

Accessories

by Phil Rudin

For the fashionably clothed male and female, most outfits are not complete without a bit of accessorizing to capture your own personal style.

First let me say that I fully intend to review the new Sony A7RV and the Marelux MX-A7RV housing in a coming issue of UWP but I thought it might be worth first talking about how I accessorize many of the housings that I review.

Over the years I have reviewed dozens of camera and housing combinations from many of the most popular underwater housing manufacturers. Many of the reviews included accessorizing the basic housing to fit my personal needs. I would like to cover four of the accessories that are important to me and that readers may want to consider.

Vacuum Valve System

Starting inside the housing, most modern systems now include leak detection systems that are triggered when moisture is detected inside the housing. All have a power source, usually a small button size

battery, that powers both an audible and visual warning when moisture is detected. This can be anything from condensation moving from an air conditioned room to the outdoors or a catastrophic flood of the entire system.

Most manufacturers have now added extra M14 and M16 bulkheads to their housings for vacuum valves that integrate with the leak detection system. The valve allows a vacuum to be drawn that helps seal the housing's O-rings before taking it into the water.

I have added this feature to every housing I have owned since they became available. The addition of a vacuum valve and the manual vacuum pump runs in the \$100.00 to over \$200.00 USD price range in a standard M14 thread size depending on manufacturer.

A verity of manual pumps are including with the valve from manufacturers like the Marelux valve which retails for \$166.00 USD. I draw a vacuum every time I take a housing into the water including in my pool. Some days, when I am testing different lens, port and extensions combinations, I may open and close the housing ten or fifteen times while



testing. Marelux offers a solution for those of use that who do frequent vacuum pulls - the Automatic Vacuum Pump. This is a vacuum pump that works with any of the 13mm diameter



valves tops and it is powered by a single rechargeable 18650 battery. The unit is 210mm (8.27 inches) long weights 230g (8.11oz) and easily packs away for travel. The AutoVac is one

of those, I didn't know how much I needed it until I had it type of products and sells for \$89.00 USD, battery and charger not included.

Flash Trigger System

My Marelux MX-A7RV review housing came equipped with their Manual Flash Trigger for Canon, Nikon and Sony cameras which retails for \$198.00 USD. This flash trigger has a single contact to trigger the flash manually and is powered by two CR2024 button batteries.

The trigger fires two red LED lights in the fiber optic cord windows. The system has never failed to fire any of the strobes I have paired with it and the two batteries are reported to last for as many as 10,000 activations.

UWTechnics Flash Trigger

For my Sony A7R V review I wanted to include shots taken using high speed sync flash, TTL and some other items that are not covered by the Marelux manual flash trigger.

My tests will include TTL using my trusted Inon Z330 strobes and HSS using the excellent new Backscatter MF-2 flashes which now include HHS, adjustable remote trigger and much much more.

For these reasons I installed the outstanding UWTechnics flash trigger. I did a full review of the UWTechnics flash trigger in UwP issue #121 using a Nauticam housing with a Sony A1 camera. At the time I did not have access to a High Speed sync flash of any brand. Currently not too many exist and none are at the Backscatter MF-2 price point, in fact most are in the over \$1000.00 USD per flash price range.



Two of the many things I like most about the UWT triggers are that they don't need to be charged and they don't need to be turned on and off for use before sealing the housing.

The UWT triggers use the same common CR-type button batteries as most flash triggers and they simply turn on and off when the camera is turned on and off in the housing.

The UWT trigger has a simple dial setting that once set will work at all shutter speeds including high speed sync and in TTL without needing to be programmed through your PC or Mac.

Once the UWT trigger is set up it will work with just about any compatible fiber optic TTL flash in the market.

The UWT flash trigger is for most purposes almost indistinguishable from the stock Marelux flash trigger. It is user friendly and can be removed and reinstalled in the same way you would the original Marelux flash trigger using their provided Allen wrench set.

Once again with the UWTechnics flash triggers I have never had a misfire other than when I became



impatient and triggered the system before the flash had time to recycle. The UWTechnics flash trigger retails for \$485.00 USD and can be found at the uwtechnics.com web page. UWTechnics also sells a wide range of flash triggers and other products for many camera brands and has support for most housing manufacturers.

Buoyancy Control Devices

Moving to the outside of the housing, most photographers and videographers use some type of lighting system supported by a verity of support arms of different lengths. With all of this equipment the systems can become heavy both above and below water.

To address the in-water issues of over weight equipment many buoyancy solutions have been advanced over the years. Some of the problems include differences in the weight of a system going from macro ports to large dome ports, mounting wet lenses, the weight of video or strobe lighting, freshwater v saltwater, free diving or scuba diving and many more.

Many divers have personal preferences as well regarding system buoyancy. Some strive for a completely neutrally system while others like myself want the system to be heavy enough to rest on the sand without floating away.

With each configuration of the housing system a change in the amount of added buoyancy needs to be considered and offset by adding weight to the diver in many cases. I have seen photographers use everything from a empty plastic bottles to cutup pool noodles to try to offset system weight.

Among the current solutions for the over weight problem are closed cell foam blocks that mount over lattice or hex arms, carbon fiber and aluminum float arms in varying lengths and diameters with varying amounts of buoyancy and a few lesser known solutions.

Currently float arms and blocks that fit over support arms are the

two most common solutions for this problem. These solutions however do not resolve the issue of quickly moving between systems without having to change the configuration of the buoyancy for each system change. Many of these solutions are also worth it but a bit expensive and add to the bulk of traveling with a complete system.

Marelux Flexbuoy

The Marelux Flexbuoy is a inflatable buoy (or bladder) that attaches to the housing or arms and can easily be deployed underwater by simply blowing gas into the bladder.

