

Underwater Photography



"1894 - 1986"

Capture your imagination



with a Nikonos outfit
from

Ocean Optics Ltd

Worldwide Underwater
Photography Specialists

Underwater Photography Magazine

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Editorial

If all the wellwishing letters are anything to go by, Underwater Photography seems to have been a long awaited publication. We aim to provide a stable platform upon which underwater photography and underwater photographers can build a reputation of their own. Whether you regard it as a sport, hobby or career, we hope to provide the information you need to improve and this can only lead to increased enjoyment for all.

No-one can say what the future holds but underwater photography can only expand as information and encouragement becomes more available throughout the world. UP is a UK based magazine but will only succeed if we can appeal to a worldwide audience. Attitudes and opinions alter from country to country but we all have one common activity and Underwater Photography's long term aim is to co-ordinate, if possible, the various temperaments and point us all in the same direction. We are, after all, underwater photographers who choose, for whatever reason, to communicate with images. Let the image speak for us and let's see what happens.

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XL-SPIRO'S NEW XTRA-LIGHT REGULATORS LIGHT IS RIGHT!



IN our search for increased diver comfort we have concentrated on reducing the weight that the diver supports in the mouth. The result is our XL range of regulators.

XL stands for Xtra Light and reflects the 40% weight saving achieved by the use of new materials. The second stage is moulded in impact resistant polymer which combines strength with lightness, and allows us to offer the XL in yellow or black.

FOR additional comfort we have fitted a silicone rubber mouthpiece as standard, together with a silicone diaphragm and exhaust valve for easy breathing.

THE XL second stage is available on our all new Club 2 XL regulator, on the Explorer XL, and on the new Pro XL.

THE Club 2 XL incorporates a completely new first stage, designed for reliability and ease of maintenance. Its dynamically balanced piston design gives good performance in all diving conditions. The hoses and accessory ports ($\frac{3}{8}$ " UNF MP and $\frac{7}{16}$ " UNF HP) are angled forward, allowing comfortable use of an Octopus and two inflators if necessary, and the swivelling clamp allows perfect positioning. An MP hose protector is standard.

THE Explorer XL combines our popular Explorer first stage with the XL second stage to give a fully balanced light-weight design. The physical features are as for the Club 2 XL.

OUR Pro XL introduces an updated version of the Pro first stage which gives increased performance, easier maintenance, and 3 spare MP outlets.

THESE three new models supplement our existing range of all-metal regulators: the Spiro Club, the Explorer and Explorer-R; the Spiro Pro, Pro-RS, and Pro-S. All our regulators can be used with our new cylinders at 232 bar.

dive Spiro

Ask for SPIRO products at your local dive shop

Spirotechnique [UK] Ltd

Sony 8mm Handycam Video and Two New Housings

The latest 8mm video format will replace VHS and VHS-C or so Sony forecast. To make sure it does underwater, Sony have built two housings. UP reviews both.

For those who watch the photographic market with even a slight interest, the gradual decline of amateur cine equipment followed by the phenomenal explosion of domestic video has been one of the major happenings of the past decade. On the continent of Europe, cine has always had an enthusiastic following but even there the talk is now of underwater video as equipment comes onto the market. Whether video is better than cine is debatable but one thing is for certain - video is creating a whole new interest in moving images underwater and is now more available than ever before.

With the advent of the 8mm Handycam video recorder and its two housings from Sony, the underwater world now has a stable supply of equipment. Up until now, the video cameras were evolving so rapidly that housing manufacturers were reticent to design and invest in tooling to make a housing for a camera which may only stay in production for a few months. Some housings were produced but we doubt if they were financially successful for those involved.

The Sony 8mm Handycam Video Recorder

When Sony announced this new format to take over from VHS and VHS Compact cassettes, they did so with the joint co-operation of over 100 video manufacturers. The new format offered increased image sensitivity and truer colours, especially in low light levels. Their two cameras were aimed at appealing to as wide an audience as possible.

