

TTL, D-TTL, I-TTL.....

When I was a lad learning underwater photography, to trigger an external flashgun you needed just two wires. When these were shorted out by the camera the flashgun (usually) fired.

If you had aimed the flashgun correctly the resulting flash would light your subject and create a good exposure as long as you had chosen the correct aperture which is dependent on the flash to subject distance.

This simple system hung around for a long time before "TTL" (through the lens) flash metering appeared.

On the face of it this was a big breakthrough in automation. A sensor looking at the film measured the amount of light falling onto it and, when there was enough, it quenched the flash and saved its power for the next flash.

In the main this new system worked well but it introduced more connections between the camera and the flash - three more to be precise.

One was a flash ready light indicator and the other two were for the TTL automation.

Now three extra connections may not sound important but if you count the number of connections between a flashgun with a removeable lead and a housed land camera there are no fewer than 35 separate contacts (maybe more on some systems) all of which have to be kept perfectly clean and dry. Should any one of those contacts be greasy or get a drop of saltwater on them, the TTL performance could fail. The result would normally be a small output of light when the camera was fired and this could fool the operator into thinking that all was well.....until they got their films back and found them all to be very underexposed indeed.

I'm not trying to put the fear of God into you, just merely making a point. TTL worked fine for the majority of people including me but, speaking as an underwater camera repairer, I would say that the majority

Editorial

of breakdowns occurred with the TTL system more than anything else i.e. shutter or mechanical problems.

Now, with the digital age, we are being offered not only D-TTL but now there is I-TTL. To be perfectly honest I haven't the enthusiasm to find out what all the fuss is about. It sounds fantastic but I've got to the point where I'm happy to shoot manual flash exposures now that we have LCD screens which show us our results immediately. Our "film" costs nothing so there's no problem in taking another shot if it needs correcting.

I can hear the rumble of TTL supporters howling "What about fast moving subjects, eh?" and I agree that TTL can be useful in these situations but photography to me is all about catching the moment in a single frame and to do that I preset my camera and flash to get a good shot at the right time and right distance. True having a motor drive and fast recycling TTL flashgun will allow you to take more but how often have you done that and ended up using only one frame from the sequence?

I guess the conclusion is that you choose to use what suits you.

I think I've chosen the easy route.

A big thank you to one of you



Tony Matheis was the only UwP reader to print off the flyer we included in the last issue.

Rob Shumaker, owner of Scuba Sphere Dive Shop is seen here in FT. Worth, holding the "Dive Shop Flyer" from UwP17 that is now displayed in his shop.

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