The LowDown on on the UpHighs (Portable Aerial Rigs, That Is)



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I get questions about my rig all the time so I figured I'd write up some info for y'all! First of all, I am not an expert, but I have first hand experience with three of the most common rigs in the US right now:

- CG: The Circus Gear Rig (what I have!)
- LVDH: The Ludwig/Vvolfy/Damnhot Rig (and the old website which is out of date but still has some info)
- TRDC: The TrapezeRiggingDotCom Rig (no longer for sale, but still quite commonly in use)

(Speaking of the USA, all the units in this document are imperial, and I use ‘ to indicate foot and “ to indicate inches. Remember 1.5’ ≠ 1’5”!)

I did a bunch of research and made a long pros and cons list back when I bought my rig in early 2018. I'll compare them in a bunch of different categories below, but the CG rig comes out on top overall in my book! That being said, there are so many factors that you may absolutely come to a different conclusion based on your needs. Also, there are other rigs out there - I just can’t speak to them because I have no intel on them, but hopefully you will be able to assess other rigs using some of the same considerations I’ve mentioned here.

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Leg Connectors





- CG: 9/10
  - Clear winner for this category! The CG rig has easy to use pins that secure well with no extra tools and are easy enough to see if dropped.
  - There is one tiny extra step involved upon first receiving the rig, which is to set each of the black inset tubes into one end of each leg piece. They are designed to be removable in order to reduce the total leg length to 6' for transport.
- LVDH: 5/10
  - The legs have little snap buttons that pop out into corresponding holes. They are handy for aligning the leg so the set screw can be tightened, but can be pinchy during breakdown.
  - The legs are secured with lil set screws that require an allen wrench to secure. While the rig comes with an allen wrench, you'll probably want to have at least one more on hand for speedier set up and take down. It's easy to forget to tighten each set screw since they can't be visually inspected for security as the pins on the CG rig can be.
- TRDC: 1/10
  - This rig doesn't require connectors between each leg which makes it a bit touchy to raise up, in my experience.
  - It stays together once raised by wrapping steel cords around each leg, which I find to be a bit tedious, and which means it can only be set up at one height per set of cords, which is a big downside.

Leg Length Variability

- CG: 10/10
  - One of CG's biggest innovations is the four 3' leg sections included along with the 6' leg sections. This means that there is never more than a ~3' difference in each side's height as the rig is being raised and lowered, as opposed to a ~6' height difference with the other two rigs. I really like this feature and it makes for a more easeful process of set up and take down.
- LVDH: 0/10
  - Equal-length legs make for a tippier experience in raising and lowering the rig.
- TRDC: 0/10
  - Equal-length legs make for a tippier experience in raising and lowering the rig.

Feet

If you'll be setting up indoors where you need to be aware of the finish on the floor, be aware of what the bottom of your feet are like! (This doesn't currently apply to me, but could be an issue if you're planning to do gigs/corporate events.)



- CG: 10/10
  - Super grippy and thick rubber on the bottom of each foot helps the rig stay put and also protects the floor below.
- LVDH: 3/10
  - Very basic square metal foot. Would need a rubber mat under each foot on a sensitive surface.
- TRDC: 6/10
  - Rubber on the bottom of each round foot, but not as sturdy as the CG rig.

Height Adjustability

- CG: 10/10
  - You can use any configuration of the long and short legs to adjust within 3' of your target height
  - The feet are adjustable to 1.5' in 2" increments (very helpful for uneven ground)
- LVDH: 7/10
  - You can use any number of the 6' pieces on your legs
  - The feet are adjustable to ~4' in 6" increments (I believe adjustable feet are now standard, though they used to be an add on I think)
- TRDC: 0/10
  - In order to set up the rig at different heights, you must have different lengths of cable to wrap around the legs to secure the sections.
  - The feet are not adjustable whatsoever.

Overall Ease of Setup, considering all factors above

CG has so many thoughtful features and is the clear winner here!

- CG: 10/10
- LVDH: 7/10
- TRDC: 4/10

Header Size



- CG: 3/10
  - The CG rig's other big innovation is in the pyramid-like header. This makes for a very stable set-up, but is a bit more cramped-feeling when you're at the very top of an apparatus, at only 2'5" in width in each direction (3'5" on the diagonal).
  - I haven't had any issue with this because the rig is so tall so I spend most of my time with plenty of distance from the legs,

but if you'll be setting up at a low height consistently and/or you're tall (I'm 5'4"), this may be more of an issue for you.

- LVDH: 10/10
  - This rig wins this category hands down because of the standard 4' header and the optional 6' header.
- TRDC: 7/10
  - Middle of the road, standard header.