The Handycam is the smallest camcorder currently on the market and as such is ideal for underwater use but its small size is achieved by not providing a playback facility which means having to transfer the tape to another machine to playback on a TV. For every advantage there seems to be an equal and opposite disadvantage. However, at 107x109x215mm and 1kg without battery, the Handycam is impressively small and light.

The 15mm fixed focal length lens is about the same angle of coverage as a standard lens on a 35mm camera. From an underwater point of view, wider angle lenses are more preferable but, when using moving images, you can "pan" across a scene and so achieve the



The Handycam tries Plymouth waters at Penlee Point. Poor viz has not caused as much backscatter as expected. A wide angle lens keeps camera to subject distances as small as possible. Nikonos 111, 15mm lens, Oceanic 2003 flash and Kodachrome 64 film. F8 @ 1/60th sec. Photo by Steve Birchall

coverage you require.

In operation, the Handycam is superbly simple with very few controls to confuse the would-be cameraman. The zone focus system is used with the usual symbols - head and shoulders, groups and mountains. The depth of field is such that the need to focus is all but eliminated. Exposure is fully automatic but with the provision of a backlight setting to overexpose by a stop when the subject is backlit.

The viewfinder is a separate device so is not through the lens viewing - another drawback but, in fairness, this is one which still photographers have mastered underwater with the Nikonos and still produce excellent shots.

To shoot film, all you have to do is press the trigger and away you go. The results you get will come out well in all but the most contrasty of lighting or in very dark conditions but the provision of a movie light will restore the colours and reduce the contrast.

The cassette tapes are not much

bigger than a normal audio cassette and provide up to 90 minutes of filming. Shorter length tapes are available. When the camera is set to "Long play" this time is doubled to 180 minutes as the recording speed is slowed down by half and surprisingly enough, the results seem to be just as good as those shot at normal speed. Perhaps the differences will show up when trying to edit the sequences. The Handycam is powered by a single interchangeable battery pack which will give 80 minutes of filming. This means up to 160 minutes if "long play" is used.

The battery charger will charge one battery in 90 minutes on a timed rapid charge but, if more batteries are being charged, this facility is not available and the charge time is a more normal overnight rate.

The Handycam Marine Pack

For the scuba diving underwater photographer, the Marine pack allows the Handycam to be used down to 40 metres.



Sony have made a complete package available which includes the housing, movie light and a smart carrying case. The case has compartments to hold many accessories.

The front of the housings holds the built in battery holder and the rear has the handles and viewfinder. A counterweight is attached to the rear housing which can be removed when the housing is used out of the water.

The splash/2m housing is so compact it is just bigger than the Handycam yet still allows all controls to be used.



Beautifully finished in yellow injection moulded plastic, the Marine pack must have cost a small fortune for the moulds alone. It seems that Sony have spared no expense in the production and design of their first underwater housing.

Held together with three traditional sprung overcentre catches, the Marine Pack has two halves. The front contains the mounting system, battery holder, microphone and trigger lever while the rear section incorporates a rear viewing port to see the camera's function lights together with an ingenious, yet very simple, leak detection system. The optional handles are attached to the rear housing together with a removable chamber containing a buoyancy weight to make the unit easier to handle underwater.

Despite the high standard of design and finish, Sony choose to provide one of the flimsiest framers ever seen. The single screw fixing and small locating lug are far from effective and the unit flexes so much that it can easily be dislodged. It seems as if this was thrown

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restore the absorbed colours, there is a Sony 80watt video light which has been made for them by Sea & Sea Ltd. This is a traditional light on a basic but strong mounting arm which gives around 30 minutes of light before needing to be recharged. Spare battery packs are available to avoid charging delays during a heavy shooting schedule.

To complement the outfit there is an optional bright yellow hard carrying case which will house not only the housing and light but also the playback unit and all the necessary backup equipment such as spare tapes, chargers etc. Sony don't do things by halves.

