

Lume Cube light

by Dan Bolt

Another crowd-funded product hit the market this year, and while not specifically aimed at underwater photographers, its specifications tweaked my interest enough to spend £80(ish) on one a couple of months ago.

Touted as a companion light to your modern outdoor lifestyle to go alongside your GoPro/ similar rugged recording device, this small and very well made little light offers pairing with your phone (with up to an additional 4 lights), 10 light levels from 150-1500 lumens (max 150 Lux at 3m), and even a slave sensor allowing it to be remotely triggered by other strobes. The beam spread is a very even 60 degrees, and you can use 3 additional diffusers if required. There is a standard tripod mount on the base.

Obviously the Bluetooth control and pairing functions aren't much use underwater (but may add to your personal reasons for considering one if you do a lot of outdoors photography and want waterproof rugged lights you can control from your phone) but I was intrigued to see if the slave sensor was useful for remote lighting situations while diving, as well as its general efficacy as a light source.

The stated topside burn time at 1500 lumens is a not-very-good 25 minutes. However, that limit is only imposed by the internal thermal cut-out switch and, trust me, in air this thing gets very hot very quickly. But once you submerge one of these lights (even in a warm swimming-pool) you will get almost an hour at full brightness, 2 hours at 50% and many hours at the lower lumen settings.



Adjusting the power output is as simple as clicking one of the two buttons, the other button turns it off (or switches it into slave mode). But with 10 settings to choose from it can be hard to keep track of how many times you've clicked, resulting in you having to go 'round the clock' again if you click once too many times and it drops to the lowest setting.

So back to the slave sensor: technically it



Anemones in poor vis. Olympus OM-D E-M1, Aquatica AE-M1, Olympus 8mm fisheye, 1/60th, f/7.1, iso1600, single Lume Cube on constant



Front-lit anchor at night. Olympus OM-D E-M1, Aquatica AE-M1, Olympus 8mm fisheye, 1/40th, f/5, iso800, single Lume Cube on constant



Lume Cube on tripod. Olympus OM-D E-M1, Aquatica AE-M1, Olympus 8mm fisheye, 1/13th, f/3.5, iso1600, single lume cube on constant

worked well, and was able to detect a low-power flash from my YS-D1. But this is where non 'flash' based technology can't compare with the light-output from a proper strobe/flash. In essence the 'flash' mode of the Lume Cube is just a very short duration constant-light burst from a single LED. And so, even at the max 1500 lumen output, and using the fastest 1/125th duration, the actual amount of light output was so small as to be barely registered on my camera's

sensor. Yes you can lengthen the duration of the 'flash' all the way up to 1 second, but at what point does a 'flash' become a continuous light source? I'll leave that debate and the ensuing lumen/lux/GN over time calculations to others ;)

It sometimes takes a while for a new bit of kit to embed itself into an existing setup, and the same was true for me and the Lume Cube. After a few dives its most useful function became clear; with such a small size, 10 levels of adjustment and great battery life; using it as a focus/spotting light almost seems to be what

it was designed for in the first place. I now do every dive with it (yes wide angle and macro) – I simply turn it on at the start of the dive and totally forget about it.

Being able to re-charge via USB was a bonus for me too, no heavy charger required and it will re-charge from flat in less than 90mins.

Dan Bolt

www.underwaterpics.co.uk

www.lumecube.com