

Scubalamp MR6 HDMI Monitor

by Peter Rowlands

For most of my time underwater I used to shoot video using a dedicated camcorder with the attraction of a small external LCD monitor to frame images without having to have your eye up to a small internal viewfinder.

Camcorders have pretty much been overtaken by hybrid still/video cameras which offer increased image quality, frame rates and ISO capabilities. The result is that there are very few, if any, camcorder housings in production today which, for me, is a real shame but hey ho.

Over the years the LCD screens on these hybrid cameras have got bigger and have now peaked at just over 3" which is fine but they are 'line of sight' which means you have to hold the housing in front of you to get the best view of the screen. That's where an external monitor comes into its own but it's not as simple as it used to be.

Camcorders had small 'video out' sockets which only had two wires but that was all that was needed for the amount of data and quality of image that was available in those days.

Fast forward to today and most hybrids have HDMI (High-Definition Multimedia Interface) out sockets



Back in the 1990s I was shooting a Sony VX1000 camcorder in an Amphibico housing with a housed land monitor.

which now have up to nineteen, yes, nineteen wires. This, together with their physical size, has proved a complication for underwater housing designers and the result was rather bulky and complicated setups. The monitor housings were for existing land monitors which were not always ergonomically suitable to be housing but needs must. As a result I have never gone down the route of an external monitor for my Nauticam GH5 housing; until now.

Scubalamp (SUPE) have



Fast forward to 2023 and still wearing the same wetsuit and hood! An external monitor makes image viewing much easier and lets you look past it to anticipate where the action is going. Photo courtesy of Alex Tattersall. The 6" 1920 x 1080 screen is very bright and crisp. Perfect for focus and composition.

specialized in designing and manufacturing quality underwater lighting equipment but recently announced their own external monitor, the MR6, which is a sealed unit with a 6" 1920 x 1080 pixel display. My interest was aroused and when I met them at the DEMA Show in New Orleans last November they offered to loan me one to review.

The MR6 has a very sleek profile compared to other external monitors and it is fitted with a male HDMI connector which has an M16 bulkhead





The MR6 is slim with a separate but integrated battery pack. The integrated monitor make it much slimmer than most other monitors.

fitting so your housing needs an unused M16 port. There are two sizes of internal HDMI connector and my Panasonic GH5 took the larger of the two so check what size HDMI there is on your camera input.

Fitting the internal cable was a bit fiddly as there is not a lot of space inside the housing but it squeezed in above and in front of the camera hotshoe which, because I would assume most people would want this



The inner HDMI connector is quite a tight fit but it is still easy to install and remove the camera.

monitor to shoot video rather than stills, isn't needed to fire external strobes.

There are three mounting holes for the single 1" ball socket adaptor provided - one underneath, one on the back and the final one on the top. These are very positive fittings and my configuration was best suited with the ball adaptor on the bottom fixing. The housing needs a spare 1" ball and mine had a Nauticam 25221 on the



The internal HDMI cable is available in two sizes so check which one your camera has. Most housing manufacturers design their housing to take these tight angle connectors.

right hand side.

To position the MR6 monitor as centrally as possible I used an extended ball clamp which was about 4" (10cm) long. This needs to be a good quality clamp as it is supporting the 1.3kg land weight. Underwater this is reduced but more of that later. The balljoint design allows for the monitor to be rotated left or right and tilted back or forward if needed but, in practice, I used it fixed in line and tilted slightly forward for the most comfortable view and easiest ergonomics.

The MR6 is powered by two 21700 rechargeable batteries which, conveniently, have USB-C charging sockets so you don't need another charger. The sealing cap is double O ring sealed and needs to be screwed well home as this is part of the power connection from the battery to the monitor. The spec sheet says fully charged batteries should give between 2 and 7 hours use. I recharged mine after two one hour dives and the power bar was saying just less than half full so I'm thinking I should easily be able to get three full dives out of one full charge.

Fully charged and mounted, press and hold the left hand power button and after about 5 seconds the screen lights up and is a 6" replica of the camera's 3" LCD screen. Area-wise this is almost 6 times bigger which makes standoff viewing, focusing and composition very comfortable indeed. The only niggle is that the text size of the display info such as Mode, Shutter/ Aperture etc etc is a bit small and I couldn't find any menu to enlarge it.

There are two main controls - Left button: long push and hold for On/Off and short push for 'Select' in the Menu - Right button and wheel: short push for Shortcut Menu and push and hold for Full Menu. Turning the outer wheel rotates through the Menu settings, pushing the centre button selects that part of the menu and then turning



Carrying it is best done with your right hand on the housing right handle so that the rig tilts horizontally with the monitor and housing at the same level. This is perfectly balanced.

Underwater the negative weight on top of the rig makes it want to roll forward so you have to use your wrists to keep it level. This isn't unduly tiring but I added two medium size Stix floats retained with velcro straps around the battery chamber and this reduced the roll significantly. That's all I had with me on this trip and my next job is to add the correct amount of buoyancy to make the rig neutral and this will help shooting steady footage.

It is a long time since I have shot video footage with a separate monitor for reasons outlined earlier but now that I have tried the MR6 it's like going back to the good old days again :-). The MR6 image is very bright (2600 nits apparently, whatever they are) and crisp and can be viewed easily in direct sunlight from various angles.

The MR6 retails at \$1098 which I think is very good value indeed compared to other underwater monitors out there.

My thanks go to Scubalamp SUPE for the loan of the MR6. It gave me a really useful opportunity to find out if I wanted to go back to a separate monitor - and I most definitely do. As a result I have bought the MR6 and am genuinely excited about shooting footage with my 'new' GH5 rig.

the outer wheel again scrolls through the subMenu options. It, like most complex menus nowadays, takes a bit of getting used to and hardly any of the options needed changing for me as my requirements are basic - view, focus and compose, hit record and know that it is recording (red flashing light). For those with more specific requirements there is Focus peaking, Zebra, Grids, Marks, Scanning modes, Flips, Multiple wave displays, LUT settings and General settings. Very comprehensive indeed.

Physically the housing and monitor are 'a bit of a lump' - not unduly heavy, just unbalanced as the monitor makes the rig top heavy.

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MR6 HDR Monitor

— 2600 nits of brightness

6"inch LCD
 Resolution:1920 x1080 pixels
 Single button for all operation modes



2*21700 Battery
 2-7 hours burn time
 subjective to back light power

Support various
 camera interface

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