Height/Footprint

- CG: 10/10
  - Most compact footprint
  - 23' high: 20.5'x20.5'
  - 20' high: 19.5'x19.5'
  - 17.5' high: 17'x17'
  - 15' high: 14.5'x14.5'
  - 12.5' high: 12.5'x12.5'
  - 10' high: 10.5'x10.5'
- LVDH: 6/10
  - 16' high: 16'x14'
  - 20' high: 20'x18'
- TRDC: 4/10
  - Widest base and lowest max height make it less flexible for situations with a limited footprint available for setup.
  - 18.5' high: 24'x26'

Material

I am no material scientist, but my understanding is that aluminum is more weather resistant than steel, which is a bigger factor for someone looking to keep their rig outdoors for an extended time.

- CG: 10/10
  - Aluminum
- LVDH: 5/10
  - Steel - can be powder coated in many colors for an extra fee, as a fun bonus
  - FAQ states that it is suitable for extended outdoor use as long as it is monitored well
- TRDC: 10/10
  - Aluminum



Out of the Box Features

- CG: 10/10
  - Todd at CG generously includes just about everything you might ever need when you order your rig (not including a pulley system or any apparatus or rigging gear). This includes 5 eye bolts installed on the header, four tie off points on each leg, and rubber pads for setting up the rig on grass (protect the legs from dirt) or a fancy floor (protect the floor from the legs).
- LVDH: 1/10

    - This rig comes with one eye bolt, and the option to order more (necessary for a pulley system, hanging multiple apparatus at the same time, and/or a double point trapeze, for instance). You also have to get tie offs separately.
- TRDC: 3/10
    - This rig comes with three eye bolts and no tie off points at the bottom.

Add-Ons / Customizations

- CG: 6/10
    - Circus gear's only add-on option is the pulley system, which provides everything you need for a 4:1 set-up. That being said, I'm sure if you have a need for some other customization, Todd would be happy to work with you.
- LVDH: 10/10
    - Because this rig comes with such barebone features, you can add a lot of a la carte options, such as additional eyebolts, tie offs, and weather-proofing plugs to try to keep some water out of the pieces. But where this rig really shines is it's header options! You can order a 6' header instead of the standard 4' to give yourself more room at the top of the rig.
- TRDC: 0/10
    - I'm not aware of any customizations available for the rig.

Ease of Transport



- CG: 6/10
    - Longest piece is only 6'0" BUT, the tetrahedron header is bulky at 11.5”x2’4.5”x2’4.5”
    - I can fit this in my 2013 Ford C-Max hatchback with the back seats down, no prob
- LVDH: 8/10
    - Longest piece: 6'5"
- TRDC: 7/10
    - Longest piece: 6'8"

Customer Service

- CG: 10/10
    - Very responsive and happy to customize
- LVDH: 10/10
    - Very responsive to questions, very flexible customization
- TRDC: 0/10
    - NA, company out of business

Website

Why would I bring up the website? I wouldn't have except that I was recently looking for a new place to set up my rig and the owner of the barn wanted to make sure that I had top quality equipment. I know that all three of these rigs I'm discussing are good reliable rigs, but I'm glad that I was able to send her to the Circus Gear website, which calmed her nerves about my equipment.

- CG: 10/10

    - Professional and modern
- LVDH: 10/10
    - EDIT: The new Vvolfy website is legit!
- ~~LVDH: 4/10~~
    - ~~While I know the maker is reputable, their website, which looks like it is stuck in the 1990s, doesn't necessarily instill confidence in someone from outside the industry trying to assess your equipment.~~
- TRDC: 0/10
    - No longer operational

Other Thoughts

Are you sick and tired of all of my hot takes? Here are some more informed opinions about portable rigs from Delbert Hall, which I referenced way back when I was looking for my rig in 2018:

- Overview + Ludwig + Trapeze Rigging
- Addendum + Circus Concepts
- Circus Gear

But Wait, There's More!

OK, you think you're ready to take the plunge and get that rig? STOP!!! What does your budget look like?! Sorry to burst your bubble, but if you haven't factored in shipping, a proper mat, and high quality rigging hardware, you might not be as ready as you think, as these add hundreds and hundreds of dollars to the cost of your setup.

- Have you contacted the seller to find out how much shipping is? Rigs are bulky and heavy, so how far you are from NC (CG) or CO (LVDH) will make a difference in how much shipping will cost you!
- Have you budgeted for a suitable mat and shipping for said mat?! Again shipping tends to jack up the farther away you live from the manufacturer, so do your research, get quotes, shop around, etc.
- What exactly do you plan to hang from this rig?! Make sure you are buying apparatus(es) and rigging gear (carabiners, swivels, pulleys etc) *directly from reputable manufacturers*. Even if you find a reputable brand on Amazon, DON'T DO IT. It is simply not worth the risk of ending up with counterfeit gear. The good stuff costs real money, and it's worth missing out on free prime shipping to make sure what's holding you up will do so without fail.



Update: I made a flashy instagram post on this little subtopic, including pie charts! https://www.instagram.com/p/CO4R4Nhg0Z4/

Comments? Questions? DM me!

OK, I've hopped off that lil budgeting soap box and I'm ready to answer your questions as best as I can! Or, did I miss something important? Let me know! Feel free to DM me on Instagram, I'm @molliewobbles! My DMs are always open, especially if you have any rope loops to share with me ;)



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