

Light & Motion Tetra 5050 and ROC lighting control

American manufacturer Light & Motion are more associated with high quality video systems but they have recently entered the still photography market as demand for these products increases.

Their first cast aluminium housing was for a previous Olympus digital camera and they have used the same basic mould for their Olympus 5050 housing.

Elegant is not a word I would use to describe this housing but it does allow control over nearly all the cameras functions with the main exception being the on/off control but this is not a problem as half pressing the shutter release will 'wake up' the camera.

The camera fits snugly into the housing and is held firmly. All you have to do is slide the top connector into the hot shoe and plug the telephone style connector into the rear of the housing to activate the housings' impressive electronics.

The rear section of the housing is retained by two simply operated turnkey latches which close the housing securely with a piston O ring design.

The LCD screen is easily viewed through the large rear plexiglass port which also incorporates the display for the revolutionary ROC strobe controlling system.

I fully admit that my knowledge of electronics is basic to say the least and I can't offer you an explanation of how the ROC system works electronically - all I can say is that it does exactly what it says it



will.

The Tetra 5050 housing has two Nikonos style flash connectors which you can't fail to see on the top of the housing. The ROC controller is set up by default to work with the Sea & Sea YS90DX, 90, 60 and 50 strobes but if you have other models, the ROC can easily be reset to work with most commonly available strobes from Ikelite and Nikon.

Once set up, the ROC can

be used for TTL or Manual exposures. The manual system allows you to control the output of the strobe from the housing itself. If your first shot is incorrectly exposed you can adjust the strobe output for the next shot by pressing either the "+" or "-" buttons under the LCD screen. This will give you much more convenient control over your manual exposures.

In the "TTL" mode the electronics get the strobe to

emulate the camera's 'preflash' method of getting flash exposures correct. The first flash is read by the camera and used to make the second flash correct for a good exposure. If the light output was insufficient a red LED flashes on the display and alternates with the green ROC display LED. This works well in practice although the green LED is not particularly bright. I tested the system on land and it performed perfectly.

For those who would like to interchange strobes underwater there is a Wetlink connector option which replaces the standard flash connectors with waterproof versions. A special sync cord is available for use with the Wetlink. As this was a 'dry' review of the housing I was unable to put this capability to the test but I think the system would provide increased versatility although at a price.

For those wanting close up and wide angle options, the Tetra 5050 has you catered for. The standard front port is removeable and can be replaced with one which takes 67mm filter thread accessory lenses which are commonplace nowadays.

The Light & Motion Macro and Wide angle adaptors are similar (if not identical) to those made by Inon and other Japanese companies which have become so popular in recent years. The wide angle coverage is increased to 100° with the standard wide angle adaptor and a Pro version is available which pushes this to 130°.

Conclusion

The Light & Motion Tetra 5050 housing is a robust, if quirky, design and exploits the capability of the camera very



well.

However, at \$1500 it is considerably more expensive than the plastic housings from Japan which have revolutionised the underwater photography market in recent years. You do

however get the revolutionary ROC system which is very impressive.

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