

Olympus 5060 & PT-020 housing system

Until now there were two distinct categories of underwater digital camera - SLR and “point and shoot” but now, with the introduction of the Olympus PT-020 we have a new intermediate category and I don’t know what to call it.

“Point and shoot interchangeable lens auto TTL flash” is a bit of a mouthful but that’s what it is. PSILATTTL for short if you want but however you categorize it this new outfit is truly groundbreaking.

The Olympus C5060 wide zoom camera is the latest from this revolutionary range. It’s a 5.1 megapixel camera with the capability, it would seem, of a Tardis. Measuring just 116 (W) x 87 (H) x 65.6 (D)mm and weighing just 430gms it has functions and a performance which defy belief.

Fortunately in such a review I don’t have to go into great detail about the camera’s capabilities for we are here to report (worship?) the arrival of the PT-020 housing system which I think is the most significant development in underwater photography since the Calypsophot.

Wow! Hold on there. That’s a bit bold but I say not.

Here we have a housing system which for an incredibly reasonable price will enable almost anyone to take almost any underwater photograph they could wish to take and still be able to take it in their hand luggage with plenty to spare.

The housing has no fewer than 20 controls for all the functions you might need underwater. The



majority are push button controls which touch the camera accurately from all angles with ergonomics which are extraordinary. It is quite frankly a design masterpiece. The main seal is a double compression design which should prove foolproof and the interchangeable port has both piston and compression seals.

The lens port can be changed and replaced with the wide angle port for the 0.7 wide angle lens. I haven’t physically seen one of those yet but it looks like it has a flat port which will reduce the wide angle coverage from the 35mm equivalent of 19mm to about 24mm.

And if this were not enough there is also an external housing for the Olympus FL-20 TTL flash (strobe) which is triggered directly from the camera via a 5 pin external socket and sync lead. This provides “auto TTL” exposure automation.



The PT-020 is the first Olympus housing to have interchangeable ports. The ports incorporate both piston and compression seals with two rotary retaining clips



The sync socket cover O rings are virtually impossible to access and maintain.

The combination of this housing and its accessories breaks new ground in terms of price and performance. There are, however, alternatives for both the wide angle lens and strobe housings (Inon and UN manufacture external wide angle lenses and optically triggered strobes) but Olympus's wide angle lens and strobe can also be used on land which I would have thought is a strong argument for their purchase.

The design and quality of construction is very high and virtually flawless except for the sync cap which covers the 5 pin connector socket. The small piston and compression O rings

are virtually impossible to access to remove them to regrease them and clean their grooves

The underwater photography world (especially the equipment retailers) owes a huge debt of gratitude to Olympus's commitment to producing quality housings for their digital range of cameras. They have injected new life into underwater photography and opened up this hobby to a whole new audience.

Peter Rowlands
peter@uwpmag.com

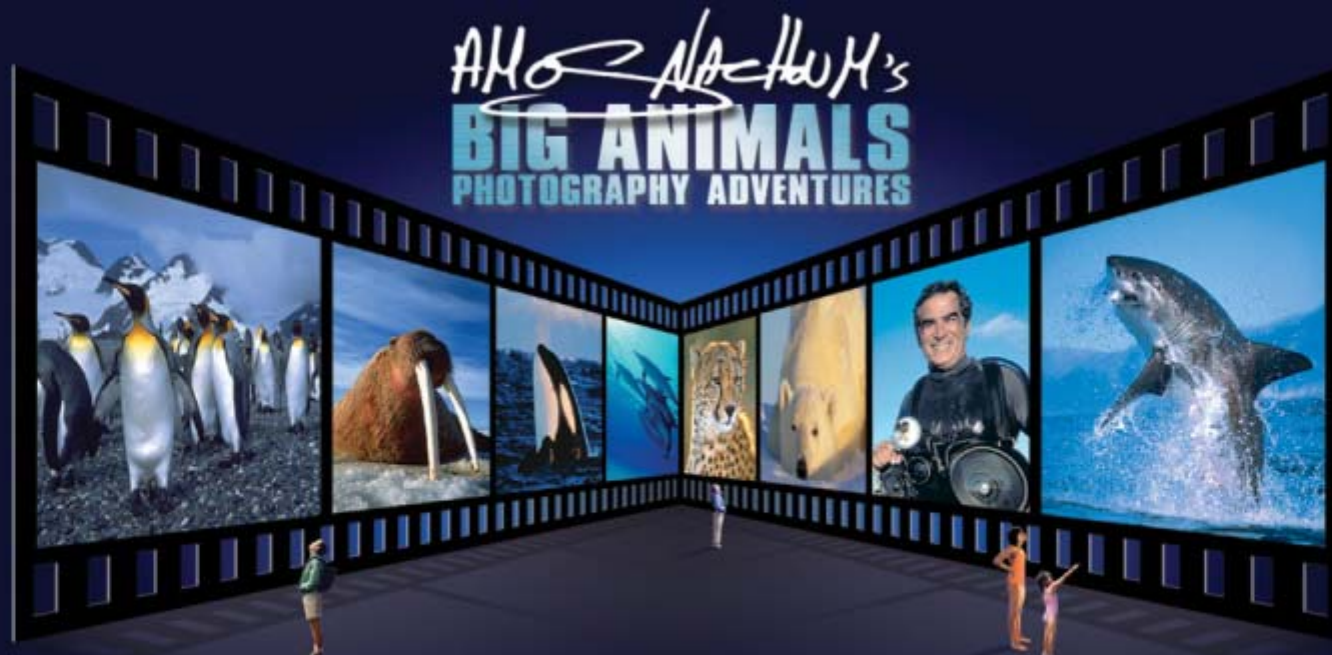
South Africa Sardine Run
 June 10-20, '04

South Africa
Great White Shark
 June 30-July 14, '04

Bikini Atoll
 July 14-August 4, '04

Tonga, Humpback Whales
 August 16-30, '04

The World:
 001 (415) 923-9865
 U.S.: (877) 229-4253



Join world-renowned wildlife photographer Amos Nachoum
 as he leads these inspiring photography and diving adventures

Norway, Orcas
 November 5-13, '04

Ultimate Antarctica
 January 22-February 12, '05

Mexico, Humboldt Squid
 May 1-15, '05

High Arctic, Polar Bear,
Beluga & Narwhale
 May 26-June 16, '05

Visit us on the web at:
www.BigAnimals.com