Sony strobe triggers

by Massimo Franzese

When I got my Sony A1 I looked at strobe triggering together with lenses, housings and ports as for photography you will be mostly shooting with underwater strobes.

I use rear curtain on certain shots so I went on the lookout for a trigger that would support it that was not TTL.

I do not want to open a discussion on manual vs TTL however I shoot flash top side and even there I never use TTL unless I have to do a documentary/product shot and I have no time to prepare.

Strobe Trigger Options for Sony

I went on the lookout for options and my research included the following manufacturers:

- Nauticam
- UWTechnics
- TRT Electronics

Only Turtle triggers seemed to offer all the features I was looking for so I contacted Turtle electronics technical team who did some remote tests for me on an A1. The A1 can trigger flash with electronic shutter and this is something I was looking for.

Turtle Manual vs TTL

The Turtle TTL trigger has all the feature of the Manual in addition it offers TTL of course and a cool feature called multishot.

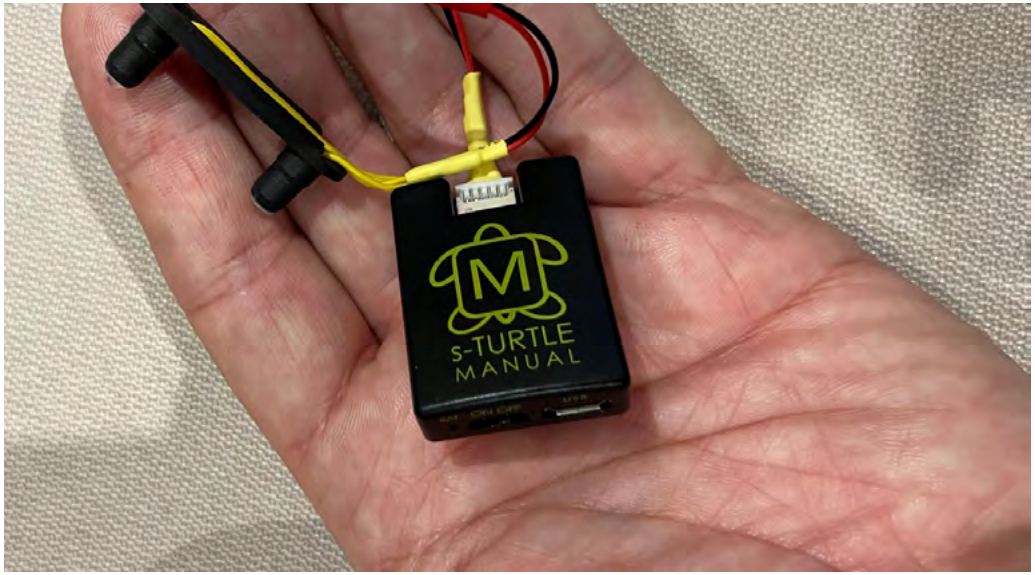
I personally do not have any interest in TTL but my main issue with this product is that in order to change for example from front to rear curtain you need to reprogram it.

I wanted a solution with no computer where I could control all settings from the camera and is not TTL. This is achieved only by the Manual Turtle Trigger.

The Turtle Manual Trigger is really a joy to use and is extremely well built.

The first consideration is that it is housed with no electronics showing so an occasional drop of water is not going to fry it. The second is that the battery is rechargeable. I have experience with Nauticam trigger that suddenly my strobes would stop firing consistently as the battery was low without warning. The fact that you can recharge the trigger each day or whenever you like is a great feature.

Finally the version I got had a convenient rubber part to insert in the housing strobe trigger sockets. This is a part from the TTL trigger that will allow you to fire with cheaper cables and does not come as standard



Brand	Model	Price (€)	TTL	Rear Curtain	HSS	Burst	Multishot	Power	Programming required
Nauticam	Mini Flash Trigger	294	No	No	No	Yes	No	Battery	No
UWTechnics	11075-HSS/TTL Converter	485	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Battery	No
Turtle Manual	Turtle Manual	299	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Rechargeable	No
Turtle Smart TTL	Turtle Smart	387	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Rechargeable	Yes

on the manual trigger, you need to request an upgrade which I warmly recommend.