As the name implies, the Flexbuoy has a flexible weighted inflation tube that hangs from the side of the bladder. At depth you can inflate the bladder as much or as little as you like to offset weight and naturalize buoyancy.

As you ascend the gas expands and is vented out of the open inflation tube. As you descend the gas is compressed and additional gas can be added to offset the reduction in buoyancy which occurs as you go deeper.

You can add as much or as little buoyancy as you need for the system you are using without having to remove or add additional floats or float arm sizes.



Typical carbon fiber arms in the 50X200mm range (2X8 inches) have about 160g (5.64 oz) of lift, a larger 70X300 (2.76X12 inches) arm has about 671g (23.68 oz) of lift. The Flexbuoy comes in two sizes 400ml (13.6 oz) lift and 800ml (27.2 oz) lift with a retail cost of \$19.00 USD for the 400ml and \$21.00 USD for the 800ml size.

The Flexbuoy attaches to the housing or support arms with a simple spring loaded stainless and plastic clamp. The bladder is held inside a mesh bag which is tightened on both ends with a nylon bungee cord using a simple slip lock like those used on a



wrist straps.

When the slip lock is pulled open the bladder can easily be removed for cleaning by simply running water from the tap into the bladder. The weight on the end of the bladder inflation tube keeps the nylon inflator below the bladder at all times whilst in the water so it will never deflate accidentally during use.

Two things you should know about the Flexbuoy, they tend to hold water that seeps into the bladder at the surface when you end your dive. I found out quickly that, if not drained, you may end up with water in places it should not be.

Second the weighted end of the tube used to inflate the bladder can

hang in places you would rather not have it like in front of the LCD screen on the housing. These are easy fixes that are resolved in the first dive or two by finding a proper placement point to keep the tube out of your way and by remembering to dump the bladder before you drip onto anything that doesn't mix well with water.

I have two 400ml Flexbuoys in my dive equipment bag when I travel so I always have them with me. Flexbuoy's lime green mesh bag is hard to miss when I look in my dive bag so I have not forgotten them on any dive so far.

This is a product I am still in the process of testing but at this time I would say that they are worth the small investment for a pair even if you don't always end up using them. Because the nylon bungee cord that is used to secure the Flexbuoys stretches a bit I am able to secure the Flexbuoy around the five inch Marelux port extensions to raise the front of the port. I intend to find a way to also secure Flexbuoy to my macro port to help offset the weight of closeup lenses.

Accessory Viewfinders

In almost every camera and housing review I have done for UWP and other publications I have included information on a verity of viewfinders I have used with both DSLR's and



mirrorless EVF's.

I consider being able to access a large full frame view an essential tool for U/W shooters. Accessing a large image in the viewfinder allows you to accurately assess critical composition, with EVF's you can enlarge images to locate the exact focus point and also assess sharpness in critical areas like eyes without ever moving your eye from the viewfinder.

Inon Straight Viewfinder Unit II

Marelux has a Smart Viewfinder in the pipeline: the first offering will be for the LCD screen and it will include features like a depth indicator not found in other viewfinders.

While I wait for the Marelux Smart Finder to arrive for testing I wanted to try the awesome abilities of the over 9M DOT A7R V EVF. Because the standard pickup finder supplied with the Marelux housings is an odd size I sourced an adapter that works with the newest Inon Straight Viewfinder Unit II from Fun-In Taiwan.

The viewfinder and adapter arrived assembled and the only



requirement was to remove the pickup finder and replace it with the ready to install Inon finder.

After the vacuum is drawn on the housing the viewfinder can be rotated out of the way or turned completely upside down, so be aware that you will want to align the viewfinder with the EVF for full coverage of the entire frame.

Once installed the viewfinder shows full coverage of the rather large A7R V EVF and, at times, my old eyes struggled to see the information bar across the bottom of the large EVF screen. In some cases this was a result of the surrounding bright ambient light

rather than my vision issues.

Looking into the viewfinder I was able to see the focus points and compose the image with complete confidence. Reviewing images in the viewfinder I was able press the magnification function button on the housing without taking my eye away from the viewfinder and access critical focus in eyes and other focus points.

The Inon viewfinder is a reasonable option for the Marelux housing retailing for around \$690.00 USD and includes a cap to cover the optical glass. Inon also has a 45 degree Unit II that works with the same Fun-In adapter and sells for around \$600.00 USD.

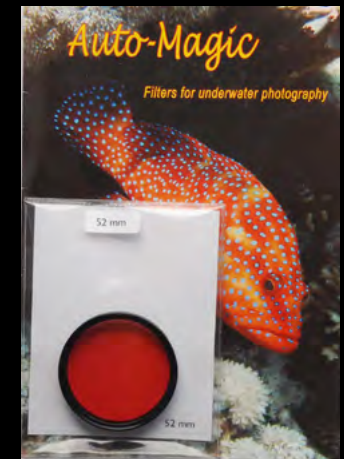
These products can be sourced from the following web pages:

www.Marelux.co
www.UWTechnics.com
www.inon.jp
and
www.Fun-in.com.tw

I would like to thank all of these companies for assisting me with products for this review.

Phil Rudin
Instagram

We've got you covered!



Magic filters are now available in 3 options. Original Magic for use in blue water with DSLR and compact cameras with Manual White Balance, Auto-Magic for compact cameras in automatic point and shoot mode. GreenWater Magic for use in green water with DSLR and compact cameras with Manual White Balance. Prices start at just £25.

The Auto-Magic formula is now available in a Plexiglass filter that can be added or removed underwater.

www.magic-filters.com