



(2003) – This picture was taken prior the Sardine Run off at the Aliwal Shoals of South Africa, using a polecam to photograph tiger sharks attracted to bait. Canon EOS D60 (6MP DSLR), Canon 15mm lens, ISO f2.8, UK-Germany housing with dome port, Inon Z220 strobes x 2, ISO 200, f5, 1/60 sec

competition – the first digital winner they recognized.

Are there any other influencers you would like to recognize?

Too many to mention, but Howard Hall was a particularly important one, and gave my career an early boost by hiring me for some of his film projects, and letting me keep the photos I shot on them. I also owe a big debt of gratitude to Steve Lucas, who is probably not reading this, as he left underwater photography years

ago to concentrate on more lucrative fashion and product photography. When I was barely surviving on day gigs in Miami while starting my career, Steve often hired me as an assistant, and also gave me my introduction to Skin Diver Magazine, where he was regularly featured. He was a very generous mentor, with an under-appreciated talent for writing.

What are your current shooting setups?

Nikon D850 for macro and general use, and Sony a7r4 for wide-angle, both in Nauticam housings.

Do you feel that there is little else to capture by human intervention and that the future is remote cameras/vehicles for more time and depth?

I believe that there is a lot more unrealized potential for remote cameras & vehicles, but human-operated systems will always have a place. The largest portion of our planet, containing the vast majority of unknown species, is the deep sea, and it is an extremely inhospitable place for the human body.

Do you still have a bucket list of animals and behaviours?

Oh sure – it's endless, but I have no ambition of actually trying to empty that bucket myself. I'm now mostly focused on what I can do locally in my home state of Hawaii to document the amazing community of life we have here, bring attention to it, and perhaps contribute to slowing the extinction juggernaut. This planet, and its ocean, have given me a wonderful life and career, and I feel an obligation to pay it back in some small measure by greatly limiting my overseas travel, producing my own pv electric power and some of my own food, driving electric, etc. The guides who might

take me to see those bucket list things are all excellent photographers in their own right now. They live there and have more and better opportunities to document the phenomena than me, so there is no need for me to burn precious fossil fuels to get my own body out there. Besides which, Sir David's film crews have already made themselves miserable camping out there for weeks or months so that I can watch their best results condensed into a few minutes in glorious hi-def on my large screen tv in the comfort of my own living room.

Thank you, Doug, for your illuminating, inspirational replies and for your groundbreaking images.

Peter Rowlands
peter@uwpmag.com

Doug Perrine
www.dougerrine.com



A professional's life

by Alexey Zaytsev

My name is Alexey Zaytsev and I am a professional commercial underwater photographer. I live on the island of Cozumel, Mexico. Cozumel is a Mecca for divers from the USA and Canada. Cozumel, for North Americans, is like the Red Sea in Egypt, for European divers, just as convenient a place to dive. A short flight from Texas or Florida, good year-round weather, and a well-organized dive industry.

For two years now, I have been photographing divers who come to dive on Cozumel. And now it is my main form of income. I want to share with you some of the experiences I've had doing this, as well as some of the photographic equipment I use for my work.

Before I moved to Mexico, I was also a professional underwater photographer. I worked in almost all Russian magazines for diving enthusiasts and was editor-in-chief of several of them. In my work, I had to take a lot of underwater photos during expeditions and editorial trips. I used these photos to illustrate articles about trips to different exotic places of our planet. Yes, I used these photos for work, but I never sold my pictures to anyone else.

I ended my career as a journalist and editor because I left Russia after Russia attacked Ukraine in 2022. Finding myself in forced immigration in Mexico, I had to use my skills as an underwater photographer to make a living at it.