The good news is that there are no controls; everything is set in the camera menu. Here are the steps for my A1 but all Sony cameras are pretty much the same.

1. MENU → (Exposure/Color) → [Flash] → [Flash Mode] → desired setting.

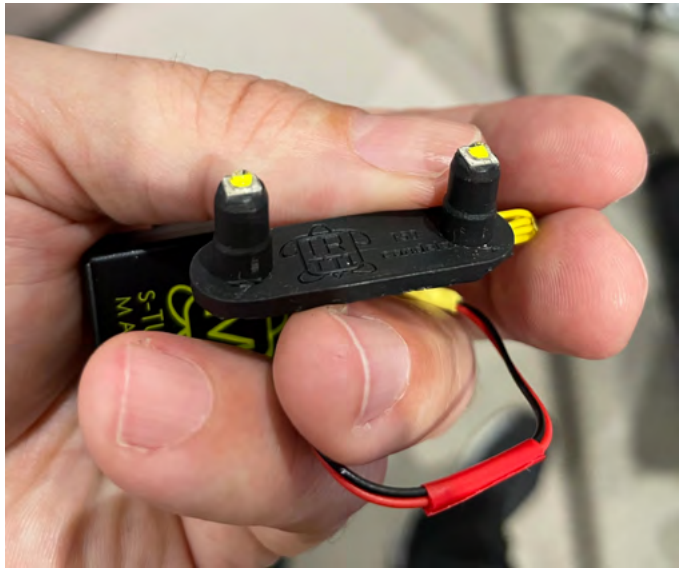
Menu item details

Flash Off:The flash does not operate.

Fill-flash:The flash works every time you trigger the shutter. (Front Curtain)

Slow Sync.:The flash works every time you trigger the shutter. Slow sync shooting allows you to shoot a clear image of both the subject and the background by slowing the shutter speed.

Rear Sync.:The flash works right



before the exposure is completed every time you trigger the shutter. Rear sync shooting allows you to shoot a natural image of the trail of a moving subject such as a moving car or a walking person.

This means I can set the flash mode each shot if I want to without changing any settings on the strobe or elsewhere.

In order to access the HSS mode you need to turn wireless mode on

1. MENU → (Exposure/Color) → [Flash] → [Wireless Flash] → [On].

This is not wireless mode but the trigger tells the camera HSS is supported and you get a indicator WL HSS. Your shutter speed is not capped anymore. Unless you have an HSS capable strobe this setting should be left Off otherwise your photos will have the shutter in the image. I do not have HSS strobes but if you own Retra this is very useful.

Other positive points of the Turtle trigger:

• Supports electronic shutter (only applicable to A9/A1 series)

• Supports Speed priority with A1 (1/400 on mechanical shutter)

• It works with SINGLE core and cheap cables when used with the upgraded LED unit

I had sourced two expensive multicore Nauticam fiber cables after my Nauticam trigger refused to shoot consistently and now with the Turtle I am back at shooting my 15 years old Sea and Sea cables.

Probably the only limitation for me is the burst speed. With electronic shutter the A1 goes at 6 fps the trigger would only fire once probably a limitation of the internal LED recharging circuit.

However in mechanical shutter it would work with the Low speed setting of 3 fps.

Take into account that the strobe will deplete its charge when you shoot continuously and the recharge times that are typical mean that when the capacitor holding the charge is empty the strobe will stop firing or fire at much lower power.

With Sea and Sea YS-D2 maximum power 32 maximum sustained burst rate 32 – 2 stops = 16 this is the maximum you can fire your strobes at.

Realistically you are not going to be able to shoot smaller aperture than f/11 with a diffuser before the strobe starts loosing power in the following shots unless you increase your ISO. This however is plenty for me and frankly it was more academic.

Massimo Franzese
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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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