

Blackmagic 4K cinema and Nauticam NA-BMPCCII

by Vance Burberry

With the Pocket Cinema Camera 4K, Blackmagic is giving users affordable 4K Raw video. The Blackmagic Pocket Cinema Camera 4K delivers true DCI 4K capture at 60fps recorded in either 12-bit Blackmagic raw format or a variety of 10-bit ProRes flavors. Video can be recorded internally to SD or CFast 2.0 cards or via USB-C to a compact SSD. The MicroFourThirds mount means a large selection of lenses.

As a professional cinematographer I am always evaluating new camera technology and tools that help expand my creative process. I have been filming for over 32 years, working mostly on land but also choosing to specialize in underwater imaging, having been diving for 40 years and a certified NAUI Instructor Trainer for 20.

The cinematography world is very demanding with overly ambitious schedules and tight budgets. Working underwater greatly magnifies those pressures. In my career I've filmed everything from feature work to music videos, commercials and

documentaries, both on land and underwater.

I have a partnership in a Nauticam Alexa Mini Housing with the shop where I am an instructor in Los Angeles. It's an incredibly wonderful system, that is beautifully designed. The quality of the Alexa camera's images is exceptional but the size and complexity of this camera system means setup time can be a burden on already tight schedules also the operating costs are fairly high. Because of this, I have long been hoping for a more compact solution that captures beautiful images of similar quality. Enter the Blackmagic Pocket Cinema Camera 4k and the Nauticam NA-BMPCCII.

I was fortunate to be able to test a pre-production version of the new Nauticam NA-BMPCCII housing on Catalina Island, California.

I was blown away by the results, finding the NA-BMPCCII with the BlackMagic Pocket Cinema Camera 4K to be an underwater system that fits seamlessly into the professional cinematography toolbox while





The NA-BMPCCII features a notch above the camera holds a T5 compact SSD which is connected to the camera via USB-C and allow for the recording of Raw or ProRes video to high-capacity edit-ready media.

The NA-BMPCCII is designed with the Nauticam Mission Control philosophy insuring access to essential controls within easy reach of the handles. Thumb levers provide access to ISO, Shutter Speed, White Balance, Autofocus, and Review.

The NA-BMPCCII ships with an auxiliary battery cage that holds 4 x 18650 lithium batteries. The cage sits securely below the camera and can provide a total run time in excess of 3 hours with 4 x 3400 mAh batteries. Batteries are not included.



still being compact, efficient and incredibly cost effective.

The NA-BMPCCII housing, like all other Nauticam products is beautifully designed and engineered. Having owned several Nauticam housings for a variety of cameras, I've found the quality to be consistent across the board including the new NA-BMPCCII. The overall layout of camera controls, the built in external power supply and the internal mount for a Samsung T5 SSD drive highlight the amount of consideration for the underwater shooter's needs that goes into the design.

The test was for a week but weather and water conditions were a challenge throughout. Regardless, I was able to get it in the water during a trip out to the dive park at Casino

Point in Avalon on Catalina Island California. Conditions were poor but testing proceeded. I had preset the camera recording format settings during my prep session before my trip. Some formatting settings need to be set beforehand as the touch screen is not accessible underwater. This is not an issue at all as most professional cameras require a similar approach. As I only had access to one N85 dome port for the test, I used a 7-14mm Panasonic Lumix F4 lens with manual focus control. Although the NA-BMPCCII gives you have easy access to the auto focus of the camera, I personally prefer manual focus as it's still the standard in the professional cinematography world. Prior to entering the water and throughout the dive, the vacuum



system confirms the water-tight integrity of the housing which gives great peace of mind, knowing your camera is secure from water damage due to leaks.

Dropping to about 30' and just hovering a 3 or 4 ft from the bottom, I wanted got a feel for working with the various controls, starting with white balance, a critical element underwater. A lever near the right handle opens up the Color Temperature Menu, which is navigated by a neighboring control wheel below the shutter. For these conditions, I set the camera to a color temperature of 8000k. If you have a white-balance card, pressing and holding the control will create a custom white balance. Tapping the white-balance control lever again exits the menu and the control reel returns to controlling the lens iris, if using electronic lenses.

I had preset the high frame rate on the camera to 60fps to facilitate smooth slow motion for a project setting of 23.98FPS. A dedicated HFR button allows quick switching between the different frame rates. On the other toggle of the white balance thumb lever, you can access the shutter angle. The shutter angle is managed in the same was as white balance, using the control wheel. Precise and simple



as I've come to expect from my Nauticam housings.

Custom function buttons (of which there are 3), momentary auto-iris, momentary auto focus, zoom for manual focus, still shooting, camera run/stop, and very critical, ISO adjustments. Everything is clearly marked and easily accessible from outside the housing by a combination of dials, buttons and levers. Within five minutes I'd found committed to memory where everything was just by feel, a testament to the thoughtful design of the housing.

The housing was very well balanced with a very slight negative buoyancy which I prefer. Over the years, I have developed a light touch with the camera to allow for precise control. The well balanced feel of the setup made it feel like the larger cinema camera housings I've become accustomed to in terms of the ease of maintaining stability throughout a shot. Impressive for such a compact underwater system. The NA-BMPCCII was a joy to shoot with, moving through the kelp and terrain and while being able to make adjustments quickly and easily was a dream, especially in what were quite challenging conditions. The housing performed incredibly well and I could not be more pleased and am anxiously awaiting one of my very own. I will

have a camera system that can not only be easily taken anywhere to shoot with for fun, but also will serve as another valuable tool in my professional toolbox.

To sum up, the Nauticam BMPCC11 is a must have in my opinion, If you are a recreational diver who is simply passionate about underwater imaging or are a professional cinematographer the NA-BMPCCII is built for you. I believe this setup to be a revolution in underwater cinematography as now anyone can have access to the tools to shoot cinema quality underwater video.

Technical Specifications

Dimensions

370mm(w) x 220mm(h) x 124mm (D)

Weight in air 3.2 kg

Weight in water TBA

Depth Rating 100m

Vance Burberry

To see more of Vance's work:

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Don't settle for 2nd best



Film - No Filter No
White Balance



Digital - No Filter Manual
White Balance



Magic Filter Manual
White Balance

Digital cameras have opened up new possibilities to underwater photographers. For available light photography manual white balance is an invaluable tool for restoring colours. But when you use it without a filter you are not making the most of the technique. You're doing all the hard work without reaping the full rewards. These three photos are all taken of the same wreck in the Red Sea. The left hand image was taken on slide film, which rendered the scene completely blue. The middle image is taken with a digital SLR without a filter, using manual white balance. The white balance has brought out some of the colour of the wreck, but it has also sucked all the blue out of the water behind the wreck, making it almost grey. The right hand image is taken with the same digital camera and lens, but this time using an original Magic Filter. The filter attenuates blue light meaning that the colours of the wreck are brought out and it stands out from the background water, which is recorded as an accurate blue.

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