

Subal ND20 for the Nikon D200

by Peter Rowlands

The Nikon D200 looks set to become the most popular DSLR to be used underwater and it is no surprise that all the major housing manufacturers are gearing up to produce housings. Subal were one of the first past the post and UwP was sent their ND20 to review by their UK agent Ocean Optics.

As a self confessed Subal fan, initial impressions are that, once again, Austrian designer Arnold Stepanek has excelled himself. The subtlety of design and form produced by machining a solid block of aluminium are quite remarkable. The external curves are step free and the paint finish is first class. The result is a highly desirable housing which looks great in both form and, in the main, function. It comes as standard with an LED leak detector, two handles, sync sockets and flash arm mounting shoes, one on either side giving a pleasing visual symmetry.

The housing is best opened face down and is secured by two of their QuickLoc latches on either side of the rear plate. These incorporate large stainless steel registration pins to keep the front and rear sections precisely positioned.

Pushing the QuickLocs down and rotating them 90° releases the rear plate to reveal the chunky baseplate onto which the D200 is attached via the tripod screw. Prior to sliding the camera into the housing you need to remove the viewfinder rubber surround and the LCD protector and then



turn the camera on and set the housing 'On/Off' control to 'On' to ensure correct alignment and operation.

In addition you need to make sure the autofocus select lever and focus pattern levers are correctly aligned. The former can be jiggled into



place if you forget but the latter must be properly aligned.

Rather than list all of the controls which are provided (which is about 99%) it will be simpler (and lazier) to list those that are not! The only real omission is there is no flash adjustment button on the left hand side. This lets you adjust flash exposures and choose different flash modes such as rear curtain sync underwater. For some this will be missed and others not. I suspect the left hand flash sync socket limited access to this control.

Other than that, you can fully control the camera and the ergonomics are pretty good. I still say Subal should produce a shorter stemmed right handle but this is an injection moulded part of which they probably

have hundreds in stock. It's a bit of a stretch to the rear command dial and toggle buttons but this isn't a big deal.

My Subal housing came with the GS viewfinder which, as always, is superb if expensive. The D200 viewfinder is more akin to the D2x than the D70 so I wonder if the GS is absolutely necessary with the D200 but, having had a GS on my D70, I wouldn't settle for less. Lucky me.

The large LCD 2.5" screen is a big bonus on the D200 and Subal's viewing port is well shrouded by both the housing wall and the GS viewfinder.

The twin flash sockets have internal wiring connectors so you can choose between manual flash triggering or TTL depending on the flashguns/housings you are using.



All of the controls have decals to remind you of what all of the buttons and dials are for. These are essential because there are so many controls and you need to know what they are for before you activate them in the heat of the action.

After a while it becomes quite difficult to review new housings. They usually do what they say and have most, if not all, of the controls that are needed and in mostly the right place. The Subal is no exception except to say that the D200 camera is a class act at a reasonable price and size compared to the D2x. Put it in a Subal housing and, I believe, you have a not far off perfect picture taking machine and hopefully one which will be around for a few years before those fiends at Nikon bring out the D300



(haven't you heard the rumours?!).

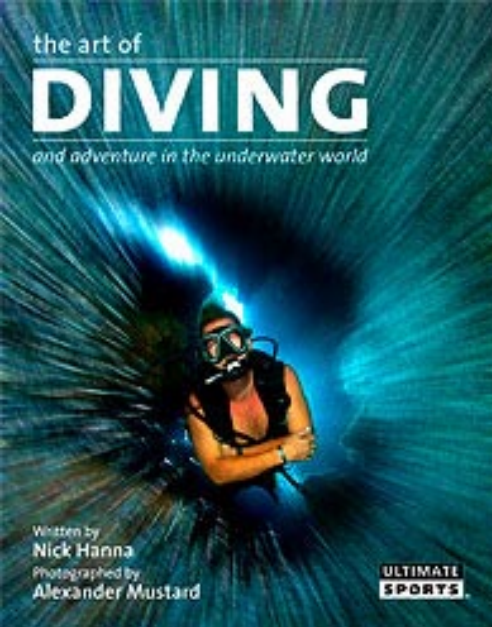
I am grateful to both Ocean Optics for supplying the housing and the amazingly trusting JP Trenque for loaning me his D200 to do this review.

It is with great sadness that I am having to pack them up and return them to their respective owners.

Peter Rowlands

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From "The Art of Diving"
I am particularly grateful to Ocean Optics, London, who supply and maintain all my underwater equipment.
Dr Alexander Mustard

THE ART & TECHNIQUE OF
UNDERWATER
PHOTOGRAPHY
Mark Webster



From "The Art and Technique of Underwater Photography"

I would like to take this opportunity of extending my thanks to...Steve Warren at Ocean Optics, London, UK...
Mark Webster



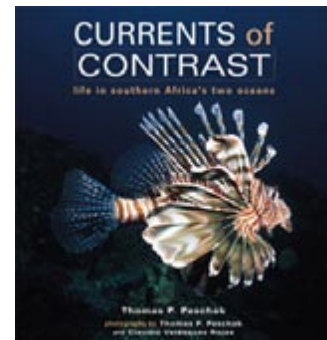
From "Dive in Style"
Ocean Optics of London will give you totally unbiased advice, even to the extent of losing themselves a sale.
Tim Simond

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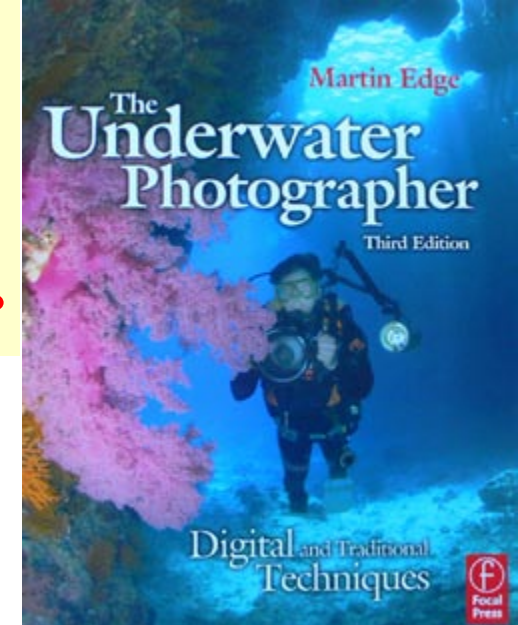
From "The Realm of the Pygmy Seahorse"

The Ocean Optics team in London - Andrew Bell, Matt Crowther, Andrew Pugsley, Sidharth Thaker - were in the unenviable position of trying to satisfy my photographic needs and supporting me in the field.
Constantinos Petrinos



From "Currents of Contrast"

*I would never have successfully completed it without the great generosity, enthusiasm and knowledge of the many people whose paths crossed mine on my many journeys: Steve, Andrew, Dan (Ocean Optics).
Thomas P. Peschak*



From "The Underwater Photographer"

I would like to thank... Steve Warren, Colin Doeg and all the staff of Ocean Optics, thank you for your continuing support.
Martin Edge

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