is not the case! Their assumption is mostly because of the "look" we were able to create with Redrock's M2 and microX. It's well worth the price.

### Final Comments

*With the recent crop of low-cost lens adapters, everyone is going to have their favorite. But those that want the true cinematic look with a constant eye on improvements will choose Redrock products, and in particular, the microX. This product proves their commitment to their customers, and products to come will continue to take your production value to another level.*

<b>Breakdown</b>	
Ease of Use	8.0
Depth of Options	10.0
Performance	10.0
Value	10.0
<b>Overall Score</b>	<b>9.8</b>



**AJ Wedding** graduated from Western Michigan University in 2000, and headed out to Los Angeles. As an actor, he has played co-starring roles on Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Drake and Josh, and most recently a TV movie, The Fall of Hyperion. As a writer/director, he has won awards from the East Lansing Film Festival, Houston Worldfest, and most recently sold a feature called The Disappearance of Jenna Matheson, set to release next year. He currently co-writes and co-stars in the web series Infamous, distributed by 60 Frames Entertainment.

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