



[product review]

### **THE SURELOCK ROPE LINE CLAMP**

Reviewed by Elbin Cleveland

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## The SureLock Rope Line Clamp

One of the most common safety hazards in the theatre is the unbalanced counterweight rigging line set. The unwitting release of an unbalanced line set can set loose runaway battens with frightening potential to destroy scenery and equipment and to kill people.

Therefore, we were very pleased to learn that JR Clancey has developed a new purchase line rope clamp for the counterweight locking rail which virtually eliminates releasing unbalanced line sets. The new SureLock clamp is engineered to prevent the opening and release of the rope clamp if the load on the batten is fifty pounds or more out of balance in either direction, toward the counterweight arbor or toward the stage.

The secret is a set of four compression springs which allow the lock clamp mechanism to travel slightly up or down in its housing if the line is unbalanced. This travel moves a steel cross pin in the handle out of the operating position so that the handle cannot be pulled down to release the rope clamp and to set free the unbalanced load.

We tested the SureLock clamp with a braided nylon line to see how well it would hold a rope that is "slipperier" than the common natural or synthetic hemp hand line. With the clamp dogs properly adjusted, there was no significant slippage of the hand line with imbalances up to 65 pounds.

We tested the clamp travel by attaching line loads varying from zero up to approximately 85 pounds, in each direction, as measured by a Hansen "Viking" model spring line scale. We discovered that the rope clamp began to shift at about 40 pounds of imbalance and that 45 pounds of imbalance rendered the release handle inoperable. It seems likely that after continued use the slide mechanism may loosen even a bit more and regularly lock somewhere between forty to forty five pounds



of load imbalance. We believe that this lower imbalance (lower than the 50 pounds stated by Clancey.) is a distinct advantage because it forces the flyman to note and be aware of the imbalance, and (hopefully) to properly attend to its correction before further attempting to operate the line set. What a pleasure to find a product that actually operates better than promised.

We also like the fact that the handle and the safety ring are vinyl coated. This coating largely eliminates rattling of the safety ring or the handle during operation. Another nice feature is the rubber bumper installed where the handle drops against the base. This greatly reduces the clank of a released metal handle striking against the metal base. Details like these distinguish the well-planned and well-manufactured products from the ordinary.

We do have two minor problems to point out. First, the opening in the plastic shroud for the clamp adjusting screw and its locking nut was too narrow for easy application of a

wrench to the locking nut. Second, and less important, we have a general suspicion about the durability of plastic parts. We would have preferred a shroud of folded sheet metal.

However, we still believe that this new rope line lock unquestionably fills a major safety gap in traditional counterweight rigging systems and we fully recommend it to our readers. In our opinion, every new counterweight rigging system should be equipped with SureLock rope locks and older systems should be retrofitted immediately.

The SureLock costs \$795.00 which is a bit pricey. But that is a small fraction of the cost of a repair bill, a hospital bill, or a lawsuit. It is available from JR Clancey, Inc., 7041 Interstate Island Road, Syracuse, NY 13209-9713; [www.jrclancey.com](http://www.jrclancey.com)

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