

Inon UFL 165AD

By Peter Rowlands

Japanese manufacturer INON just keep coming out with excellent accessories for digital 'point and shoot' cameras and the UFL-165AD is no exception.

Having resisted the temptation to upgrade my P&S camera, I still use a 4megapixel Olympus C-40 zoom in an Olympus PT-012 housing. The combination is a very small box of electronic tricks which is capable of big and varied images. Fortunately for me the UFL-165AD supplementary wide angle lens seems to have been designed with the PT-012 specifically in mind because the two go together like strawberries and cream.

The UFL-165AD has a bayonet mount so I had to use the INON bayonet mount adaptor which fits over the housing front port and is secured with a large knurled knob into the tripod socket. The UFL-165AD then goes onto the adaptor with a 90° rotation followed by a reassuring click as the lens is secured.

Now anyone who has read my ramblings in previous issues will know that I am a great fan of UR-Pro filters but unfortunately there is no commercial way to incorporate one into this combination because the rear element of the UFL-165AD protrudes back into the bayonet mount adaptor. Luckily though there is



just enough space between the rear element of the UFL-165AD and the front port of the PT-012 to put a 27mm diameter filter. I achieved this by cutting out a circular disc from a larger UR-Pro filter but I understand they sell a 27mm filter in a screw mount which would do the same thing if it was taken out of the mount.

The downside of such a DIY fix is that I have to take the UFL-165AD off underwater at the beginning of the dive to make sure there aren't any air bubbles stuck to any lens surface. This has to be done carefully to make sure the unretained filter doesn't fall out and flutter down the drop off. With all the bubbles removed the filter has to



The UFL-165AD increases the angle of coverage to 165° (which explains the name!). This is achieved with the presence of some barrel distortion but it is not as exaggerated as the 180° full frame fisheye lenses used on film and digital SLR cameras.



Without the UFL-165AD with the C-40 zoom at its widest setting. I was unable to use the Ur-Pro filter for this shot which explains the cyan/blue colour shift.

be persuaded to go back into position and then the UFL-165AD can be refitted. This is a bit fiddly but once done the outfit is ready for use.

With the UFL-165AD added, the buoyancy changes from slightly positive to negative but it is only very slight and the package is very easy to operate with one hand, if needed.

My first dive with this combo was on the wreck 'Salem Express' in the Red Sea and this proved to be the perfect subject to test its performance. Underwater the UFL-165AD

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First impressions are that this is obviously a very wide angle lens and it took a bit of time to realise that I could get much closer to subjects and yet still have them all in the frame. The added advantage is that this reduces the amount of water between



Taken from the same position with the UFL-165AD added. This increases the coverage considerably and the UR_Pro filter has restored the natural colours.

you and the subjects which improves contrast, sharpness and colour considerably.

My first shots on the 'Salem Express' were very pleasing indeed and I spent the whole dive with the camera lens at its widest setting which gave no cut off at the corners. It was only on a subsequent reef dive that I discovered yet another amazing capability of this lens.

Most dome ported supplementary wide angle lenses will only allow partial zooming in before the focus

becomes impossible but the UFL-165AD and C-40 zoom can be zoomed through the whole range (but not the digital zoom). The shots at the tele end of the zoom are not quite as bitingly sharp as at the wide end but they still acceptable.

At this point I was very impressed indeed but then I thought I'd try to find the Achilles Heel and approached a piece of coral about 30cm in length. I got the lens to within about 10cm of the coral at which point the wide angle of



*(Top left) Coral about 10cm away at widest zoom
(Top right) Same lens position at full telephoto!
(Bottom left) Widest zoom
(Bottom right) Fully zoomed in
(Below) My hand is touching the dome port yet it is still sharp!*



coverage still included all of the piece of coral. Having taken a shot, I stayed in exactly the same position and then zoomed in fully. I was absolutely amazed to see that the resulting shot was pin sharp! This capability makes the UFL-165AD and C40 a fantastically versatile combination.

I understand the UFL-165AD will also work with the PT-014 and 016 housings as well as several Canon housings but I would recommend you check how fully compatible they are.

The UFL-165AD and bayonet adaptor cost about the same as the housing and camera combined but, for me, the additional expense is well worth the investment.

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