When I started shooting underwater on Cozumel, I quickly concluded that it was no



Olympus OM1 II, Nauticam housing, 2 x Scubalamp D-PRO strobes, 1/125 sec f8 ISO1250 Olympus 8 mm f1,8

longer possible to shoot the way I had been shooting before. Usually, most of my underwater photography was done with a fisheye lens. It's good for underwater landscapes with divers in the frame, but for commercial diver photography, the fisheye was not the best choice. 180 degrees is too much for photographing people. Divers

who book a photo shoot with me want to see themselves first and foremost in the photo. Of course, you can make a beautiful photo of coral with a diver in the frame, and you can make a photo of the diver against the coral. But in the second case, there are two problems: distance to the diver and barrel distortion. Ordinary divers,

not photographers, don't understand why the photographer wants to get so close to them. They think the shooting distance is very short and instinctively try to stay away from the camera. The diver in the frame, especially if it is closer to the corners of the frame is subject to distortion, which also impairs the perception of the photo.

In my search for wide-angle optics for shooting people, I decided to try a combination of a zoom lens and a wet wide-angle lens. I have had experience with the Chinese company Weefine WFL-02 wide angle lens and Olympus TG series cameras. For this popular compact camera, wet wide-angle lenses are the only and best way to get good wide angle shots. Weefine's wide angle lenses are known in the US and Canadian markets under the Kraken brand.

The WFL-02 lens has an M52 thread. To mount it on a Nauticam flat housing port I used a special step-up ring from M52 thread to M67 thread. As my luck would have it, a few years ago I bought an Olympus PEN 9 camera with the Olympus M.Zuiko Digital 14-42mm f3.5-5.6 EZ ED kit lens. Before that, the idea of using this lens with my main Olympus M1 Mark II camera never occurred to me.

I had underestimated this lens. With such a tiny size it has very impressive performance. The focal



length equivalent at full frame is 28-84 mm. Maximum angle on land 75° and 29° at 42mm focal length. The minimum focusing distance of the lens is only 0.2 m.

The Weefine WFL-02 wide angle lens with Olympus TG cameras has an angle of view of 150 degrees diagonally. The focal length of the lens of TG cameras at wide angle is equivalent to 24 mm at full frame. The 14 - 42 mm lens is equivalent to 28 mm at wide angle. The angle of view of the 14-42mm lens with this wide lens underwater is 127 degrees.

My opinion - this is the perfect wide angle for shooting underwater. And not only for shooting divers. Landscapes, marine life, it all looks



much more natural than fisheye.

Before the digital age, I shot for many years with a Nikonos V camera with a 15 mm Nikkor lens. The angle of view of this lens was even smaller, only 94 degrees. I liked the images taken with this lens. The 14-42 mm zoom with the Weefine WFL-02 lens makes the images look as similar as possible to those of the legendary Nikkor lens.

I liked the combination of the 14-42mm zoom lens and the Weefine wet wide-angle lens. So much so, that I stopped using my favorite Olympus 8mm fisheye to shoot at sea. Now, I only photograph with the fisheye

in the Mexican cenotes, there, in the confined space of the caves, the 180-degree angle is really necessary.

The next challenge I faced was the light. Since, in the past, I traveled a lot, the best choice for me was Inon strobes. They are quite compact and lightweight and have the necessary power. In Mexico, I arrived with an Inon 330 strobe.

A small digression. What is the specialty of diving on Cozumel Island? Usually, the first dive is always done at maximum depth. The area of Palancar Reef, in the southwest of the island, is a steep wall going into the abyss. And on a morning dive, this side of



(Both images) Olympus OM1 II, Nauticam housing, 2 x Scubalamp D-PRO strobes, 1/250 sec f8 ISO400 Olympus 14-42 mm @14 mm Weefine WFL-02

the reef is always in the shade. The sun is not high enough to illuminate the wall at a depth of 20 to 25 meters. You have to increase the ISO to get blue rather than black water in the background. The strobes, on wide-angle scenes, are also running at maximum power. The second feature is a constant current. At times it is very strong. To photograph divers, you need to overtake all the divers, turn around to face the group, find an interesting object in the foreground,

such as a large sponge or coral, and hold yourself on the flippers against the current to take a picture. Since the divers are swimming towards me in the current and are in motion, I use tracking autofocus (C-AF+TR). This is not staged photography, but real reportage, and my models are most often not paying attention to me and the camera.