As was stated earlier, video is not inexpensive as the camera is around £700, the playback unit £550, the housing £550, the light £400 and the carrying case £140. You don't need to be much of a mathematician to work out that you've just blown a hole in well over £2000 so the demand for video will be limited to dedicated enthusiasts and those with high disposable incomes.

Despite the costs, there is little to compare with the thrill of seeing your own work on the small screen in your own living room. We have come to accept the TV as being part of the domestic family and being able to control what it shows adds a new dimension. The uses of such an outfit are many and varied from pure enjoyment to training and from travelogues to moving family photos.

Video will play an increasing part in the underwater scene as more and more people use it to produce good material and show how effective it really can be.

The Handycam Sports Pack

For those who have no desire to go underwater but would like to use the Handycam in splash zones and occasionally down to 2 metres, the Sports Pack is ideal. Very light and not much bigger than the camera itself, all the normal functions can be used easily including the built in microphone.

The housing is held together by a large over-centre catch which squeezes the two halves onto a gasket. This is a seal which is not designed to withstand much water pressure but as such is very simple and effective. It will enable the operator to film in hazardous conditions which covers not only water/moisture areas but also harsh environments such as sand storms etc.

As all video cameras are prone to malfunction if excess moisture is present, the Sports Pack is the sort of optional accessory which most other manufacturers would be well advised to make available.

At under £100, the Sports Pack is surprisingly good value and will keep your Handycam safe at all times.

Next issue: UP describes the potential of video in its quest to make the silent world move.

Product News

Pelican's new SwatLite

Pelican Products in America have been producing small torches for many years and have just announced the latest addition to their range. Called the "SwatLite" (Who thinks up these names?), it is a very useful torch with unlimited uses for both divers and underwater photographers as well as for all outdoor activities.

The main attractions of the SwatLite are its variable angle of coverage from spot to flood and its two power settings. The angle of coverage is varied by rotating the front reflector which moves in relation to



the dual filament bulb. Powered by 4 "C" size standard or Ni-cad batteries, the SwatLite will give up to 6 hours of light at up to 25,000 candlepower. For all of us not used to candlepower, this equates to extremely bright. 11" long and 2 1/2" diameter, it weighs 14oz with batteries and is available in black, yellow or green. As

the main body diameter is identical to that of the SabreLite, the litesaddle accessory can be used for attaching the SwatLite to flashguns/strobes. Ocean Optics import Pelican Products equipment and the SwatLite is available from stock at £39.95 (+£2.50 p&p). For further details, telephone 01 381 6108.

Oceanic's Master Strobe

(Strobe is American for flashgun)

Just arrived from the USA is the new Master Strobe from Oceanic Products in California. This is the latest development in their 3000 series of flashguns/strobes and is the most versatile yet.

By using interchangeable cord modules, the Master Strobe can be either TTL compatible for the Nikonos V, auto with any camera or just plain manual with two powers. In addition there is a slave sensor built in the reflector.

The new style housing is just over 1" longer than the original 3000 housings which makes the Master Strobes near neutral in the water. The angle of coverage is an even 110° and the 6 Ni-cad "D" cells are built-in for minimum maintenance. They give a minimum of 350 flashes per charge although in the TTL and Auto versions, this number will increase greatly if flash to subject distances are small.

The Master Strobe is the most powerful Oceanic unit at 150 watt seconds which equates to a guide number of around 40 with 100asa on land in metres. In underwater terms, this will give about



F11 at 3 feet with 64 asa. Reed operated magnetic switches ensure no unnecessary through-holes in the housing and the charge socket is incorporated in the cord contact section to virtually eliminate flooding due to charge caps being left off after charging. Operational down to 400 feet, the Master Strobe is the top of the range in both



performance and specification. In the UK, the Master Strobe is £555 without cord. The Nikonos V cord is £80 and the auto version is £207. EO connector cords are available for £108.61. The UK agents for Oceanic Products are Ocean Optics Ltd, 4 Greyhound Road, London W6 8NX. Tel 01 381 6108.

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