The moment I take a picture, they might start to clear the mask of water, do some equalizing, or exhale



Alexey Zaytsev
PHOTOGRAPHER



(Both images) Olympus OM1 II, Nauticam housing, 2 x Scubalamp D-PRO strobes, 1/80 sec f8 ISO400 Yuneec 14-42 mm @14 mm Weefine WFL-02

and bubbles might cover their face. Or just turn their head the other way when they see something interesting. The shot will be ruined. Naturally, you can manage to take a couple more shots while the diver is approaching you and the composition of the shot is still not ruined by the movement of the object. But if your strobes do not have time to recharge, the second frame will not be illuminated as you would like, and the third frame may be completely dark because the

strobes have almost completely used up the capacitor charge. The group of divers continue their movement in the current, and again I have to overtake them, find a shooting point, and shoot. So many, many times during one dive.

I liked my Inon strobes. But I wanted a faster reload speed. I started looking for a solution to this problem and noticed the D-PRO strobes from the Chinese company SCUBALAMP. By that time, which was a year ago,



Olympus OM1 II, Nauticam housing, 2 x Scubalamp D-PRO strobes, 1/250 sec f16 ISO100 Olympus 60 mm f2,8

there were already a lot of reviews and publications about these strobes on the Internet. Many famous underwater photographers started to use these strobes and according to their reviews, I concluded that this is what I needed. I was not embarrassed by the lack of TTL on these strobes. For me, manual power control has always been preferable.

Since last October, I started using these strobes in my work and I can say that it was the right decision. The recharge rate of the strobes is very

fast. I stopped getting underexposed shots by doing several shutter release presses in a row.

I won't go on at length about these strobes. There have been many publications about them on the internet over the last year, including in this magazine.

I'll just list the main things I like them for:

- *Powerful enough for shooting in bright sunlight and backlighting.
- *Even spot of light and wide angle of the light beam.
- *Warm color tint gives

photos a pleasant saturation of red, orange and yellow colors.

- *High recharge rate at maximum power.

- *Easy and intuitive operation.

- *Powerful pilot light - it is enough even for video shooting at night, for macro and wide-angle shooting at close range.

- *Battery capacity is enough for several days of diving. No need to charge the batteries after each day of diving as I can see the battery level on the display.

- *Customer service

About that last point. Any equipment can break down. During the warranty period, the manufacturer is obliged to provide repair services for its products free of charge. But this is only part of the service. If the manufacturer is on the other side of the globe, the logistics of providing this service is also important. I purchased my strobes not through a distributor, but directly from Scubalamp. A few months ago, one strobe stopped working. For some unknown reason, it stopped turning on, and replacing the batteries did not help. I contacted Scubalamp, and sent them a video taken on my phone showing that replacing the batteries was not working. The company responded very quickly, and shipped me new strobe innards to Mexico, with detailed video instructions on

how to open the strobe housing and do the replacement. I only had to pay for postage from China and two weeks later I was back with working equipment.

All of the above makes the D-PRO strobes a truly professional tool for the job. I can safely recommend these strobes not only to professionals but also to experienced amateurs of underwater photography.

I'm very much my working kit right now. In addition to the wide-angle lens, I take underwater the CMC-1 macro lens from Nauticam. This gives me a versatile system, for shooting almost any subject or scene. The macro lens with a 42mm zoom lens allows me to shoot real macro. My clients often want to buy pictures of what they saw while diving. By changing lenses, and sometimes shooting with just a zoom lens, I can photograph anything from nudibranchs to sharks.

But that's not the end of the story. I was already excited that I had found my perfect working configuration when three months ago, my Olympus M.Zuiko Digital 14-42mm f3.5-5.6 EZ ED zoom lens failed. This lens has an electric zoom drive. You turn the zoom ring on the lens, and the built-in motor moves the lens to the tele or wide-angle position. The lens is suddenly "off", the camera can no longer see it, the lens no longer